THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND TRAINING COLLEGES IN INCREASING EMPLOYABILITY

WHOLESALE AND RETAIL SECTOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING AUTHORITY RESEARCH PROJECT

RFP/2019/23495

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Introduction

The Wholesale and Retail Sector Education and Training Authority appointed the Association of Private Providers of Education, Training and Development (APPETD) to undertake research in respect of the Role of Community Education and Training Colleges (CETCs) in Increasing Employability.

The key purposes of the study included:

a. An assessment of the extent to which CETCs enhance the employability of its graduates; and

b. The development of a set of recommendations in terms of strategies and plans that the W&R SETA can put in place to enhance support to the sector.

2. Literature

The research project consisted of a literature review and an empirical study. The literature review focused quite heavily on the regulatory landscape since the Community Education and Training Colleges (CETCs) sector is an emerging one and consequently, there is very little empirical research to date. As a result, local literature on the topic is scarce.

Some key concepts from international examples, particularly from the United States of America, are nevertheless included despite the stark differences in the characteristics of the two systems.

3. Empirical study: data collection and analysis

The empirical study took a pragmatic approach, consisting of both qualitative and quantitative elements. Due to time and resource limits, extensive data collection was not possible, but key trends and issues emerged early in the study.

A research instrument was used for both face-to-face interaction and the telephonic mediated administration of a survey. The survey was thus augmented and supported by rich qualitative data, in conjunction with quantitative data collected through the survey (Survey Monkey).

4. Findings

Policy pronouncements suggest high expectations of the CETC sector in contributing to the needs of youth and adults to expand skills development, training of the unemployed and training of people locked into low-skills jobs.

However, the sector is extremely poorly prepared for these demands:

a. By and large, Community Learning Centres (CLCs) lack infrastructure of their own – most Centres are dependent on buildings and classrooms belonging to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) or other government departments.

b. The current arrangement with one CETC per province, which is responsible for multiple CLC sites, reduces the sector's reach and quality. In some cases, the distances between these sites inhibits regular visits and interaction, which renders the management of the college ineffective and appears to limit the extent to which the central office can introduce quality assurance mechanisms.

c. In general, staff are under-prepared for the changing focus of CETCs. Most have a Higher Certificate or Diploma in Adult Basic Education and Training in keeping with the purpose of the PALC system. Certainly, staff are not generally equipped to teach on the Amended Senior Certificate (ASC) or skills programmes.

d. Conditions of service of lecturing staff are still uncertain, with most members of staff either on fixed-term contracts and part-time contracts, with limited employee benefits (pension, Unemployment Insurance Fund, etc.).

e. In terms of programme offerings, the traditional mandate of the CETCs (as inherited from the PALCs) is offering the Adult Basic Education and Training levels (1 – 4), the General Education and Training Certificate and the Amended Senior Certificate (in the absence of an alternative adult matric). Some CETCs also offer rewrites for the National Senior Certificate.

f. Occupational programmes in keeping with the new focus of the CETCs, are slowly being introduced, e.g. sewing, computer literacy, some of the suggested areas such as Early Childhood Development and Home-based Care, to name a few.

g. However, the uptake of the more occupational (skills) programmes is limited due to the difficulties experienced in attaining accreditation with Sector Education and Training Authorities.

h. Learners include mostly younger people (between the ages of 18 and 25), with some remnants of the previous system of adult learners (36 years and older).

i. Lecturers are generally older (40's or older) and are generally seriously underqualified (or incorrectly qualified) for the new demands placed on the CETCs, in particular as it relates to skills programmes.

j. The lack of suitable infrastructure has an adverse impact on the effectiveness of the CETCs. As many of them are housed in schools, classes can only start after 14:00 in the afternoon, regardless of the needs of the learners.

5. Recommendations

a. The first recommendation pertains to a very serious endeavour to reskill and upskill the CETC lecturing staff, to cope with the aspirational demands of government and society as a whole, in terms of skills development and the enhancement of employability.

b. The second recommendation is that educational and administrative support for the development of new programmes and accreditation of those programmes, be rendered by the SETA.

c. Thirdly the SETA should assist with the identification of workplaces and facilitating liaison between the Colleges and the workplace in keeping with local needs and the local economy.

1. Introduction and background

1.1 Introduction

The Wholesale and Retail Sector Education and Training Authority appointed the Association of Private Providers of Education, Training and Development (APPETD) to undertake research in respect of the Role of Community Education and Training Colleges (CETCs) in Increasing Employability. This document is the result of the commissioned research project.

The purpose of this study is to inform and assist the W & R SETA in their formulation of strategies and plans to assist the Community Education sector to support the needs of local communities. The study thus responds to the call from the Department of Higher Education and Training to formalise its aid to this sector.

The study seeks to report on two key matters:

- The extent to which CETCs enhance the employability of its graduates; and
- Recommendations in terms of strategies and plans that the W&R SETA can put in place to enhance support to the sector.

1.2 Contextualisation

South Africa as a whole, and the education system of the country, in particular, were profoundly shaped by the Apartheid government's racial ideology. Education was strongly biased to benefit the white minority population, while the black majority had limited learning opportunities, and if they had access to education at all, it was not well-resourced and often of inferior quality (Chrisholm, 2015).

As a result, the first democratically elected government inherited a system that was 'deeply divided' and 'wrestling with the shadows of apartheid' (Lolwana, 2015).

Various policies and initiatives have been implemented since the advent of democracy in an attempt to effect redress, access, equity and equality, with varying levels of success in the different areas of education and training. Post-school opportunities have to date focused largely on vocational training at the TVET Colleges, and university education at a variety of public and private higher education institutions.

Not all learners are however ready for those two streams (TVET and Higher Education). The schooling system is to this day considered to be a 'dual system' due to the gross inequities (Spaull, 2015) between well-resourced and under-resourced schools, and as a result, some learners may pass the National Senior Certificate but not be ready for further studies, while other learners drop out of school before completing the National Senior Certificate for a variety of reasons including socio-economic reasons.

In 2012, a Ministerial Task Team on Community Education and Training Centres identified two distinct groups who remain outside mainstream post-school education, namely adults, and young people who are not in employment, education, or training, with few opportunities for access to first or second chance learning and lifelong learning.

These two groups represent a large percentage of the total population. The 2015 General Household Survey Report (Stats SA, 2016) reports that there are 18.8 million South Africans over the age of 20, who could potentially benefit from a Community Education and Training College engagement. This number is made up as follows:

- Around 1,7 million people have no formal education at all;
- Around 3,5 million people only have some primary schooling;
- Around 1,6 million people completed primary schooling;
- Around 12 million people have some secondary education but have not completed Grade 12.

The 2018 General Household Survey Report (Stats SA, 2019a) reports a noticeable improvement between 2015 and 2018. The percentage of individuals aged 20 years and older who did not have any education decreased from 11,4% in 2002 to 4,5% in 2018, while those with at least a grade 12 qualification increased from 30,5% to 45,2% over the same period.

It is however generally acknowledged by government and civil society alike, that there is still a lot of work to be done in this area.

In 2005, South African Labour Minister Mdladlana described youth unemployment as 'a powder keg waiting to explode unless something drastic was done to address it' (Department of Labour, 2005). This still holds true today.

In addition to those adults who did not have any learning opportunities, the high school dropout rates also continue to contribute to the high unemployment rates amongst South Africa's youth. In 2017, only three-quarters of male students who attended Grade 10 in 2016 progressed to Grade 11, while the same was true for close to 87% of female learners. During the same period, even fewer males (71%) who attended Grade 11 in 2016 progressed to Grade 12 the following year, while 76% of the females did the same (Stats SA, 2019b).

It is therefore not surprising that the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013), which outlines the dream of a seamless, integrated post-school education system, specifically emphasises the role of education in addressing inequality and poverty. It also confirms the important role of Community Education and Training Colleges (CETCs), towards achieving that dream. The CETCs are the youngest of the proposed post-school education and training system suggested in the White Paper (DHET, 2013).

