

**New Linkages:
Building Pathways between FET Colleges,
Technikons and Universities in KwaZulu-Natal**

A Workshop to
Facilitate Collaborative Planning and Promote Student Mobility
between FET and Higher Education Institutions

26 & 27 February 2004

Everglades Hotel
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A Collaborative Initiative facilitated by:

**Bronx Community College/National Center for Educational Alliances
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Preface

In South Africa, there are many initiatives to reconstruct—indeed to transform—the education system, post-apartheid. We thought that an important area deserving greater attention was the relationship between further education and training (FET) and higher education (HE) institutions, because for a long time it has been apparent to educationists that serious limitations in the nature of that relationship are having adverse effects on the system as a whole. This disjuncture has led to a number of inefficiencies and incoherences, paramount among these being the lack of articulation between FET and HE programmes and qualifications. It is our view that strengthening the relationship between FET and HE systems can contribute to addressing national challenges in education and training.

We hope that readers of the report will be prompted to reflect on the issues canvassed in the report and assist in both bridging the current institutional divide and building coherence between the sectors—as a means of promoting learning pathways for South African learners.

CEPD and Bronx Community College New Linkages project team
June 2004

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Aids	Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
CAO	Central Applications Office
CEPD	Centre for Education Policy Development
esATI	eastern seaboard Association of Tertiary Institutions
FET	Further education and training
FETC	Further Education and Training Certificate
FTE	Full-time equivalent
HE	Higher education
HEI	Higher education institution
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
RPL	Recognition of prior learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SMME	Small, medium and micro enterprise
US	United States
VSME	Very small and micro enterprise

Introduction

This is a report on the New Linkages workshop that took place on 26 and 27 February 2004. The workshop was designed to facilitate collaborative planning and to promote student mobility between further education and training (FET) colleges and higher education institutions (HEIs) in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

The workshop constituted one component of the New Linkages project being run as a collaborative initiative between the Bronx Community College's National Center for Educational Alliances and the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD), with funding from the Ford Foundation.

The New Linkages project aims to enhance educational opportunities for FET students by fostering greater curriculum articulation between FET colleges, technikons and universities in KwaZulu-Natal. During this 18-month project, FET colleges will partner with technikons and universities. It is expected that pilot grants will allow a number of inter-institutional teams to design and begin implementing joint plans for curriculum articulation that will encourage student movement from one type of institution to another and promote inter-institutional co-operation.

The workshop aimed to achieve four objectives:

1. to provide a better understanding of the strengths and needs of FET students;
2. to provide lessons about current practices bridging educational sectors in the United States (US) and South Africa;
3. to create a platform for agreements upon outcome goals aimed at strengthening articulation between FET and HE curricula; and
4. to provide a platform for the development of one-year plans to improve curricular linkages between FET and HE institutions.

The workshop took place against the backdrop of major reforms currently underway in both the FET college and HE sectors in South Africa. Mergers of institutions in both sectors have been planned to promote the national goals of access, equity, redress and quality. The public FET sector has undergone a merger process of the 156 former technical colleges into 50 new FET colleges. While the geographic spread of campuses has been maintained, it is anticipated that the new colleges will have stronger management and governance systems and enhanced capacity to respond to the education and training needs of the country. Reforms are taking place in the areas of curricula, learning and teaching, quality assurance, funding and management. The HE sector is similarly undergoing transformation, including increased state steering, mergers of some institutions, and the implementation of a new quality assurance system. The mergers of HEIs will in some cases result in a new form of HEI, the "comprehensive" institution: one that offers both technikon-type and university-type programmes.

The workshop sought to complement reforms in both FET and HE sectors by providing a context within which constructive linkages could take place, with implications for curricular articulation, teaching and learning, assessment and student mobility.

KwaZulu-Natal was chosen for the New Linkages project because the province has a history of educational linkages, both within the HE sector itself and across the FET and HE sectors.

The challenge of expanding educational opportunities for disadvantaged South African students by easing transitions between FET colleges and HEIs can be informed by the experience gained by educationists in facilitating student transfer from community colleges to baccalaureate programmes in the US. During the past 20 years, with help from the Ford Foundation, the National Center for Educational Alliances, based at the Bronx Community College, has been working hard to understand and promote inter-sector movement and, just as importantly, to stimulate co-operation between community colleges and four-year institutions. Collaboration has been achieved on a broad scale despite the fact that many American institutions had established their identities and were frequently suspicious of what might be perceived as "turf" incursions. The Bronx Community College's experience in the field and the CEPD's track record in education policy work in South Africa will hopefully be of great value to this workshop and in taking forward its deliberations.

