

South Africa features poorly in maths and science ratings compared to many other developing nations and this has a negative impact on its economic growth and global competitiveness. It is hardly surprising, given South Africa's history, poor school infrastructure and the significant absence of a learning culture.

The lack of a quality maths, science and language base in the Foundation Phase hinders learners from attaining quality matriculation passes in science and maths, without which a number of study and career paths are forever closed to them, resulting in a lack of relevant skills in the country. Research has shown that the problems manifest particularly at two points in the school system: during the Foundation Phase starting from grade R and in the FET phase leading up to matriculation. Any intervention which aims to combat these problems therefore has to begin at the Foundation Phase, where institutional learning has to be developed in mother tongue literacy and numeracy to provide the foundations for mathematics and the acquisition of English language. At the FET phase, attention has to focus on educators as well as learners to ensure that sufficient learners exit the system with quality passes in mathematics, science and English.

Innovative systems and models will be required to speed the country out of the time-lag and to produce a critical mass of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds who matriculate with these subjects. These systems will need to focus both on maths – which itself impacts significantly on science learning – as well as on support learning for maths in areas such as literacy, early numeracy and English proficiency.

JOHANNESBURG

SOUTH DISTRICT I I

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The proposed project, which formally begins in 2007, is funded by the Zenex Foundation. It promises to be quite exciting as it takes a new approach to development in schools. In many past programmes, one of the reasons why they achieved limited success was that the district and provincial levels of government were not directly involved in the implementation of the project. This meant, in effect, that educators and principals held no accountability in ensuring the project's success. This depended, rather, on the commitment of the implementers as well as the

personalities of the people involved.

This new project aims to be different in that the relevant provincial and district representatives have been consulted from conceptualisation of the project and will be directly involved in its implementation. They have been influential in the choice of district, the schools and the focus of the project. It will only be implemented with the commitment from the relevant district officials and school principals and educators. This project will be implemented in Gauteng, Johannesburg South District – D11.

In collaboration with the district, a needs analysis will be done in each school and at district level to determine the level of competency in each school and the areas of focus for that school. The programme will cover all the identified aspects of need, namely, management, science and mathematics and English for Grades 10 -12, and numeracy and literacy for Grades R- 6, with differing intensity depending on the needs.

The project aims to improve the quality of learning and teaching in schools, improve the quality of school management at district, circuit and school levels, increase the number of learners who complete the National Senior Certificate with quality higher grade maths and science passes, and improve management and curriculum systems. Ultimately, it aims to assist participating schools to become centres of excellence on which other schools can model themselves, thereby contributing to improving the wider education system.

ISSN: 1819-6675

Published by:
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December
2006

AN UPDATE ON LEAD PROJECTS

Higher education institutions (HEIs) have a longstanding tradition of teaching, research and service. Of these, service remains the most undefined and the least considered function in institutional policies, planning, and resource allocation. However, in recent years, the spotlight has fallen increasingly on the role of service in higher education, in terms of its contribution to the reconstruction and development of civil society, its contribution to scholarly activity and as a complementary alternative to the marketing of higher education, thus strengthening the mission of HEIs to contribute to the public good. In 1982, the President of Harvard University, Derek Bok, called on universities to function as genuinely civic, socially and morally engaged institutions in order to fulfil their educational mission:

"If we could teach our students to care about important social problems and think about them rigorously, then clearly our institutions of learning must set a high example in the conduct of their own affairs. In addition to responding to its students, a university must examine its social responsibilities if it wishes to acquire an adequate understanding of its proper role and purpose in present-day society".

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Jo Lazarus
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COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION

COMMITTEE FOR RACIAL EQUALITY (CIRE)

Minister of Education
Naledi Pandor

Perhaps one of the major obstacles to integrating community service as a core function of the academy lies in the way 'service' is understood (or misunderstood) and applied within higher education. Since the mid 1980s, discourse and practice regarding community service in higher education shifted from the notion of 'outreach' towards 'community engagement' (CE) and the notion of a 'scholarship of engagement'. The term 'engagement' implies a less paternalistic, more reciprocal and inclusive community-higher education relationship, including teaching, research and service.

Community engagement in South African higher education policies

The White Paper on the transformation of higher education (Department of Education, 1997) sets out broad national goals, and refers to CE as an integral part of higher education in South Africa. The White Paper makes specific reference to the role CE can play in transforming the higher education system, and HEIs are called on to "demonstrate social responsibility ... and their commitment to the common good by making available expertise and infrastructure for community service programmes". The White Paper further states that one of the goals of higher



education is to “promote and develop social responsibility and awareness amongst students of the role of higher education in social and economic development through community service programmes”. The White Paper shows receptiveness to “the growing interest in community service programmes for students” and gave in principle support for “feasibility studies and pilot programmes which explore the potential of community service in higher education”.