The historical background of the CETCs is important because it explains some of the findings in this report:

The PALCs were largely run from primary and high schools in the form of afternoon classes offering Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) levels 1 to 4 and the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) aimed at adults and reported to the Department of Basic Education (DBE). With the White Paper (2013) and the

promulgation of the Act (Act 16 of 2006, as amended), CETCs came into being and were transferred to the Department of Higher Education and Training, as post-school education and training institutions.

The recent iteration of the National Skills Development Strategy, the National Skills Development Plan (NSDP), (DHET, 2019: 14) make the point that:

> The NSDP acknowledges the role to be played by the Community Education and Training (CET) institutional type in expanding skills development in the country. The CET colleges will cater to the knowledge and skills needs of the large numbers of adults and youth requiring education and training opportunities, unemployed people, and those employed but in low or semi-skilled occupations.

However, while these new institutions appear to be a critical type of institution with a very important role in the post-school system in the country and the government's redress agenda, they unfortunately seem to be poorly equipped for their new role.

This report outlines some of these problems and makes recommendations in regards to the support the CETCs need most.

2. Literature review

As noted above (DHET, 2013), the concept of Community Education and Training Colleges (CETCs) is a relatively new type of institution in the South African post-school education and training sector. As a result, South African literature consists primarily of studies used to inform the establishment of policy, and the actual policy, including the White Paper (DHET, 2013), and a range of other related policy documents.

This literature review attempts to reflect the intent, brief history, as well as progress, in the establishment of a sustainable Community College system.

An overview of the content of policy documents, e.g. the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training, Acts, and Regulations as it relates to CETCs, is given. This review also includes a synthesis of national and international discourses in respect of community education and training, especially as it relates to improved employability of the beneficiaries.

Naturally, no such discussion would be complete without reference to the South African education and training context and the broader policy framework.

2.1 Overview of the policy framework establishing Community Education and Training Colleges in South Africa

This section will provide an overview of the legislative framework and policies that call CETCs into being and regulate their functioning.

The intention is not to discuss every policy in detail, as the current study is particularly focused on the employability of CETC 'graduates', and, having been commissioned by the Wholesale and Retail SETA, is slightly biased towards the impact that the SETA itself can make regarding the employability of the beneficiaries of this sector.

The discussion of the relevant legislation and policies inevitably has to start with the Constitution, the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013) and the Continuing Education and Training Act (previously Further Education and Training Act), as these documents form the basis of all the CETC-specific policies.

2.1.1 Constitution of South Africa

The Preamble of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996) recognises the 'injustices of our past' and outlines the aims of the Constitution as follows:

- Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice, and fundamental human rights;
- Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law;
- Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person; and
- Build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.

Section 29 of the Constitution also guarantees the right a) to basic education, including adult basic education; and b) to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.

The notion of government's responsibility in terms of providing its adult citizens with basic education is therefore embedded in the Constitution. The White Paper, which is discussed next, outlines the government's intention of executing this responsibility, in more detail.

2.1.2 White Paper for Post- School Education and Training

While the notion of Community Colleges is not an entirely new one (and this review will show some of the early studies which considered what the South African Community College landscape should look like), the concept was only formally introduced into the legislation and policy framework of post-school education in the country, around 2013.

The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013), announced Government's intention to establish Community Education and Training Colleges in South Africa (DHET, 2013), to replace the old 'Public Adult Learning Centre' (PALC) system in South Africa.

Community Colleges are envisaged in the White Paper as important vehicles in achieving redress in that they were intended to 'cater mainly for youth and adults who did not complete their schooling or who never attended school and thus do not qualify to study at TVET colleges and universities' (DHET, 2013: xii).

The intention as outlined in the White Paper is to offer both formal programmes, including the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC), the Senior Certificate programmes, National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA) and occupational programmes funded by SETAs or the NSF (DHET, 2013: xii).

Community colleges were also envisioned to link directly with the work of public programmes – such as the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), Community Works Programmes (CWP), and others – where they would provide classroom and workshop-based learning, and the programme would provide work-integrated learning (WIL) opportunities.

The White Paper (2013) proposed a phased approach to the introduction of community colleges, preceded by a pilot process to help inform further development of the concept and its roll-out throughout the country. It was envisaged that the community colleges will have a headcount enrolment of one million by 2030, as compared to the 265 000 in the PALCs in 2011.

2.1.3 Legislation and Policies related to Community Colleges in particular

The establishment of Community Colleges is legislated in the Continuing Education and Training Act, 2006 (previously known as the Further Education and Training Colleges Act) (Act 16 of 2006) as amended.

The National Policy on Community Colleges in terms of section 41B (4) of the Continuing Education and Training Act, 2006 (Act No. 16 of 2006) in turn provides more detailed policy guidelines, in terms of which the legislation should be implemented.

The establishment and operations of Community Education and Training Colleges are guided by the following principles:

- Expansion of access to education and training to all youth and adults, especially those who have limited opportunities for structured learning, including learners with disabilities;
- Diversification and transformation of institutions that promote the goals and objectives of a progressive socio-economic agenda;
- Provision of good quality formal and non-formal education and training programmes;
- Provision of vocational training that prepares people for participation in both the formal and informal economy;
- Close partnerships with local communities, including local government, civil Society Organisations, employers' and workers' organisations and alignment of programmes with their needs;
- Partnerships with government's community development projects;
- Local community participation in governance; and
- Collaboration and articulation with other sections of the post-school system.

The DHET published a document titled 'Community Education and Training – National Strategy on Partnerships within Community Education and Training' in December 2016, which encourages partnerships with and between various state departments, municipal authorities, and Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) in the establishment and running of Community Colleges.

Good progress was made in the creation of a policy framework during 2017, when a series of Policy and Procedure documents were published, to enable the

establishment and operation of Community Colleges. These policies were published for public comment such comment was welcomed and integrated into the policies:

- Policy and Procedures for Regulating the **Opening, Merging and Closing** of CET College Learning Sites published as Government Notice 203 in Government Gazette No 40666 on 3 March 2017
- National Policy on **Curriculum Development and Implementation** in Community Education and Training Colleges published as Government Notice 204 in Government Gazette 40666 on 3 March 2017.
- Policy Framework for the Development of **Admission Policies** by Community Education and Training Colleges published as Government Notice No 254 in Government Gazette No 40711 on 24 March 2017
- Policy on the **Conduct, Administration & Management** of the General Education and Training Certificate for Adults **Assessment** published as Government Notice 240 in the Government Gazette No 40699 on 17 March 2017
- National Policy on **Verification of Enrolments and Staff** in the Community Education and Training Colleges published as Government Notice 253 in Government Gazette 40711 on 24 March 2017.
- Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETA) **Workplace Based-Learning** (WPBL) Programmes Agreement Regulations published as Government Notice in Government Gazette No 40730 on 29 March 2017.
- National Policy for **Student Support Services** for Community Education and Training Colleges" (the Policy), published by the Minister of Higher Education and Training as Government Notice No. 543 in the Government Gazette No. 40898 (the Notice) on 9 June 2017.
- **Funding Framework** for Community Education and Training (CET) as well as Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges, published for public comments by the Minister of Higher Education and Training in Government Notice No. 917 in Government Gazette No. 41082 on 1 September 2017.
- National Policy **Reporting** by Community Education and Training Colleges published as Government Notice No. 1013 in the Government Gazette No. 41132 on 22 September 2017.
- The Service Delivery Framework for Community Colleges, 2017
- National Policy for the Monitoring and Evaluation of CET Colleges, 2017.

As most of the above policies are aimed at regulating the good governance and management of the Community Colleges but do not deal with their approach to selecting and offering programmes as such, they will not be discussed in detail.

The focus will instead be on policies that are directly relevant to the process of determining which programmes to offer, and the actual offering of those. The Service Delivery Framework for Community Colleges seems particularly relevant and will, therefore, be discussed in more detail.

2.1.3.1 Service Delivery Framework

The Service Delivery Framework for Community Colleges (DHET, 2017) states that the CET Colleges 'are complex to manage and they demand advanced expertise and high levels of sophistication in terms of management and administration to ensure relevance and responsiveness to local needs'.