The workshop brought together members of most FET colleges and HEIs in KwaZulu-Natal, and provided a forum for discussion on challenges in developing inter-sectoral linkages, and agreements on ways forward.

Greetings and Welcome – Mr Enver Motala

Mr Enver Motala (CEPD) welcomed all participants to the workshop. He extended a special welcome to Dr Ahmed Bawa of the Ford Foundation, as well as to workshop presenters, Dr John Butler-Adam of the eastern seaboard Association of Tertiary Institutions (esATI), Dr Michael Cosser of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), Mr Edward Sutton of Mangosuthu Technikon, Ms Shelly Barnsley of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and Dr James Greenberg of the University of Maryland. Mr Motala expressed a warm welcome to members of the Bronx Community College team who were the co-facilitators of the workshop: Dr Richard (Dick) Donovan, Dr Carolyn Williams, and Ms Barbara Schaiier-Peleg.

Mr Motala highlighted the complexities associated with the project at hand. He explained that the Bronx Community College/CEPD team had consulted with members of universities, colleges and universities of technology (technikons) prior to the workshop, to get consensus on the importance of the endeavour. Participants had been brought together to develop practical and concrete strategies on throughput, articulation and transfer of students from FET to HE. It was hoped that such initiatives would increase cohesion between the sectors, and enhance institutions' responsiveness to national needs. Mr Motala explained that issues of access, the accumulation of knowledge and the responsiveness of institutions were considered national challenges.

Dr Carolyn Williams (President, Bronx Community College) expressed her gratitude to the Ford Foundation for its support for the workshop. She said that the Bronx Community College and the National Center for Educational Alliances had been involved in partnership work for 25 years, and were proud to be co-hosting the event. She described the workshop as an opportunity to strengthen partnerships for access, success and mobility of learners.

Dr Ahmed Bawa (Program Officer, Ford Foundation Southern Africa) introduced the vision underlying the Ford Foundation's work in South Africa and Africa more broadly. He recognised the importance of the HE sector in bridging the chasm between the continent and the rest of the world in the knowledge economy, building capacity to embark on development trajectories, and building democracy. He explained that the Ford Foundation's Southern African programme has three pillars: building research capacity at both institutional and systemic level; building partnerships between institutions and their communities; and widening access to HE. Dr Bawa contextualised the current workshop's aim of facilitating articulation between the FET and HE sectors as part of the national policy aims to build coherence between education and training and enhance the access of learners to educational programmes. The project could contribute to changing the educational landscape in pursuit of national goals. He said that the Ford Foundation sought to work both with Ministries and Departments of Education and at a grassroots level, to leverage change.

Orientation to the Workshop – Dr Richard Donovan

Dr Richard Donovan (Director of the National Center for Educational Alliances, Bronx Community College) outlined the objectives of the workshop, in allowing participants to:

- better understand the strengths and needs of FET students;
- learn about current practices in the US and South Africa to bridge educational sectors;
- agree upon outcome goals to strengthen articulation between FET and HE curricula; and
- prepare one-year plans to improve curricular linkages between FET and HE institutions.

Dr Donovan outlined achievements in the US in promoting articulation and student mobility between sectors. He linked the objectives of the workshop to the proposed workshop agenda.

An FET Update – Dr Michael Cosser

Dr Michael Cosser (HSRC) delivered a presentation based on both the HSRC's 2001 research study, *Technical College Responsiveness* and later research undertaken for its *Human Resources Development Review 2003*. He said that the Technical College Responsiveness study showed that the FET sector has the potential to contribute significantly to the economy of South Africa. This can only happen if this sector is given adequate focus and if relationships between the sector, the markets and communities are strengthened. At the time of the study, the sector had not been very responsive to the demands of the market and communities, resulting in a significant number of unemployed graduates who neither met the requirements of the labour market nor played an entrepreneurial role in their communities.