The Founding Document (2001) of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) identified “knowledge based community service” as one of the three areas – along with teaching and learning, and

research – for the accreditation and quality management of higher education. Subsequently, the HEQC incorporated CE and its service-learning component into its national quality assurance framework. In June 2004 the HEQC released its Criteria for Institutional Audits, including criteria on service-learning¹ and CE. In November 2004 the HEQC released its Criteria for Programme Accreditation, including minimum requirements for service-learning.

The HEQC audit criteria call on HEIs to have “quality related arrangements for community engagement (which) are formalised and

¹Service-learning is an experiential teaching methodology that combines community service with student learning in a reciprocal manner.

integrated with those for teaching and learning, where appropriate, and are adequately resourced and monitored”. In order to meet this criterion, examples of what might be expected include:

- Policies and procedures for the quality management of community engagement
- Integration of policies and procedures for community engagement with those for teaching and learning and research, where appropriate
- Adequate resources allocated to facilitate quality delivery in community engagement
- Regular review of the effectiveness of quality

related arrangements for community engagement.

Following the release of the CHE-HEQC audit and accreditation criteria there has been a proliferation of interest in and initiatives that include CE in South African HEIs.

Community engagement in South African higher education institutions

Since the release of the White Paper, JET Education Services has been a major force supporting the development of feasibility studies and pilot programmes which explore the potential of community service (engagement) in higher education, as called for in the White Paper. During 1997 and 1998, JET conducted a survey of community service in South African higher education and published its findings in two monographs. Key findings of the survey were:

- The mission statement of most HEIs included the notion of community engagement
- No HEI had a policy or strategy to operationalise the community engagement component of their mission statement
- Most HEIs had a wide range of community service projects

- Most projects were initiated by innovative and socially responsive students and academics and not as a deliberate institutional strategy
- Few projects embraced all three traditional functions of HE (teaching, research, and service)
- Few projects embraced any form of partnership model in their conceptualisation and implementation

the conceptualisation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of pilot CE programmes and to use the data generated through this process to inform higher education policy and practice at a national, institutional and programmatic level.

In July 2000 JET-CHESP convened a meeting of Vice Chancellors and representatives from the Department of Education, the CHE and the South African Universities Vice-Chancellors Association (SAUVCA). The meeting was chaired by the Minister of Education. The purpose of the meeting was to gauge support for CE in SA higher education and to identify key issues to be considered in this work. The following key issues emerged from this meeting.



Nick Taylor of JET with Helen Zille, Mayor of Cape Town and Dr Mala Singh, Chief Executive Officer, Council on Higher Education

- **Purpose of higher education:** Concern was expressed about the overemphasis

on education for the market place and the need for this to be balanced with education for good citizenship. It was suggested that HEIs should revive the notion of civic responsibility through their teaching, research and service programmes.

- **Compliance or serious engagement:** It was suggested that CE should not be optional in South African higher education. However, given the current constraints within HEIs, compliance could be

- In the few instances where projects included teaching, research and service, and where a partnership had developed between participating constituencies, the benefits to community, academics, students and service agencies had been significant.

Building on the results of the survey, JET launched its Community-Higher Education Service Partnerships (CHESP) project in 1999. The purpose of this initiative is to support

counterproductive. Instead, HEIs should be encouraged and supported to take seriously their responsibility to inculcate the notion of citizenship in students through integrating CE into mainstream academic programmes.

- **Add-on or integrated approach:** It was agreed that CE should not be an add-on or purely philanthropic exercise. It should be an integral part of the mainstream teaching and learning and research programmes of HEIs.
- **Academic staff roles and rewards:** The dominant paradigm of scholarship focuses on and rewards teaching and research. It was agreed that if HEIs were to take their reconstruction and development role seriously, their leaders would need to promote, support and reward a scholarship of CE.
- **Opportune moment:** Given the fact that HEIs are currently facing significant challenges in terms of their own transformation, it was suggested that this might be an opportune moment for institutions to reflect on their own mission and purpose and integrate CE into their teaching and research programmes.
- **Resources:** With the current resource constraints experienced by HEIs, it was recommended that consideration be given to the allocation of earmarked funds towards a reconstruction and development agenda within HEIs. These resources should encourage and support the development of academic programmes that engage in the reconstruction and



De Mala Singh, Acting Chief Executive of the Council on Higher Education delivers the closing remarks at the conference

development of poor communities through teaching, research and service.