The framework was developed as a guide to the CET College Councils for the development of their service delivery frameworks, translating macro-policies for micro-level implementation, promoting the role of Community Colleges as dynamic and proactive role players in addressing the socio-economic challenges of the country at a micro-level, and offer quality education and training in response to local needs.

The Framework requires Community Education and Training Colleges to be flexible in their programme offerings and include programmes driven by the community developmental priorities, as well as the priorities of the State.

Accordingly, a Community Education and Training College shall offer programmes that are driven and funded by the State, as well as programmes that respond to the immediate needs of the community and are funded from other funding sources as identified in section 24 of the Act.

A holistic approach to education and training is required to offer learning options in which both soft and hard skills are developed within an integrated development framework that seeks to improve livelihoods, promote inclusion into the world of work and that supports community and individual needs.

Non-formal programmes shall take place on a `needs' basis, and shall be aligned strongly to local contexts, and employment and community development opportunities. Non-formal offerings that do not lead to qualifications or part qualifications, however, may also be made available to learners participating in adult education programmes in varied institutional, workplace and community -based settings.

The triad in Figure 1 below illustrates the three types of offerings of Community Colleges.

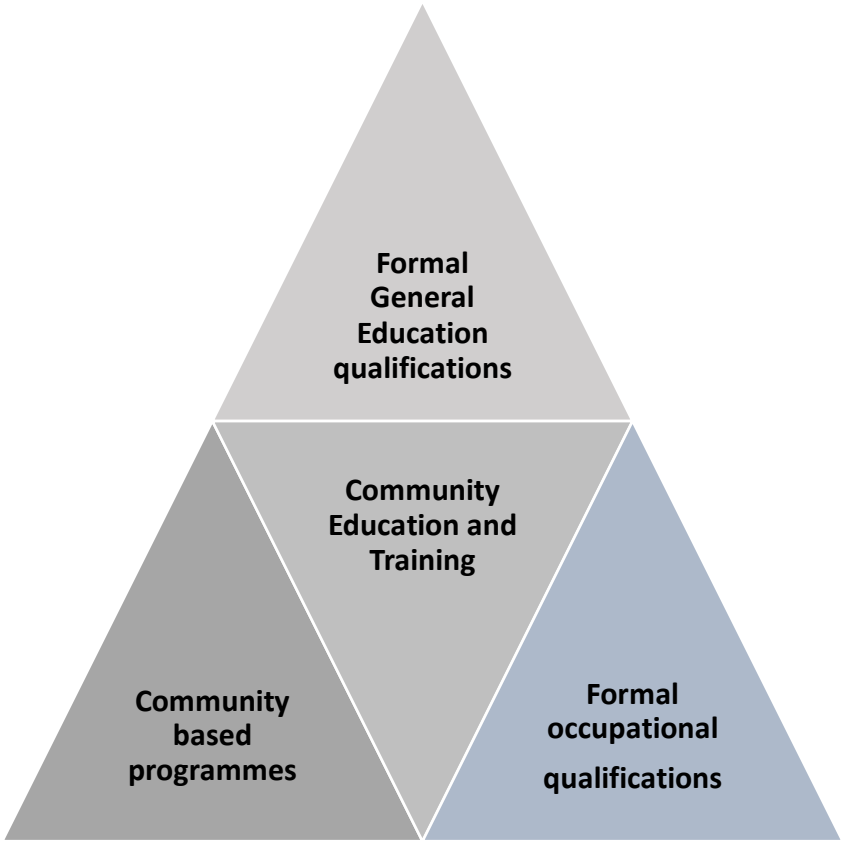

Figure 1 A Triad for Service Delivery by Community Colleges

The DHET also published a document titled 'The Community Education and Training College System - National Plan for the Implementation of the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training System' in 2019.

This document provides a vision for the Community Education and Training College System and proposes a number of solutions to current challenges in the system. It makes proposals regarding the expansion of access to the system, ensuring the delivery of responsive programmes, improving success (completion rates), improvement of the quality of delivery, an improved geographical spread, the development of steering mechanisms, the evolution of the sector and evidence-based institutional planning.

It is noted that General Education does not necessarily have to lead to employment or even employability, but is mostly aimed at setting a foundation for further learning. The formal occupational qualifications are however aimed directly at preparing learners for the workplace, and most of the community-based programmes, if planned in alignment with the needs of the community, should also lead to employability, whether in the formal, or informal sectors.

2.2 Current status of implementation of Community Colleges in South Africa

In keeping with the phased approach envisaged in the White Paper, the first nine CET Colleges were opened, one in each province, in April 2015, clustering the existing 3,276 PALCs. The PALCS were renamed as Community Learning Centres (CLCs). The nine Colleges serve as administrative hubs, while the CLCs serve as delivery sites of CET.

The CETC sector is still quite small, relative to the other sectors, with around 283,602 participants, receiving funding through DHET of R1,859.99 million (2016/7 year).

As stated before, the system can be described as 'emerging' and as a result, there is fairly limited literature on the performance (success) of the system.

The DHET identified certain performance issues and low learner success rates in the early stages of the rollout of Community Colleges, and responded by releasing the 'National Improvement Plan for Teaching and Learning for Community Education and Training Colleges' in 2017 (DHET, 2017). The purpose of the document is to provide the necessary guidance to deliver corrective measures aimed at areas of underperformance and deficiencies in the system. In the long term, the point of this plan is to 'empower CET Colleges to be able to plan for the delivery of programmes, quality, and incremental success rate' (DHET, 2017a: 5).

The most significant report on the status of Community Colleges and their mandate, is that of the OECD, titled 'Community Education and Training in South Africa – Getting Skills Right' (2019). The report provides a brief history of adult education in South Africa, outlines the need for a community education system that enables lifelong learning, and outlines the role, financing, alignment to local needs, and quality assurance of Community Colleges.

The report shows that the enrolment numbers in community education are very low, both in comparison to the ambitious target of 1 million learners by 2030, and also in comparison to the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Higher Education sectors. The detail is illustrated in Table 1.

The report considers the challenges experienced in growing the sector, including infrastructure and funding. The report further argues for a significant contribution to Community Colleges from the National Skills Fund (NSF) as well as the effective use of SETA funding, in addition to donor funding. It also argues for the carrying of some of the cost, even if minimal, by the learners.

Table 1 Comparison of three Post-School Education and Training sectors

Community Education and Training (CET)	Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)	Higher Education
Institutions	**Institutions**	**Institutions**
9 CET Colleges (administrative hubs), with 3 276 delivery sites (Community Learning Centres)	50 Public TVET colleges, with 250 campuses	26 Public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), i.e. Universities and Technical Universities
Private institutions	Private institutions	123 Private Higher Education institutions
Programmes	**Programmes**	**Programmes**
AET 1-4	NATED (N1-N6)	Undergraduate degrees, certificates and diplomas
Grade 10-12	National Certificate Vocational (NCV)	Post-graduate (below master's level)
Occupational/Skills programmes	Occupational/Skills programmes	Master's degrees
Non-formal programmes		Doctoral degrees
Students	**Students**	**Students**
273 431 students in public CET institutions	705 397 in public TVET colleges	975 867 students in public HEIs
61 118 students in private institutions	107 793 students in private institutions	167 408 students in private HEIs

2.3 Understanding the discourse

In this section, the role of Community Colleges and the meaning of some of the key concepts will be unpacked.

2.3.1 Defining 'Community'

The Ministerial Task Team Report (2012) defined CETCs as 'being located within and contributing to local needs and local development, building social agency and social cohesion'.

'Community' refers as much to the location (easy access for youths and adults), as it is a matter of orientation, locating this sphere of adult and youth education in communities with strong links to communities in their varied forms, to NGOs and CBOs, to local government and the local economy and labour markets.

Community colleges need to have 'a real and vital connection to the local community' as the ones in North America seem to have (Land & Aitchison, 2017:13), where they are popular institutions of choice for school leavers who, for academic or financial reasons are unable to attend university.

2.3.2 The role of Community Colleges

The role of CETCs in South Africa may be different from that of Community Colleges in the developed world, given the dire need for adult basic education, and the commitment of the government in this regard.