Dr Cosser's presentation covered the status quo of the FET college sector, issues arising with respect to FET college provision and articulation, and challenges faced by FET colleges. In examining the status quo, he noted that although the new landscape of 50 merged colleges has been established, the study found considerable disparities in performance between colleges. The HSRC's examination of FET college provision and articulation pointed to policy ambiguities around college provision, particularly in relation to the South African Qualification Authority's (SAQA's) distinction between "general vocational" and "vocational" tracks, and uncertainty regarding quality assurance jurisdiction over such tracks. Furthermore, policy ambiguities were found to exist around school-college-HE articulation in areas such as college provision of N4-N6 programmes and the requirements for the proposed Further Education and Training Certificate (FETC). These findings were particularly relevant to the workshop.

Dr Cosser argued that an important challenge facing the FET colleges is for them to contribute to shaping FET policy through defining FET college roles and demonstrating good practice in integrating education and training. Important roles for the FET colleges in this regard include becoming the primary developers of intermediate level skills, and developing self-employment and very small and micro enterprise (VSME) skills, as well as forging viable FET-HE pathways. A second area of challenge is for colleges to cultivate the relationship between education and work, while a third challenge is for colleges to make optimal use of learner support units to promote gender equity, increase access, provide career guidance, and mount effective HIV/Aids prevention and treatment programmes. Further challenges arise around managing perceptions and building strong management and governance systems in the reconfigured educational landscape.

Panel Presentation on FET/HE Linkages: Past, Present and Future

The panel offered an overview of some successful inter-sectoral initiatives in South Africa and in the US and gave perspectives on how well-planned approaches can overcome predictable barriers in each country. The panel was facilitated by **Dr John Butler-Adam**, Chief Executive Officer of esATI.

Mr Edward Sutton (Mangosuthu Technikon)

Mr Edward Sutton (Department of Mechanical Engineering, Mangosuthu Technikon) delivered a presentation on the bridging programme that the Technikon has run since 1979 for under-prepared Grade 12 students wishing to enter the S1 programme in Engineering. He explained that the Engineering programme does not place emphasis on students' entrance qualifications. In research conducted by the HSRC on students who had been through the bridging programme, no correlation was found between students' entrance qualifications and their subsequent S1-level performance. Mr Sutton explained that the bridging programme has contributed to widening access to under-prepared students, and shows an average success rate of 68%. The bridging course emphasises both content and processing skills, and has the added benefit of providing information on different branches of engineering, thus giving students exposure to important elements of the course they have chosen.

Ms Shelly Barnsley (University of KwaZulu-Natal)

Ms Shelly Barnsley (Assistant Director, Science Foundation Programme, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal) delivered a presentation on the Science Foundation Programme. Started in 1991 with only 32 students, the year-long access programme now boasts 280 students, and is aimed mainly at those who do not meet the minimum requirements for the courses for which they have applied. The course, which includes a counselling component, takes a holistic approach to addressing students' needs, and integrates areas of learning that are traditionally taught separately, such as communication, mathematical competence, problem solving skills and critical thinking skills. Foundational concepts are taught in depth, and opportunities are provided for experiential learning. The programme has a graduation rate of around 50%, and contributes to increasing the university's number of Science graduates.

Ms Barbara Schaier-Peleg (Bronx Community College)

Ms Barbara Schaier-Peleg (Associate Director, National Center for Educational Alliances, Bronx Community College) explained that the Center has been working in partnerships for over 25 years. At the time of its inception, there was very little transfer of students from community colleges to institutions granting baccalaureate degrees. A key lesson that the Center has learned is that real change—in this case, change involving partnerships—should involve individual members of institutions that have partnered; while top-down change is important in developing policy, substantial change can only occur if it touches the hearts and minds of students and lecturers on the ground.

Ms Schaier-Peleg outlined some initiatives that characterise the partnerships developed under the Ford Foundation's decade-long Urban Partnership Program, for which the Center serves as a facilitating partner. Such initiatives include the establishment of comprehensive databases, the development of clearly articulated transfer agreements, and the establishment of a transfer centre to provide a centralised counselling and advisement service for students. Faculty members developed new curricular pathways for students to follow. Ms Schaier-Peleg advocated broad-based partnerships, which could include schools, colleges, universities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and communities. She noted that change takes time, and acknowledged the ten-year support provided by the Ford Foundation.