- **The role of national higher education stakeholders:** Although government should not necessarily drive the role of HEIs in reconstruction and development, government should provide the necessary encouragement, support and direction. The role of HEIs in reconstruction and development should be reflected in the agenda, plans and policies of government. For example, HEIs should reflect their CE agenda in their three-year rolling plans.

- **Leadership support:** For the reconstruction and development agenda to take effect in HEIs, it would need the vocal, visible and tangible support of the top leadership within the institution.
- **Institutional audits:** All HEIs should be encouraged to do an audit of existing CE activities within their institution. This audit would contribute towards a national audit on CE in South African higher education.

As a direct or indirect result of the work undertaken through the JET-CHESP initiative, numerous HEIs have: conducted an institution-wide

audit of CE activities; developed institution-wide policies and strategies for CE; allocated resources towards the implementation of these policies and strategies; established and staffed an office or centre for CE; and, collectively, conceptualised and implemented approximately 250 accredited academic courses that include CE. Together these courses included more than 8 000 students across 39 different academic disciplines. Social issues addressed through these courses included: child and adolescent development; dental technology; entrepreneurship; environmental education; HIV and AIDS; human rights; information technology; job creation; literacy; local government; rural development; school improvement; skills development; small business development; sport and recreation; sustainable construction; substance abuse; crime reduction and violence. All courses were subject to an extensive monitoring and evaluation programme designed to generate data to inform higher education policy and practice at a national, institutional and programmatic level.

Community engagement in national higher education initiatives

Since the inclusion of community engagement in the HEQC's Founding Document in 2001, the HEQC and JET-CHESP have collaborated extensively on advancing CE as a core function of the academy. Based on this work, in June 2006 the HEQC and JET-CHESP published a book entitled *Service-Learning in the Curriculum: a Resource for Higher Education Institutions*

and *A Good Practice Guide and Self-evaluation instruments for Managing the Quality of Service-Learning*. The purpose of these publications is to assist HEIs to develop academic programmes that include service-learning and to manage the quality of these programmes effectively. Other publications currently in the pipeline are: *Service-Learning in the Curriculum: Lessons from the Field*; *Service-Learning in the Curriculum: a Resource for Students*; *Service-Learning in the Curriculum: a Resource for Community and Service Partners*; and *Perceptions of Community Engagement in Higher Education*.

In September 2006 the HEQC and JET-CHESP hosted the first national conference in South Africa on CE in higher education. Speakers included Ms Naledi Pandor, Minister of Education, Western Cape Premier Ebrahim Rasool, Executive Mayor of Cape Town Helen Zille, and Vice Chancellors and CE scholars from Ghana, India, Mexico, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The conference was attended by more than 200 delegates, representing all 23 public and a number of private HEIs in South Africa, community and business leaders and local authority officials.

The overarching goal of the conference was to promote an enabling environment for the conceptualisation, implementation and quality management of CE in South African higher education. Specific goals included: promoting dialogue among senior academics and local authority/ community/ business leaders regarding regional socio-economic development through teaching, learning and research; exploring the implications of CE for HEI governance and management; exploring the potential of partnerships as a vehicle for CE; exploring the potential of CE in teaching and learning; exploring the potential of CE through research; identifying the enabling mechanisms for and key challenges to CE; identifying critical issues for managing the quality of CE; and to identify strategies and develop recommendations for the implementation of CE in South African higher education. A few of the key recommendations emerging from the conference are noted here.



Premier Ebrahim Rasool, one of the keynote speakers at the conference

- **Vision and Mission Statements of HEIs:** It was recommended that the vision and mission statements of all South African HEIs include CE as a core function of the institution.

- **Institution-wide Policies and Strategies:** CE should be embedded in the policies and strategies of HEIs giving expression to the CE portion of their vision and mission and providing the necessary direction for implementation. Policies and strategies should include desired outcomes and strategic objectives for CE. HEIs are encouraged to develop criteria and mechanisms for the inclusion of CE in performance management, staff promotion and rewards systems.

- **Institutional Planning:** CE should be embedded in institutional planning processes in terms of strategic direction, size and shape, organisational structures, academic planning, resource allocation, staff appointments and quality management. CE should be included alongside other academic and financial choices, decisions and trade-offs.

- **Governance, Management and Strategic Positioning:** HEIs should consider establishing a CE Advisory Board that includes representation from community leaders, local government, and the non-governmental and private sectors within their region. This Board should have links to the highest structures of governance (such as the Senate and Council) within the institution. An office or



Professor Frederick Fourie giving his presentation at the conference

centre for CE should be established to facilitate the development and implementation of institution-wide CE policies and strategies. The “strategic positioning” of this office or centre will be critical in shaping the perceptions of the academy and external partners towards CE and in determining its success in achieving its desired objectives.