On the one hand, it is difficult to compare the South African CETCs with Community Colleges in the United States of America or Canada. In those (developed) countries, literacy is a given, and Community College programmes are more advanced, even up to degree-level, while CETCs in South Africa offer lower-level qualifications, school-leaving certificates and in some cases, skills programmes.

There are however significant similarities as well. The dual purpose of upskilling/reskilling and providing second chances to those learners who did not complete their schooling is clear in both the South African policy documents as well as the international literature.

According to Land and Aitchison (2017:13), 'the international evidence sees community colleges primarily as genuinely post-school or post grade 12 institutions offering formal qualifications and non-formal courses but with the capacity to serve the local community's (often non-formal) educational needs. They are comprehensive or multi-purpose. They usually have some degree of open access and remedial courses for those who dropped out of or did not succeed in the school system. Most of them have at least some higher education qualifications on offer'.

The National Policy (2015:4) clearly signals that the emerging system will evolve to reflect a 'focus on community in the CETCs and CLCs [which] is as much a matter of location (easy access for youths and adults) as it is a matter of orientation, locating this sphere of adult and youth education in communities with strong links to

communities in their varied forms, to NGOs and CBOs, to local government and the local economy and labour markets'.

2.3.3 Social justice

Another similarity between the South African system and the international literature, is the social justice agenda. There is no doubt in either the international or the South African literature on the topic, that Community Colleges have to play a meaningful role in the quest for social justice.

In education, we associate social justice with the idea that all individuals and groups should be treated with fairness and respect and that all are entitled to the resources and benefits available in the system (Shriberg, Bonner, Sarr, Walker, Hyland & Chester, 2008).

This is of particular importance in the South African education and training system, which, as shown in Section 2, is still struggling, after 25 years of democracy, to right the wrongs of the past, including the unequal access to education.

The DHET Task Team of 2012 emphasises the social justice purpose of community education: "Community Education should support learning and development that leads to social justice for everyone. Community Education can be seen as committed to the principle that education should originate in and be designed to meet the interests of the community, and be directed to improving its quality of life..." (DHET 2012b:32 – 33).

The social justice agenda of Community Colleges is also confirmed in the White Paper, as important vehicles in achieving redress, in that they were meant to 'cater mainly for youth and adults who did not complete their schooling or who never attended school and thus do not qualify to study at TVET colleges and universities' (DHET, 2014:xii).

2.3.4 Lifelong learning

The OECD report (2019) stresses the important role of Community Colleges in facilitating a culture of lifelong learning in communities, allowing access to a variety of continuous learning opportunities to enhance personal, social, family and employment experiences.

Walters (2006) positioned adult learning in the context of lifelong learning, as a vehicle to enhance possibilities for people to survive the harsh conditions in which they live; to develop skills in the formal and informal sectors for economic purposes, and for cultural and political education which encourages active citizenship. As such, lifelong learning is clearly linked with the social justice agenda outlined earlier.

2.3.5 Second chance education

The OECD report (2019) speaks to the right to Basic Education, which includes Adult Basic Education, and outlines the role of Community Colleges in offering 'second chance' programmes to adults. This includes the offering of upper secondary

education opportunities (e.g. Senior Certificate/Matric) to adults who wish to obtain those.

This aligns with the international literature and is also reflected in the policy documents that regulate the CETCs.

2.3.6 Increased employability

The OECD report (2019) also speaks to short skills programmes that may assist working adults in addressing skills gaps, to make them more employable.

While the concept of employability is often not clearly defined, there seems to be a general agreement that the term means 'the propensity of students to obtain a job', however this is generally also understood to mean that the learner has gained the attributes that would make them suitable to perform such job satisfactorily (Harvey, 2001).

These definitions may however be too narrowly focused on the attributes of the learner, without taking external factors such as labour market forces, into account (Clarke, 2018).

Alves (2007) specifically cautions against a narrow definition of employability as a set of employability skills, without due cognisance to the context of job shortages and economic conditions.

In the South African context in particular, there is an added element: employability is traditionally seen as being able to obtain *formal* employment. In view of the high unemployment rates and the lack of sufficient economic growth, it is however necessary to develop a more nuanced understanding of the terms 'employability' and 'employment'.

A too narrow view of 'employability', 'jobs' and 'work' in terms of working in the formal economy, may constrain innovative ways of dealing with workplace placements and employability (Blom & Stoltz-Urban, 2019).

The authors would therefore like to argue for a broader or more liberal understanding of employability and employment, for the purpose of this report.

2.3.7 Pathway to other post-school opportunities

The intention of the White Paper was to create a seamless post-school system that would enable some learners to move from the Community Colleges to other post-school opportunities such as TVET or even higher education, upon completion of their programmes.

2.4 Challenges experienced in the system

From the limited South African literature available, it appears that the main threat to the successful implementation of the Community College system (with success defined as having one million learners in the system by 2030, as envisaged in the White Paper) is that of funding (Land & Aitchison, 2017:13). This is particularly relevant in view of the fact that the university sector is demanding more and more of the national education budget as a result of the 'Fees must Fall' campaign. Naturally, a lack of funding links closely to the possible lack of infrastructure such as workshops or laboratories, which may have a negative impact on learner success and the intention to contribute to the development of skills in the country.

Secondly, the Colleges' ability to respond to local needs may pose a challenge. Land and Aitchison (2017:32) report that offerings in adult learning centres have thus far been 'standardised and limited' and that there is a 'lack of flexibility in modes of delivery and options for learners', resulting in what was described in the 2012 Task Team report as 'a pitifully inadequate output'.

The White Paper envisaged the establishment of meaningful partnerships in the sector. While there have been some definite successes, Partnerships with non-state institutions that are already proto-community colleges, such as the Catholic Institute for Education's Thabiso Skills Institute in Gauteng, as well as many small vigorous organisations such as Dlalanathi in Swayimane in KwaZulu-Natal's uMshwathi district, The Family Literacy Project in the Southern Drakensberg, and the Midlands Community College in Nottingham Road (Land & Aitchison, 2017), these are not adequate to sustain the scalable rollout of a large Community College system, as yet.

The lack of suitable workplaces in which to place learners (Blom & Stoltz-Urban, 2019) also remains a hindrance as there is a requirement from the SETAs for learners to complete the workplace component of their programmes, before they may be declared competent, and this may pose a considerable hindrance to the successful rollout of these programmes.

The issue of qualified lecturing staff is also raised here, based on the experience of the TVET colleges in terms of qualified lecturing staff.

Lastly, stringent accreditation requirements may also pose a challenge, in particular as it pertains to the accreditation of workplaces for learner placement.

3. Study design and methodology

The design and methodology of the study, including the sampling strategy, data collection, and data analysis will be discussed briefly, with cognisance to the fact that this is not intended to be an academic paper, but rather an empirically evidenced practitioners' paper, informed by a combination of contemporary literature and research.

3.1 Design

The study employed a multi-method research design. This is because the study made use of multiple approaches to data collection, analysis and meaning-making (Morse, 2003). Multi-method approaches tend to increase the trustworthiness and credibility of a study in many ways: different data sets increase transferability of findings because of the contextual detail evident through the data sets provides a range of perspectives. As the findings do not rely on a single data set, the study's dependability is increased. Therefore, confirmability is improved by using both secondary and primary data, which reduces researcher bias (Shenton, 2004).

Morse (2004:197) suggests at least four ways for undertaking qualitative multi-method inquiries, but this study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection approaches. The literature formed a good basis for the data collection process, and qualitative and quantitative data was collected, as illustrated in Table 3 below.

Table 2: Data collection

	Description	Data collection approach
A	Literature review	Analysis and synthesis of secondary data available through current literature and policy constructs relating to community education; discourse analysis
B	Qualitative data in respect of the extent to which community education enhances employability	Interviews with Principals and Deputy Principals; focus groups with lecturing staff and students (where possible)
D	Quantitative data to support and enhance qualitative data collection	Survey Monkey

The sampling strategy will be discussed next, before the data collection process will be explained in more detail.

3.1.1 Sampling

The scope of the study included the nine community colleges in the country, (one in each province), which includes a total of 3,279 adult education and training centres.