Ms Schaier-Peleg outlined some other successful partnership programmes, including the Summer Scholars Transfer Initiative and the Faculty Alliance, both of which have been effective in changing attitudes and removing barriers to student transfer. (Further information about these programmes can be found in the *Background Readings* document provided to workshop participants.) Ms Schaier-Peleg expressed the eagerness of the National Center for Educational Alliances members to learn from the South African experiences.

Defining our Goals: New Linkages for Greater Student Mobility

In this session participants examined the strengths and weaknesses of FET college students and the FET college sector with a view to sharing a vision for an FET-HE pathway and developing concrete goals in this regard. Workshop participants held discussions in breakaway groups, and then reported back to plenary.

The discussions in plenary are presented thematically below. They cover a wide range of issues, speaking to matters concerning public perception, the challenges presented by the poor educational backgrounds of students, institutional capacity, the curriculum, communication, and other such issues of importance.

Perceptions of FET Students' Strengths and Weaknesses

Workshop participants identified strengths exhibited by FET students.

Provision of practical skills

FET colleges are seen as strong in the provision of practical skills. Participants argued that, compared to other sectors, colleges are better able to equip students with skills that are immediately employable. This provides FET students with the necessary edge in competing for jobs and in the kind of businesses that require the skills for which FET colleges students have been trained.

Higher levels of maturity

FET students are perceived as mature learners, since the FET sector is seen as providing post-school learning. The alignment of the FET colleges' curriculum with the market further reinforces this perception.

However, the strengths of FET college students are counteracted by an array of weaknesses or barriers to success.

Deficiencies from school education

Members of FET colleges said that many students lack "the fundamentals" (numeracy and literacy). Providers pointed out that they are dealing with deficiencies in provision at Matric level, particularly in Maths and Science. There is insufficient emphasis on these subjects at school level, leading to a lack of capacity amongst students to succeed in these subjects. Many HEIs find the need to provide a bridging year for under-prepared students, with a focus on Maths and Science.

The language proficiency of students in general was a subject of concern for participants from both FET colleges and HEIs. It was argued that specialised programmes such as "English for Business Communication" might not adequately build academic language skills.

Inadequate lifeskills training

A concern was raised that although FET colleges provide students with important practical skills, they seldom address the area of interpersonal skills. Having graduated from college, FET students find themselves within contexts that require them to relate to others and communicate their ideas. It was felt by participants that equipping students in this area would help them function optimally in the world beyond the college.

Lack of career guidance

Participants from both the FET (college) and HE sectors complained that many students receive inadequate career guidance before enrolling in programmes. Career guidance should ideally be provided at school, allowing pupils to select appropriate subjects for their future careers. Students often enrol randomly, depending on the availability of places in a programme, or based on social, financial or geographic factors.

Perceptions of the FET College Sector's Strengths and Weaknesses (Barriers to Articulation)

Participants recognised strengths in the FET (college) sector that could be harnessed in supporting partnerships between the FET (college) and HE sectors.

Closer to the people

FET colleges were said to be much closer to the people than universities and technikons for instance. The location of FET colleges suggests a greater accessibility and a greater degree of responsiveness to community needs than is the case with other educational institutions. The affordability of such colleges relative to other institutions of learning also suggests higher levels of responsiveness to community needs since they are seen to provide important skills to community members at lower costs.

However, there are also constraints to student mobility, including structural constraints, in the FET (college) sector. Several pertinent issues were raised in this regard.

Finance

It was highlighted that many people are financially excluded from FET colleges. Although the FET colleges sector is relatively affordable in comparison to the other educational sectors, some potential students are still not in a position to enter the sector because they cannot afford the fees. It was suggested that more funding should be made available for current and potential FET college students.

Purpose of FET qualifications

It was acknowledged that FET college qualifications serve a number of different purposes. A primary purpose is to provide vocational training for employment. A secondary purpose is to provide more general education and training, for employment or self-employment. The third purpose, to provide access to HE, has received less consideration from both the FET (college) and HE sectors. The fact that there are conflicting or diverse purposes might hinder easy articulation. Some participants argued that, in certain fields where qualifications are highly specialised, articulation would not be possible.

Institutional capacity

Colleges often lack capacity in areas such as research and curriculum development, and this would impact on their responsiveness.