- **Strategic Partnerships:** HEIs are encouraged to develop strategic partnerships with other HEIs, local and regional government, non-governmental agencies and the private sector. In terms of CE the purpose of these partnerships should be to collaborate on the socio-economic development of their region.

- **Responsive Teaching, Learning and Research:** The teaching, learning and research programmes of HEIs should be made more relevant and responsive to the socio-economic development priorities of local communities.

- **National Network:** Given the proliferation of interest in and programmes that include CE, it was considered timely to create a South African network for CE in higher education.

- **Funding:** HEIs should be encouraged to allocate a portion of their annual budgets to the advancement of CE as a core function within the academy and to mobilise funds creatively through CE initiatives linked to local governments, regional governments, service and donor agencies. Through its audit and accreditation criteria the HEQC has given a very clear signal regarding the importance of CE in higher education. It is important that this message is supported and followed up by earmarked funding through the national Department of Education.

CE has become an important component in the transformation and development of a socially accountable and responsive higher education system in South Africa. The work already undertaken by the HEQC and JET-CHESP has laid some of the foundations for embedding CE as a core function in South African HEIs. The recommendations emerging from the recent conference provide the direction for taking CE to scale in South African higher education.



Mveledzandivho is a school development and support project of the Department of Education and is funded by BHP Billiton through its Development Trust. It is a five-year project which started in 2003 and will run through to 2008. Mveledzandivho aims to improve the quality of learning and teaching in 29 schools. that were selected by the employees of BHP Billiton. The schools are located in six provinces: Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West and Northern Cape. The project demonstrates BHP Billiton's commitment to working closely with government to contribute towards education quality improvement in South Africa.

As an integrated school development and support project, Mveledzandivho focuses on the following areas: management & governance support, curriculum support for maths, science, technology and language of teaching and learning, numeracy and literacy for the foundation

THE MVELEDZANDIVHO PROJECT

*Dina Mashamaite
Divisional Manager
School Development and Support*



phases and early childhood development for schools with Grade R. It also provides for infrastructure refurbishment and the supply of basic educational resources and it exposes learners to youth and social development activities.

During its first years, the project dealt with upgrading of infrastructure and refurbishment of facilities at all project schools, as well as the provision of basic educational resources. Implementation of the school management and governance programmes and the curriculum support work, which began in 2004, is continuing to date in the 28 mainstream schools.

The KaMagugu Inclusive School is supported with educational resources and the presentation of sign language classes for parents and the community. This was based on the need of parents to be able to communicate with their deaf children and to help them with school work. Since the project does not focus on erecting new physical infrastructure, Kamagugu



All project stakeholders from the six provinces were gathered to reflect on the impact of the project



Mr Ncele, Circuit Manager, Mahlabathini, KwaZulu-Natal

Groups meet regularly to ensure implementation remains on track.

Feedback from some of the beneficiaries indicates that Mveledzandivho is making a positive impact

Mr Ncele, the Circuit Manager for Mahlabathini Circuit in KwaZulu-Natal reported that the project has benefited all schools

Inclusive school was supported with the foundation and roof of its multipurpose hall as well as the ramps within the school yard, which addressed some of the school's infrastructure needs.

In September 2005, an Early Childhood Development (ECD) service provider was contracted to conduct recognition of prior learning (RPL) assessments among ECD practitioners in the project schools. ECD practitioners have been placed according to their levels of qualification and, over the past year, ECD training has been implemented. The aim of the ECD component is to ensure that the practitioners are on the required NQF level and are able to provide the learners with quality classroom practices. The provision of educational resources for ECD centres in the project schools is another area that is addressed.

Planning and ongoing implementation of the project is overseen by the Area Working Groups which have been set up in each of the provinces. The Area Working

in his circuit, with the refurbishment of classrooms and provision of chalkboards creating environments that are supportive to both learners and educators. Educators have been skilled to prepare lessons and assessment tasks properly, so learners benefit in receiving well-planned lessons and assessment tasks. Educational resources provided to the schools make teaching and learning much easier and more effective. Special attention is also being given to a new technology programme – a new learning area that was previously problematic to learners and educators.