The qualitative data collection process utilised a combination of face-to-face and telephonic interviews and focus groups. These were conducted with all the Head Offices of the public CETCs, as well as two CLCs (in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape, respectively). Unfortunately, it was impossible to reach the North-West CETC. Other respondents included College Principals or Deputy Principals, lecturing staff and learners (where possible) (see Table 3):

Table 3: Qualitative interviews

Organisation	No of respondents	
Gauteng CETC	1	Principal
	2	Lecturers
	3	Learners
KwaZulu Natal CETC	1	Dep-Principal
	1	Centre Manager
	3	Lecturers
Eastern Cape	1	Centre Manager
	2	Lecturers
	3	Learners
Western Cape	1	Principal
Northern Cape	1	Principal
Free State	1	Principal
Mpumalanga	1	Principal
Limpopo	1	Principal

The survey questionnaire was distributed to all College Principals and Deputy Principals (total of 18), but was completed by only 15 respondents in total.

In order to supplement the above data, inputs were also requested from two senior members of the Catholic Institute of Education-Thabiso Skills Institute staff, Ms Yvonne dos Santos and Ms Fawzia Naidoo, as well as the owner of 'Popcorn People', Ms. Janine Scott-dos Santos, who are actively involved with private and public CETCs on a daily basis.

Following these additional engagements, the research team feels confident that a sufficiently convincing sample was used. In addition, senior specialists and managers who are in touch with both policy developments and operational matters, made up the largest part of the sample. This is supplemented by the research team's own experience in the sector and the inputs of other CETC specialists.

Furthermore, data saturation was reached prior to finishing the data collection process.

3.1.2 Data collection instrument and process

First, a common research instrument for both the face-to-face interviews and the mediated (telephonic) interviews was developed.

The instrument was tested with a small group including W & R SETA officials, and was then approved for use with minor changes. This enabled the researchers to ensure that participants responded to the same issues.

The exception was the focus groups with the learners – here the main questions dealt with the lived experience of the learners:

- Where we you before coming to the CETC?
- Why are you here at the CETC?
- What are your plans for after graduating at the CETC?

- Do you think that you will be able to find employment or create your own employment, after completing the programme that you are enrolled for?
- Which other programmes should your College be offering?

The face-to-face interviews afforded the researchers the opportunity to visit the sites of the CETCs central office, and/or the Community Learning Centres (CLCs), which enriched the researchers' understanding of the conditions at the Colleges as well as the challenges faced. The telephonic interviews were however equally insightful as the College Principals were all very cooperative and willing to share the challenges and opportunities faced by the Colleges, in an open and honest manner.

In some of the cases, and in particular when interviewing lecturers and learners, focus group interviews of between 2 and 6 participants, were conducted. This choice was made both because it was felt that focus groups create a more 'permissive, non-threatening environment' (Krueger & Casey, 2014), and also because group interaction often results in enhanced data gathering through participant interaction (see Table 4).

The qualitative data collection was supported by quantitative approach, chiefly through the use of a Survey Monkey research instrument (see Annexure 1). However, due to the low response rate, which is partly due to the lack of infrastructure and poor connectivity at most of the CETCs, the research team decided to mediate the survey through telephonic interviews with Principals, and where they were not available, Deputy Principals.

3.2 Data analysis

The responses of the research participants were recorded against the questions. No audio-recording was done, but the Survey Monkey data was automatically captured, which facilitated analysis. In addition to this data, field notes were compiled during the face-to-face and telephonic interviews.

The first part of the research instrument sought to establish the status quo in respect of programmes, students and staff, while the second part attempted to establish the challenges and opportunities, particularly as these relate to student employability. Finally, respondents were asked to indicate how the W&R SETA can be of assistance.

A thematic analysis of key themes emerging from the data was conducted to inform the findings, thereby uncovering a collection of themes that provided 'some level of patterned response or meaning' (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Emerging themes included: infrastructure; management (and quality assurance) of multiple sites (the CLCs); lecturer qualifications; inability to attain accreditation, etc. (see Findings).

3.3 Limitations

In the timeframes available to the research team to collect data (only two weeks), it was impractical to travel to all nine CETCs, let alone the CLCs. However, as noted above, and in keeping with the purpose of the study, rich data emerged. Nevertheless, more data collection would have enabled the researchers to unearth contextual elements which may only be evident in some areas and not in others. The

study should at most, be seen to be a baseline to inform the W&R SETA regarding the current status quo. In a few years, this picture is bound to be very different.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

All respondents were assured that the evaluation study dealt with employability of learners with a view to offering further support (and not for punitive reasons).

No respondents were under the age of consent, and in addition to letters to outline the nature of the study (see Annexure 2), the researchers was at pains to explain the purpose of the study, i.e. to develop recommendations for the W&R SETA to implement interventions in the CETC sector.

The raw data gathered and compiled as part of this research will be safeguarded by the research team and will be stored under lock and key for a period of 3 years. After this time, it will be destroyed.

3.8 Profile of the researchers

The research team consists of two members, namely Dr Ronel Blom (project lead) and Dr Carin Stoltz-Urban:

> **Dr Ronel Blom** is a research consultant and founder of Consider That Research Consultancy. The Consultancy specializes in education and training policy and practice. In this capacity, she has served as the lead researcher in a number of education-related research projects in the last two years, amongst others, a major Community Education and Training College research project for the Catholic Institute of Education, in 2019, entitled '*New Skills for Youth – Transforming Skills Training for Disadvantaged Youth into Community Education and Placement'*, May 2019.
>
> She has recently been appointed to the position of Academic Dean to the Regent Business School. Prior to that, she has also held the position of Dean: Research, at The Da Vinci Institute of Technology Management.
>
> Ronel has been a researcher, policy developer, analyser and critic for more than 20 years. As the Head of the Research Unit at the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) (2001 to 2007), she developed new policies for the emerging education and training system after the 1994 transition from Apartheid to a new democratic dispensation.
>
> She has also undertaken a number of research studies on behalf of public and private institutions, a few recent ones which involved the research for, and development of, a national policy for Workplace-based Learning (WPBL). This research culminated in two chapters in international handbooks dealing with WPBL and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Both her

Masters and PhD studies investigated the meaningful implementation of education and training policies in the South African system.

Dr Stoltz-Urban is the founder and owner of Vortex Education Solutions, a consultancy focused on quality assurance and governance in education and training, which has been her full-time occupation for the past two years.

Her primary focus as consultant is the quality assurance and capacity development at providers of education and training. She has also been involved in a number of education-related research projects in the last two years, amongst others, a major Community Education College research project for the Catholic Institute of Education in 2019.

Dr Stoltz-Urban's last full-time position was that of Dean: Teaching and Learning at The Da Vinci Institute for Technology Management. She has also worked as the Head of Professional Development and Education for the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) Africa, and has served as a Deputy Director in SAQA's Executive Office, for a period of 7 years.

4. Research findings

4.1 Approach to presenting the findings

The research findings of the study are presented in narrative form. The principles to the presentation of the findings are as follows:

- The researchers are conscious of the fact that this research is not intended for a purely academic audience and as such, the findings will be communicated in plain language, without compromising the academic rigour of the work.

- Frequencies will not be reported unless it has a direct impact on gaining an understanding and making meaning of the data (Mason, 2010). Trends will be discussed where the researchers were confident that these reflect the common nature of the issues faced by CETCs. Recommendations are based on these trends.

- Verbatim passages that may assist in keeping the human story in the forefront of the reader's mind are included (Charmaz, 2003, Ritchie & Lewis, 2004). This also serves to demonstrate that the findings presented are generated from, and grounded in the data (Ritchie & Lewis, 2004).

- In view of the fact that both the researchers have built up previous experience in this sector, and are well-versed with the challenges faced, their personal impressions are also captured as part of the data presentation.

In the sections below, some introductory remarks are made to provide context for the actual findings, after which the findings are reported.

4.2 Contextualisation

It is important to understand the size and the shape of the CETC sector, in order to better understand the offerings of the Colleges and the challenges experienced.

As stated in the literature review, the Community Education Colleges system is a new, emerging one, and the system currently relies on the structure and resources of the previous Adult Basic Education and Training 'Public Adult Learning Centres' (PALC).