Curriculum development

There was a perception among participants that some of the old learning programmes in FET colleges, e.g. in Engineering, have not altered in the last few years. Curricular development is often top-down, as evidenced by national curriculum frameworks. The N4-N6 qualifications are subject to a national enquiry, as they represent HE qualifications being offered at FET colleges. However, it was acknowledged that the FET colleges have developed a niche in offering these qualifications.

A concern was voiced that HEI departments might seek control over the FET curriculum as a way of guaranteeing "feeder" students into their programmes.

Participants were also concerned that the curricula offered in some cases do not meet local economic demand. Where qualified students cannot find employment, this impacts on demand for the courses from which they have graduated. Some FET colleges are

developing courses outside the core N1-N6 programmes. While such courses could be in response to local demand, they often do not articulate easily with the programmes of other colleges and HEIs.

In some cases the subject combinations taken by FET students do not align with the requirements of HEIs. The N6 is not seen as a marketable qualification, unless students enter that particular trade.

Teacher ability to relate to students

The issue of the relationship of teachers to students was raised. It was proposed that teachers be better equipped in the area of interpersonal skills so that they might relate to students appropriately and treat them equally. It was also highlighted that teachers should address students with the awareness that they have a range of differing intellectual capacities and different strengths. Teachers were said to have a tendency to get impatient with students who fail to perform according to their expectations. Empowering teachers in life-skills was seen as a way of addressing this problem.

Awareness of cultural diversity

The issue of cultural diversity was highlighted. It was argued that FET colleges should reflect the various cultures represented by the student population. Mechanisms should be put in place to ensure "equity" in cultural representation and no one culture should be allowed to dominate other cultures represented by the student population.

Environment of teaching and learning

The environment within which teaching and learning takes place was identified as meriting intervention. The poor environment for teaching and learning that characterises many FET colleges was seen by participants as impacting negatively on the quality of education and training provided. Students often lack important facilities, such as computer laboratories. This situation jeopardises the employability of students from the FET sector compared to students from other sectors.

Share a Vision for an FET-HE Pathway

Participants agreed that successful FET-HE articulation would depend on mutual respect, collaboration and communication.

Concrete Goals to Build or Strengthen Linkages

Participants identified several principles that would inform successful linkages.

Mutual benefit

Participants agreed that the two sectors should work together to consolidate each sector; the FET sector could benefit by accessing research from HE, while HEIs could access the linkages and partnerships (e.g. with industry) established by the FET colleges.

Similarly, it would be beneficial to build co-operation and trust between the schooling sector and the FET (college) sector.

Communication

Ensuring good communication was seen as an important principle in building partnerships.

The vision for an FET-HE pathway also encompassed a review of practices, and recommendations for improvement. Issues identified for attention in strengthening linkages include promotion of mobility through an examination of entrance requirements and notions of equivalence, as well as improved marketing and information dissemination. Issues explored are further detailed below.

Perceptions

Participants emphasised the need to change perceptions—particularly amongst HE role-players—of FET colleges and their students. Participants expressed the belief that in the past many HE sector representatives had tended to hold negative attitudes towards the old technical colleges. It was pointed out that often perceptions were based on inadequate information, or even misunderstanding. For example, while some HE faculty might have been critical of FET college faculty for being inadequately trained, most FET college faculty in fact held both a training and teaching qualification.

Information sharing

Participants saw the need for all institutions to state clearly their entrance requirements for different programmes. Should adequate communication systems be set up, faculty members in both sectors would be in a better position to provide guidance on study opportunities to their students by interpreting such entrance requirements. Promising students in FET colleges could be alerted to opportunities in HEIs, while students unlikely to succeed in an HE programme could be counselled to enrol in an FET programme in order to attain a qualification.

Participants also identified opportunities for joint marketing between FET colleges and HEIs, either at an institutional level or at a faculty or departmental level.

Sharing experience

Participants were enthusiastic about a suggestion that opportunities for staff exchanges be developed. This could range from "guest lecturer" opportunities to collaboration on programmes or learning materials.