Mr Wechoemang, the Institutional Support Officer for Mothibistad District in Northern Cape, reported that the attitude of the learners towards education in general is gradually beginning to change due to the intervention of the project. They are now beginning to value education and to view it as a positive aspect of their lives. Educators are beginning to approach their teaching with more confidence. For example, Akanyang educators appear

to be ahead with regard to the National Curriculum Statements and they handle assessment more professionally. The supply of science equipment is beginning to bear fruit as the subject matter becomes more meaningful, practical and interesting for both learners and educators. It is also easier to achieve the teaching objectives when experiments are performed and learners observe the results, rather than their just being taught the theoretical concepts, as was the case previously.

Since the project started, the School Management Teams (SMTs) are beginning to function in a well-organised way, with a vision and mission. They are beginning to 'own' their schools. With



Mr Wechoemang, Institutional Support Officer, Mothibistad District, Northern Cape

the culture of teaching and learning being restored – educators attend classes and learners are beginning to show a lot more interest in education. The School Governing Bodies (SGBs) are showing interest in the affairs of their schools as their roles

and responsibilities have been clearly outlined and discussed with them through the project. Representative Councils of Learners (RCLs) are also beginning to function effectively at some project schools, cooperating with structures such as the SGBs

and SMTs, as they also have a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Late coming has been reduced markedly as a result of the RCLs being involved with disciplinary matters concerning learners.



An English lesson on spelling and reading



A teacher arousing the curiosity of the learners in a science lesson



The Youth and Social Development day in Limpopo Province

This Military Veterans Project is an initiative of the Safety and Security Sector Education and Training Authority (SASSETA) and is funded by the National Skills Fund. The project seeks to "improve and sustain a better life" for military veterans – in the words of Deputy Minister of Defence, Mluleki George, speaking at a government imbizo in the Northern Cape, November 4 2005.

The project entails:

- Adult Basic Education and Training
- Counselling and Returning to Learning
- Non Technical Skills Training Programmes
- Technical Skills Training Programmes
- SMME Development
- Learnerships and Bursaries
- Leadership capacity building for Military Veterans Associations

The project will further support the veterans through work placement, in a bid to help them develop their newly acquired skills and enable them to gain work experience. Those interested in running their own small business will be assisted by the business development support component of the project.

The project is to be implemented at a national level and will benefit 1 500 military veterans (MVs) in total. Although it has been in planning for some time, it only started in earnest in July 2006.

SASSETA MILITARY VETERANS PROJECT

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Implementation and governance

The SASSETA Military Veterans Project is an important national project and, due to the different government departments and agencies involved, it has a complex implementation and accounting structure.

- The National Skills Fund (NSF), which is housed in the Department of Labour, funds the project and provides guidelines and requirements for accounting and governance in the project.
- The Sasseta executive and its board hold the final accounting responsibility for the project.
- The Department of Defence (DoD) and the Service Corps are involved as MVs have to be registered with the DoD to be considered for participation in the project. The DoD houses a comprehensive database of MVs. The Service Corps, a division of the DoD, is also one of the training providers.
- The National Steering Committee for the project is a team made up of representatives of military veterans associations in the country.
- Working Solutions International is responsible for overall project coordination and management.
- A number of training providers are contracted to provide particular services in the various components of the project.

Returning to learning and counselling

JET Education Services (JET) and the National Peace Accord Trust (NPAT) were contracted jointly by Sassetta to provide the 'returning to learning' (RTL) and 'counselling' components of the project. The objective of the RTL component is to prepare MVs to make full use of the opportunities for learning presented by the training programmes and the workplace experience.

JET is responsible for delivering the 2-day RTL course to all project participants, for the project and financial management of this component, as well as for client liaison and project reporting.

The NPAT is responsible for the training of local counsellors, delivery of the Heroes' Journey, and management of consultants and local counsellors.

Progress, lessons and challenges

Community based projects such as this often face challenges in their implementation and the Military Veterans project is no exception.

Communication problems between all major role players have, in some instances, led to cancellations and delays in training. Confirming qualifying military veterans has proved difficult as there are different lists that exist and access to the main database housed in the Department of Defence has been limited. There have also been some problems around the administration of stipends and allowances. While a stipend is being provided to all MVs participating in the project, some MVs wanted to receive the stipends upfront so that they would have money to travel to the workshops and for food for a week or a month, as required. Some of

the participants had to walk or travel long distances to and from the workshop venues.

These difficulties have resulted in fluctuating attendance numbers at the training courses, with no certainty on how many participants will show up at each session.

Despite these challenges, the project is making progress. It is due for completion by end June 2007.

The successful integration of MVs into the labour market is more than just a political imperative; it is an economic necessity. The successful implementation of this project will go a long way in dealing with issues of redress and towards improving the livelihoods and sustaining a better life for all military veterans, as Deputy Minister George has said. 



SASSETTA Train the Trainer workshop in progress