The typical Community Education and Training College consists of a small Central Office with a number of Community Learning Centres (CLCs) (largely the old PALCs). No delivery takes place at the Central Office of the College, which is essentially a management centre. Delivery takes place at the CLCs, and in particular, at the satellite centres of each of the CLCs. This is due to the need to provide education and training in the community where the CLC/satellite is located.

For example, the Northern Cape Community Education and Training College consists of a small central office, seven Community Learning Centres (CLCs) and 80 satellite centres where the actual delivery of programmes take place.

Likewise, the KwaZulu Natal CETC currently has 897 centres within its scope, and while the College seeks to reduce this number to 40 main sites with 260 satellites, the management of these sites and its 26 866 odd students, is extremely difficult. Around Durban alone, where the head office is, there are 80 satellites to manage.

It is against this background that the findings are presented.

4.3 Findings

The Community College sector is seen as a major player in the upskilling of young people with a view to increasing their employability. The Colleges are expected to play a number of important roles, from enabling high school dropouts to complete their schooling, to upskilling adults, and provide entry into other post-school education and training opportunities.

The reality faced by the Colleges however, seems to be that these demands are not accompanied by the resources required to fulfil their mandate. Amongst a range of serious challenges, there is a serious lack of infrastructure and qualified staff, at all the Colleges. These contexts are important for any proposed plans in the future.

The findings will be reported under the following main themes:

- Programmes offered
- College infrastructure
- College capacity (lecturing staff)
- Profile of learners
- Employability and employment opportunities

4.3.1 Programmes offered

As indicated in the literature review, Community Colleges are envisaged in the White Paper as important vehicles in achieving redress in that they were intended to 'cater mainly for youth and adults who did not complete their schooling or who never attended school and thus do not qualify to study at TVET colleges and universities' (DHET, 2013: xii).

The intention as outlined in the White Paper is to offer both formal programmes, including the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC), the Senior Certificate programmes, National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA) and occupational programmes and short skills programmes (refer to Figure 1: A Triad for Service Delivery by Community Colleges).

The range of programmes offered differ from College to College. It is nevertheless quite clear that currently, the situation in terms of programme offerings, is still very far from achieving the objectives as discussed in the various policy documents.

This report will however consider the main trends in terms of the programmes offered, and attempt to establish the link between these and employability, as far as it is possible.

4.3.1.1 Range of programmes currently offered

The expectations created in the National Policy (2015:14) is that 'Community Education and Training Colleges shall be flexible in their programme offerings and include programmes driven by the community developmental priorities, as well as the priorities of the State', which include diverse programmes such as Early Childhood Development, Community Development programmes, Cooperative and Entrepreneurship training, Home-based care, Construction and Auto Mechanics programmes, Information and Communication Technology, Community Health and Arts and Crafts programmes.

However, as stated in the introductory section, the system is built on the old PALC system. The range of programmes offered, as can be expected, is still heavily slanted towards the ABET offerings of the PALC system. In fact, 100% of respondents indicated that ABET courses are offered at their Colleges, and mentioned these first, and by ABET level (ABET levels 1 to 3; GETC), indicating that they were top of mind.

In some provinces, the ABET courses are still fulfilling a very necessary function, but in other provinces, for example the Northern Cape, which is a relatively 'literate' province, their relevance is fading, and the need for skills training is much more prevalent. To be sure, the funding model also influences the Colleges' decisions about programmes, since funding is skewed in favour of ABET, the GETC and the Amended Senior Certificate (ASC), not skills programmes or occupational qualifications.

Some of the Centres nevertheless cleverly incorporated skills training in the ABET courses. A centre in East London, for example, offers sewing skills to all ABET Level 3 learners and computer skills to all Level 4 learners, as part of their standard offering.

Other Centres are seeing a reduction of numbers in the lower levels (ABET 1 – 3), but still have high numbers in ABET 4/GETC. The General Education and Training Certificate

(GETC) is seen to be a link and articulation route to the school-leaving certificate, such as the Amended Senior Certificate, which is a very common offering. The ASC currently fulfils the role of the adult matric, in the place of the new National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA), which hasn't yet been rolled out. It should also be noted that many Colleges offer matric rewrites, where learners offer one or two subject areas where they need to improve to gain access to higher education.

Some of the Colleges have made great strides in moving towards the development of, and even accreditation of, new skills programmes. The Northern Cape CETC has just completed the development of eight new skills programmes, of which some are accredited and some not, to be rolled out at its Centres across the Northern Cape. These include Homebased Care, Early Childhood Development, Doormat Making, Fashion Design, Agro Processing, as well as technical skills such as Carpentry, Welding and Electrical.

Other provinces admit that they still have far to go: The KZN CETC for example, have a brochure with programmes it intends to, but does not (yet) offer. Instead, the brochure reflects the policy intention, but not the reality. As noted earlier, this situation appears to be exacerbated by the current funding regime: 60% of funding is assigned to 'academic' programmes, which means ABET 1 – 3; the GETC and the ASC; 20% goes to credit-bearing skills programmes; and 20% to non-formal programmes such as Sewing; Arts and Crafts, etc.

4.3.1.2 Process of determining programmes to be offered

Some College Principals interviewed could explain eloquently and in great detail, how they determined which skills were most needed. They described how their Colleges have partnered with government departments, municipalities, and donors such as the national Unemployment Insurance Fund, to establish the needs of the local economy, and to determine the skills programmes required in the specific district. They also made frequent reference to the main economic drivers of their own province and related this to the type of skills needed in the particular area.

The Free State Principal further indicated that the Centre Managers are key in determining local needs (of which there are currently 204). It appears that the province's rationalisation plans will go hand in hand with clustering centres around offerings, such as ICT, ECD, etc.

Other Principals admitted that it is difficult to engage with local economies to negotiate for work placements, not least because CETCs are generally not accredited, but learners are encouraged to undertake programmes that will enable self-employment, such as plumbing.

In addition, during recruitment drives, there is a concerted effort to engage and talk about community needs.

However, despite the best efforts of College Principals to identify those skills programmes that will lead to employment, they also admitted that there 'are simply not enough jobs' and as such, some Colleges are focusing their efforts more towards the informal and in particular, township economies, and self-employment. One College Principal (Northern Cape) indicated that the entrepreneurship course (SMME) is compulsory to all learners at the Northern Cape College, as it is expected that they

should be able to create their own employment, using the skills that they have gained from the skills programmes offered.

4.3.1.3 Need for new programmes

In addition to the programmes already offered, as outlined in Section 4.3.1.1, a number of new needs have been identified, following the processes described above.

There seems to be a great need for the new National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA) to be introduced in 2021, as most of the learners have dropped out of high school for a number of reasons, and by all accounts, are very eager to complete their matric qualification so that they could study further.

The challenges with rolling these out were however also raised, which includes qualified lecturing staff and infrastructure, as already mentioned in the introductory remarks. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that many current lecturing staff are not equipped to teach at Grade 12 level.

Some colleges admit that they still focus on the core mandate (the GETC) as originally conceptualised for the PALCs, and that they have to remain mindful of their sources of income.

Other needs identified include the so-called 'matric rewrite', but it is unclear what the CETCs relationship with the DBE is in this regard. The NSC rewrites is seen to be a DBE, rather than a DHET (and CETC), responsibility. Some CETCs nevertheless offer this service, in addition to offering the ASC.

There is also a great deal of interest in offering occupational skills programmes, including those that will build on, and articulate with what is already being offered as 'vocational' subjects of the GETC: Early Childhood Development (ECD); Ancillary Health; Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMME); and Information Technology (IT). A learner at the Gauteng CETC for example, indicated that she is doing the GETC, despite having done matric in the late 1980's, in order to gain knowledge about ECD, so that she can start her own ECD centre.

ECD has also been mentioned as a programme (even as part of the GETC), that enhances employability of learners. Examples were given of ex-learners who are either employed in the sector, of who have been able to start their own ventures. Unfortunately, the converse is also true, in that learners complain that they do not want to take ECD, but there is nothing else for them.

Another of these subject areas in the GETC that could be focused on in the short to medium term, is Ancillary Health. There appears to be a need for furthering learning in the field of Community Health and Home-based Care, and there are already examples of where such programmes have been introduced.