Articulation between qualifications and curricula

Some HEI departments had considered the articulation issue, and provided for credit transfer or exemption from entrance requirements based on success in selected FET courses. Participants saw the need for FET college and HEI faculty and support staff as a collective to interrogate the curricula in specific disciplines to ensure horizontal and vertical articulation. Assessment criteria should also be scrutinised. The need was recognised to create an effective system for seamless access into HE. It was suggested that particular attention be paid to N5 and N6 subjects, with such co-operation on curricula taking place at a local level (between geographically close institutions) or

more broadly at a provincial level in specific disciplines. The Electrical Engineering and Financial fields were identified as key areas for co-operation.

While the aim of the workshop was to promote linkages between FET colleges and HEIs, participants said that attention should also be paid to articulation between the programmes of technikons (universities of technology) and universities. It is expected that the HE sector's new comprehensive institutions will lead the way in this regard.

Administrative mismatches

A case was cited where an FET programme could not articulate with an HE programme because it was offered using a trimester system, while the HEI used a semester system. It was seen as important for co-operating institutions to seek solutions to administrative mismatches.

Quality management

The FET college sector has developed and is currently implementing a quality management system, which will enhance the sector's credibility. A recommendation was made that the provincial FET Colleges Best Practices Forum be expanded to include a focus on FET-HE articulation. One way of doing this would be to recommend the inclusion of HE representatives on the Curriculum Task Team.

Sharing of facilities

The sharing of facilities was seen as an opportunity for collaboration for mutual benefit. FET colleges have a much wider geographic spread than HEIs, and could provide facilities for the offering of HE programmes in remote geographic locations. Where institutions possess sophisticated facilities that are not fully utilised, there could be opportunities for cross-sectoral usage under appropriate agreements.

Agents and processes to build linkages

Participants debated whether efforts at promoting linkages should be a top-down or bottom-up process. It was recognised that a top-down process would ensure endorsement at the highest level, and would allow for the establishment of appropriate structures such as task teams to lead the process, and the development of policy. Bottom-up efforts, on the other hand, would see the generation of ideas and new practices on the ground, to be followed by formal approval and institutionalisation of these practices. The emergence of "champions" of FET-HE linkages at both the top and bottom levels of institutions was seen as vital.

The Collaborative Advantage: Principles of Collaboration for Inter-Sector Partnerships – Dr James Greenberg

Dr James Greenberg (Director of the K-16 Partnership Development Center, University of Maryland) built on the preceding discussion by identifying principles underlying successful collaboration between sectors. He stressed that the lessons learned from inter-sectoral partnerships in the US have to be evaluated from a South African perspective; it was not assumed that they were universal.

Dr Greenberg highlighted five assumptions that could inform FET college partnerships: 1) a shared vision; 2) trust between partners; 3) meaningful communication; 4) respect among partners; and 5) mutually beneficial relationships. Thus partnerships should help solve problems that individual institutions encounter. Dr Greenberg pointed out that partnerships can happen between two or more institutions, depending on the complexity of the problem being addressed. In the case of multiple partners, they might form an umbrella body to facilitate the various relationships. Dr Greenberg argued that there is a particular niche for partnerships at the interfaces between educational sectors, with a view to promoting articulation.

Dr Greenberg suggested that partners should seek to draw lessons from local and international initiatives similar to the ones being explored, reflect on shared principles, draw insights from research, and learn from one another.

He also pointed to lessons learned. These include the value of launching partnerships strategically, reconfiguring existing partnerships thoughtfully, and encouraging different kinds of leadership. He explained that it is important to institutionalise partnership work and roles early on in the process, define roles clearly, and sustain a collaborative process through democratic conversations. Institutional measures include the need to determine institutional rewards for partnering, and the establishment of databases and quality management systems to support the partnership. Building a culture of self-reflection and shared learning would allow partners to anticipate the challenges arising from the partnership and develop solutions. He argued that partnerships could shape policy and its implementation.

Participants were referred to the paper by Donovan and Greenberg in the *Background Readings* document.

Keeping our Eyes on the Prize: Assessing Current Practice

Barriers Identified/Predictable Barriers and Current Responses

In this session breakaway groups examined barriers to (curriculum) linkages between FET colleges and HEIs. These were categorised into educational, social, institutional and systemic barriers.

After examining barriers, participants discussed current responses to such barriers, and identified areas that are not being adequately addressed. Proposals for further action to address such barriers were then tabled.

Educational barriers

As discussed in the previous session, educational barriers include students' limited attainments in literacy and numeracy, and inadequate lifeskills training and career guidance. Lack of student support structures and programmes, and incompatible curricula, are also identified as educational barriers.