There also seems to be a great need for short learning programmes related to local economies, for example Maritime studies in port cities, Tourism, Hospitality, Catering, etc. As a short learning programme, practical skills such as sewing seems popular in a number of areas, due to the self-employment opportunities that it may bring. The CIE-Thabiso also reported success with the following skills: Welding; Baking/catering;

Merchandising; Computers; Carpentry; Automotive Maintenance and Repair; Permaculture (home gardens), to name a few.

4.3.2 College infrastructure

Almost all respondents raised the issue of infrastructure.

As already explained, the current CETCs have 'inherited' the PALC infrastructure and resource allocations.

This situation has a number of implications:

- The infrastructure used for adult basic education (in other words the satellite centres where the actual delivery takes place), is primarily that of the public schools in the area where the PALC was based. This implies that classes at most of the Centres can only commence after 14:00 in the afternoon, once the public school has closed for the day, even if (which is the case for most of the Centres) the Centre is dealing primarily with unemployed adults.

- This means that in most cases, infrastructure does not belong to the CETC, or indeed, to the DHET. In Gauteng for example, only about half (22 sites) of the 47 CLCs belong to the DHET.

- A serious consideration for learners (who are female by a large margin), is the after hour nature of delivery where women often have to return home in the early evening via public transport, exacerbated by to load-shedding, thereby increasing their safety risks.

- Furthermore, the expectation that the CETCs should be offering occupational qualifications and skills programmes seems unrealistic, as the CLC sites are unlikely to have the kind of infrastructure available for skills programmes in any of the suggested fields in the National Policy (2015), for example building and construction, (bricklaying; carpentry; plumbing, etc.), welding, auto body repair, ICT, catering, and the like. Hence, a respondent laughingly said that the programmes indicated in their prospectus, are 'in the air' (KZN CLC).

- Also, it appears that even basic resources are difficult to come by, for example stationary, consumables, and teaching equipment (such as computers for ICT classes).

- Where CETCs have their own buildings, some appear to be poorly maintained and in need of repair.

In many cases, the distances between the Centres are considerable (for example in the Northern Cape), and the budgets of the Central Offices are not adequate to

cover extensive travelling. This implies that regular visits to all the centres of delivery (satellite centres) are not possible, which naturally affects the ability of the Central Office to monitor and quality assure delivery. The requirement that the Colleges' Centres should provide skills training that would make learners employable, demand infrastructure such as workshops, kitchens, and in many cases equipment, whether technical, computer, or, as witnessed in the Eastern Cape, even sewing machines.

Centres even reported not having received enough text books or learner guides, to continue with their current offering of ABET programmes, which inhibits the successful delivery of these programmes.

A lecturer in KZN consequently lamented that 'the Department has let us down after all the promises they made'.

4.3.3 College capacity (lecturers)

One of the main challenges highlighted by respondents was that of un- or underqualified lecturers (76.92% of respondents raised this issue).

The lack of qualified lecturers who are able to teach on the skills programmes that form an essential part of the proposed offerings of Community Colleges, seems to be a major challenge.

Lecturers were generally reported as older than 40, and at some of the Colleges the majority of lecturers were over 50 years of age. The variety is however sufficient not to cause the same level of concern as is the case in the university sector.

The main challenge seems to be the qualifications of lecturers, who, as previously stated, seem to have been recruited and trained to work at PALCs, and now find themselves in a system that requires a) skills programmes including technical skills, and b) National Senior Certificate (Matric) and other school programmes, for which they are ill-equipped. One Principal noted with sadness that the 'homeland system did not require qualifications' to work at a PALC. More often than not, matriculants were employed to teach (Free State).

As an example, the Northern Cape College reported that the majority of the 165 lecturers at the College hold a Certificate or Higher Certificate that enables them to teach ABET courses, while 42 of its lecturers only have a National Senior Certificate (matric) qualification. The need for upskilling and reskilling is critical for the College to be able to deliver on its new mandate. A total of ten of the 165 lecturers of the College have been selected to attend a more advanced lecturing programme at the UWC. This is appreciated but clearly not enough.

While this study did not focus on the lecturing staff and questions were limited to their age, qualifications, and their roles in respect of determining which programmes to offer, the conditions of service of lecturing staff seem to be a source of concern, as it impacts the effective functioning of the CETCs directly.

With regard to the conditions of service of lecturing staff, the study found that:

- In many cases, despite having taught in the sector for many years, lecturing staff do not enjoy the same privileges as other civil servants (pensions, etc.), because they have been appointed as part-time staff. They are on temporary contracts or fixed-term contracts that are renewed annually. That implies that they do not have job security, nor any employment benefits.

- The working hours of CETC lecturers are limited to four hours per day (based on the fact that most of the Centres run from school premises, where they may only operate from 14:00 onwards) and most do not open on Fridays at all, which in turn impacts their income.

- Another Principal further indicated that the moment lecturers achieve mainstream qualifications, they tend to migrate to other parts of the system due to better remuneration and conditions.

- A challenge related to 'double-dipping' emerged at some Centres, where staff who are teaching at the school that serves as a CLC, are also appointed as part-time staff to teach in the afternoon. Such members of staff are effectively remunerated by both the DBE and the DHET.

4.3.4 Profile of the learners

A College Principal indicated that in his region (Gauteng), the learner profile is as follows: age: 18 to early 20's; Gender: mostly female; Employment: mostly unemployed when enrolling, but will, at the 'drop of the hat' rather take employment should the opportunity arise; majority Black African – 90%; Coloured – 5%; Indian – 3%; White – 1%, - generally not interested in the skills programmes. They register for the GETC or the ASC to gain access to further education (it hasn't been ascertained whether this demographic is the same or similar across the sector).

Although there are some mature adults in the system, most of the learners currently enrolled at the Community College system, are unemployed youth between the ages of 18 and 25, and, in exceptional cases, 16 year olds. One principal was at pains to indicate the CETCs do not intend 'to compete with schools', so they will only accept younger learners when special arrangements have been made.

Most (60% or more) of the learners have some form of high school education, mostly either up to Grade 10 or 11, but dropped out of school before completion of the National Senior Certificate (matric). Where they are 18 years or older, they will be accepted in either the GETC or the ASC.

The traditional (American) view of Community Colleges as a vehicle for lifelong learning and reskilling of adults who wish to make career changes, is therefore out of place. The South African Community College system is in fact a haven for learners who have (recently) dropped out of high school for a variety of reasons, not least of which is the socio-economic context, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic that causes many households to be child-headed. South African CETCs are more akin to 'second-chance' learners, as so many of the learners are seeking to complete and/or improve their school-leaving certificate.

Furthermore, many of them see the CETCs as the last resort, because there were no available spaces anywhere else. Some view the College as a 'hiding place' and while some learners appear to do well, there are also social issues impacting on them, such as drugs (KZN). In the Free State the Principal bemoaned the fact that many of the learners are considered immigrants (from Lesotho), and therefore do not have any rights or prospects.

In addition, it appears that the CETCs are seen to be 'dumping places'. However, it also seems to provide alternatives for learners 'on the fringes'. In KZN, there is an arrangement with Autism South Africa to accept special needs learners.

The one group of learners interviewed by the researchers were representative of the younger demographic, namely young people who viewed the Community College programmes as their passport to employment. Learners interviewed include those who were at the time of the interviews, enrolled in a sewing programme (Eastern Cape).

These learners indicated that they expected this skills programme to open doors to formal employment or their own businesses, and they seemed hopeful and enthusiastic, despite the fact that the Centre only had six sewing machines to share amongst 26 learners, and they had to wait their turn to work on the limited number of machines.

A second group (interviewed in Gauteng), represented a true mix of ages. The female participant is in her 50's, reskilling herself to start a new career. The other participants were male, ranging in ages from 19 to 25 years old, and were all 'rewriters' to gain access to higher university education. They dropped out for various reasons, but all of them indicated that they have been unable to find any kind of employment due to their poor results.

While the importance of including the voice of the learners is acknowledged, it was observed that learners often have had very limited exposure to the range of possible skills that are 'out there'. Their lived experience is often limited to their immediate environment and persons, jobs and skills known to them directly, in that context. They generally found it hard to imagine another world, one where possibilities are more open.

Their unequivocal plea, however, was for 'work experience' as part of their programmes, as some of them have already experienced the disadvantage of inexperience when trying to seek employment – even low-level employment.

4.3.5 Employability and employment opportunities

There does not appear to be any reliable statistics on workplace placements and the number of learners who found permanent employment after the completion of their programmes. This is partly due to the fact that the system is still quite new, and very few learners have completed skills programmes to date, and partly because it is quite hard to keep track of the graduates once they complete their studies, as they often do not have a permanent address or other contact details.

Furthermore, data regarding the employability of learners is skimpy due to the changed mandate (from ABET programmes to skills programmes and occupational qualifications. Colleges also do not generally see tracking as their responsibility, but commented that subject areas such as ECD, ICT and Ancillary Health appear to have the greatest likelihood for future employment. On the other hand, the GETC, and even the school-leaving certificate are not seen to be directly related to employability.

Although the employability statistics of the CETCs are not necessarily reliable due to the challenges faced with tracer studies, the challenges experienced with finding suitable employment is taken as a given.

As noted in the literature review, it is dangerous to take a narrow view of employability as a set of employability skills, without due cognisance to the context of job shortages and economic conditions.

It is clear that the challenge does not only lie in the skills offered by the Colleges but in the fact that there simply are not sufficient workplaces.

Most CETCs do seem to recognise that the employability of graduates cannot rely primarily on the formal economy, but has to focus on the needs or the possible opportunities that the informal economy may hold for sustainable employment. There seems to be a need for skills that will enable learners to start their own small (street-corner) business and become self-employed – these skills include Hairdressing, Catering, and Sewing. Some Centres also make some 'entrepreneurship' or 'business skills' training available, for this reason.

There does however seem to be a reasonable link between learners having attained skills that are relevant to their local economy, even in the form of short skills programmes, and their ability to find employment or create their own employment, in whatever form.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

This part of the report contains the conclusions and recommendations of the research team, based on the findings reported above.

5.1 Conclusion

The study had two key objectives: (1) to make informed judgements about the employability of graduates from the Community Education and Training Colleges; and (2) to make recommendations in terms of identified opportunities for the W & R SETA to impact the current status quo.

The study did however also surface some of the challenges faced by the CETCs, although they may not have a direct relationship to the employability of learners.

The conclusions of the study are as follows:

Government is under immense pressure to effect redress and enhance employability and economic growth by upskilling its previously disadvantaged citizens, and

Community Colleges seems to be proposed as a 'golden bullet' that has to address the upskilling and employability of youth and adults in local communities.

Although the South African Community College sector is in its infancy, expectations for the sector are very high. The Community College sector is seen as a major player in the upskilling of young people with a view to increasing their employability. The Colleges are expected to play a number of important roles, from enabling high school dropouts to complete their schooling, to upskilling adults, and providing entry into other post-school education and training opportunities.

The reality faced by the Colleges is however that these demands are not accompanied by the resources required to fulfil their mandate. There is a serious lack of infrastructure and in particular qualified staff, at all the Colleges.

The employability of students is a complex problem, which includes not only the skills and attributes of the learners that the CETC sector produces, but the stark reality of the lack of suitable entry-level or semi-skilled jobs. It is also a well-established fact that it is very hard to track learners after they leave the College, to establish whether they are in fact employed and the nature of their employment.

While anecdotal evidence suggest that some areas of learning (ECD, Ancillary Health, etc.) are enhancing employability, no real statistics bear this out, nor is the tracking of learners seen to be the responsibility of CETCs.

What is also abundantly clear from the current study, is that the Colleges are not prepared for the task of reframing the PALC system into a CETC system, and that, in order to make a real impact pertaining to the employability of learners, they will have to receive substantial support in two main areas, namely the reskilling and/or upskilling of their lecturing staff, and infrastructure. It should be noted that alongside reskilling/upskilling, improved conditions of service and stable salary scales have to be introduced to prevent a leaking of newly skilled staff into other systems.

Infrastructure and conditions of service are however not viewed as a challenge that the W & R SETA could reasonably be expected to address, and hence the recommendations will focus on the **upskilling/reskilling of lecturers** and **support in terms of the roll-out of skills programmes**, at the Colleges.

Achieving success in the midst of these constraints, requires innovation in the way the work is approached, and tenacity in execution. It also requires support from a variety of sources, including the relevant government departments as well as SETAs and other role-players.

In addition, Community Colleges will only succeed if they remain close to the communities that they serve, in alignment with the principle that education' should originate in and be designed to meet the interests of the community, and be directed to improving its quality of life...' (DHET 2012b:32 – 33).

5.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

5.2.1 Upskilling/reskilling of lecturing staff

The first recommendation pertains to a very serious endeavour to reskill and upskill the CETC lecturing staff, in order to cope with the aspirational demands of government and society as a whole, in terms of skills development and the enhancement of employability. It is acknowledged that the needs of the CETCs in the nine provinces differ sufficiently to not have a 'one-size-fits-all' solution.

The primary need is however in the area of 'technical' skills, which may include a variety of skills programmes, so as to enable training needed in the specific area or region.

There is also a need to equip lecturers with teaching skills. While some have teaching degrees, most only hold an ABET teaching certificate, which may not prepare them sufficiently for teaching and assessing in a more vocationally focused environment. Further, a number of respondents mentioned the need to be upskilled in facilitator, assessor and moderator skills, in keeping with the requirements of SETA programmes.

In addition, one lecturer indicated that they are often 'councillors, and we are not trained for this'. The social issues presented at the CETCs may therefore also necessitate some kind of training that will enable lecturers to deal with a pastoral role (i.e. emotional, social and spiritual support).

It is therefore recommended that the W & R SETA consider the implementation of a major skills enhancement programme for CETC lecturers, in partnership with the DHET and the CETC Principals, as they already seem to have a clear grasp of the skills needs at their respective Colleges.

5.2.2 Support in the development and accreditation of programmes

The second recommendation is that educational and administrative support for the development of new programmes and accreditation of those programmes, be rendered by the SETA.

This need will once again differ from CETC to CETC, however, there are similarities across Colleges and resources may be pooled (for example learning material) to get maximum benefit.

In this respect, the current model followed by the CIE-Thabiso, a key partner of government in the implementation of the CETC system, has to be noted: the CIE-Thabiso namely has a central office that supports Skills Centres with their accreditation and quality assurance, and also continuously builds capacity at the various Centres. This model is tried and tested and has yielded very positive results.

Another recommendation, related to the reskilling/upskilling and accreditation support drives, is to support the emerging initiatives that the CETCs are keen to implement. Mention was made of examples in the Northern Cape, amongst others,

but other, at present at the level of strategic plans, are also noteworthy, and could be taken to scale with the SETA's support.

5.2.3 Support with the identification of workplaces

Thirdly it is recommended that the SETA should assist with the identification of suitable workplaces for the WIL elements of skills programmes, and even permanent placements for programmes offered by the CETCs, and facilitating liaison between the Colleges and the workplace.

In this regard, it is recommended that the regional offices of the SETA each be linked to the CETC closest to them, and that joint efforts to build relationships with industry, be encouraged.

In the same vein, CETCs are seriously seeking to establish partnerships with a host of role players, especially in terms of the identification and implementation of pilot projects that will enable the CETC to iron out any problems before taking programmes to scale.

There are also other SETAs that are already supporting the CETCs (e.g. Health and Welfare; FASSET). It is recommended that the SETAs join hands in these initiatives.

In conclusion

On a personal note, it has been a great privilege to be involved in this project and to submit these recommendations.

We believe that the CETC sector has a major role to play in fulfilling the dream of 'a better life for all' and it was a privilege to be part of that dream, in some small way. This sentiment is exemplified by a comment from a College Principal, namely 'imagine the contribution that we can make when appropriate skills are introduced...'

Researcher: Ronel Blom and Carin Stoltz-Urban (Dr`s)

APPETD

Chief Executive Officer

Ms Cynthia Reynders

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