Current responses include the provision of foundation programmes and student support services. Pre-Tech or foundation programmes often include a literacy or communication component. Foundation programmes are often at the initiative of the receiving institution, and seldom demonstrate inter-sectoral partnerships. Most institutions offer additional language support through language laboratories or language support programmes, although such efforts might not be adequately supportive of the disciplinary specialisation.

Many institutions visit schools or have open days, sometimes in conjunction with business or industry, in order to build awareness of educational options and career choices. It was pointed out that esATI's Central Applications Office (CAO) service in KwaZulu-Natal provides one of the most comprehensive career guidance services available in the province through its annual handbook and its helpline service.

Participants identified the need for faculty in FET colleges and HEIs to meet as disciplinary teams, to examine the content of the curricula and desired learning outcomes, in order to promote articulation. Subject committees could be established and meet regularly.

Social barriers

Social factors that inhibit the movement of students from FET colleges to HE include constraints in geographic access, financial constraints, students' home responsibilities including increased responsibilities in households where caregivers have HIV/Aids or have died, and pressures to earn an income.

Current responses include the establishment of satellite campuses and the facilitating of access to student financial support mechanisms.

Institutional barriers

Institutional barriers to greater co-operation between FET colleges and HEIs include the historic divide between the sectors, negative attitudes, and institutional overload in terms of policy implementation within each sector.

It was argued that the current emphasis on building quality management and quality assurance mechanisms within each sector would promote greater confidence both within and across sectors.

Inter-institutional communication was seen as vital and should ideally include both top-down and bottom-up approaches.

Systemic barriers

Resource constraints impacting on individual students have been examined under "Social barriers" above. Systemic resource barriers relate to inadequately resourced schools, limited infrastructure and facilities at FET colleges and HEIs, structural constraints in student financial aid schemes, and constraints associated with transport or accommodation.

Partnerships between institutions, and the sharing of resources or facilities, have been implemented in a limited number of cases.

Besides systemic barriers based on resource constraints, systemic barriers of an academic nature hinder the flow of students between FET colleges and HEIs. The slow implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is seen as the greatest challenge in this regard. Participants were hopeful that the ongoing development and implementation of the NQF would in the medium to long term ensure articulation of programmes and qualifications and promote student mobility. In the current circumstances, policies and practices on the recognition of prior learning (RPL) are unevenly developed across institutions, and students who have attained a qualification in the FET sector often have to repeat large sections of that curriculum should they enrol in a related programme in the HE sector. Participants referred to this as the "saw tooth" phenomenon.

A further unresolved issue that was discussed is the question of where bridging or foundation programmes should be located. Although these are essentially preparatory programmes for HE (i.e. NQF level 4, or FET programmes) they are typically offered by HEIs themselves as a means of promoting access of under-prepared students into mainstream programmes in support of equity and redress objectives. In the past there has been debate about the possible role of FET colleges in offering such programmes—probably at a lower cost than that incurred by HEIs. However, participants noted that the new HE funding formula does provide limited funding for foundation programmes, and that this will probably reinforce the existing trend of HEIs themselves offering such programmes. The finalisation of the HE sector's New Academic Policy should help to clarify possible options. A situation was envisaged where FET colleges offered such courses in parallel with, on behalf of, or in collaboration with, HEIs.

New Ideas that may Facilitate the Student Journey in Future

In the report-back session, rapporteurs summarised key ideas emerging from the discussions, including:

- emergence of "champions" of FET-HE linkages;
- establishment of partnerships based on recognised principles of trust and mutual benefit;
- promotion of a vision of lifelong learning;
- establishment of formalised communication systems and structures e.g. joint curriculum committees;
- sharing of information about HE options and requirements;
- debate about where bridging programmes belong and how they should be developed and delivered;
- increased sharing of facilities and resources; and
- opportunities for staff exchanges and teamwork to reduce duplication of labour.

FET and HE Policy: Removing Old Barriers

A panel comprising **Mr Frank Ingram** of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture and **Dr John Butler-Adam** of esATI examined the topic.

Mr Frank Ingram (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture)

Mr Ingram gave greetings from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture, and thanked the Bronx Community College and CEPD for organising the workshop. He endorsed the vision of removing barriers between education sectors. He argued that, in terms of South Africa's policy frameworks, there are no boundaries to setting up partnerships to support the mandate of providing quality education to students.

Mr Ingram said that the notion of articulation should be interrogated. He argued against public perceptions that such articulation only means widening access of FET students to HEs, and stated unequivocally that the role of FET colleges should not be reduced to that of conduits to HEIs. He argued that, in reality, the relationship between colleges and HEIs is not a one-way route where students leave colleges for HEIs. He indicated that, through their HE programmes (i.e. N4-N6), colleges could accommodate students from HEIs who, for some reason, were unable to earn qualifications from HEIs, or who were drawn to colleges because of interest in the courses available.

Having strongly problematised a rather linear perception of the relationship between FET colleges and HEIs, Mr Ingram agreed that providing access to HEIs is but one of many aspects of the FET college mandate. Against this backdrop, he argued that the relationship between FET colleges and HEIs merits serious attention, and stressed that such relationships could help to give form to the ideal of lifelong learning. Mr Ingram acknowledged that due to financial and other pressures most people cannot study on a full time basis for any extended period and, given such factors, he argued that the workplace should put in place structures for personal development and growth.

Mr Ingram said that the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture is developing an FET (College) Plan, to be informed by the provincial Growth and Development Strategy. Industry plans for training will be guided by these documents. In addition, there is a significant demand amongst communities for skills centres. Although he welcomed new partnerships between colleges and HEIs, Mr Ingram cautioned that the harsh reality in the province is an urgent need for partnerships between colleges and *schools*, because the latter are often poorly equipped, and could benefit from partnerships with FET colleges.

He commended the harmonisation achieved through the college merger process, saying that it had brought former black and white colleges together in terms of culture, language and practice. He also pointed out that the college sector in the province had expanded rapidly, moving from 15 000 full-time equivalents (FTEs) to 75 000 FTEs in the space of seven years.

Mr Ingram suggested key issues for consideration when developing partnerships, including:

- the need to interrogate barriers;
- the importance of advocacy;
- promotion of RPL;
- consideration of the impact of the new FETC;
- appropriate modes of delivery;
- examination of cost factors in broadening access; and
- research on the age profile of students.

He said that, for the New Linkages project to work, it would be important to package new programmes and examine teaching and learning. Initiatives should fit in with national mandates such as the Human Resources Development Strategy, quality assurance measures and curriculum frameworks, and institutional plans.

Dr John Butler-Adam (esATI)

Dr Butler-Adam explained esATI's aim as being to solve problems and launch new ventures through co-operation among HEIs in the KwaZulu-Natal region. While esATI would not replace the role of the Bronx Community College and the CEPD in this initiative, the association was able to offer advice and insights based on its own history of partnerships and co-operation.

He acknowledged that esATI had experienced failure in some of its attempts. However, there have been significant successes, such as the Women in Research and Women in Frontline Management programmes, and in the establishment of the CAO. Now in its sixth year, the CAO offers prospective students the advantage of a central application covering six choices of institution and/or programme, for the cost of one application fee. The office maintains an extensive database of every course offered in the province, listing entrance requirements and providing information on bridging programmes. The office annually publishes a handbook on entry to provincial HE programmes, with 350 000 copies distributed to schools, colleges and individuals. In addition, the CAO has a call centre, with counsellors offering information or advice in five South African languages. The database of applications serves as a valuable research tool, providing insight into the cross-section of applicants.

Dr Butler-Adam said that esATI is going from strength to strength, and is evidence that partnerships can and do work.

The Workshop Conclusions: Development of Inter-sectoral Curricular Plans

This session, facilitated by **Mr Enver Motala** (CEPD) and **Dr John Butler-Adam** (esATI), saw the culmination of the workshop in the drawing up of concluding agreements. It was understood that the reports from the various interest groups would represent the concrete outcomes of the proceedings and that they would give rise to processes that would be taken forward between participants with the assistance of the Bronx Community College and the CEPD.

Participants broke into interest groups to discuss the development of inter-sectoral curricular plans or other forms of inter-sectoral linkages. Several disciplinary groups were formed, namely Engineering, Humanities, Commerce, Health and Agriculture. In addition, the principals of several colleges chose to form a senior management group, to examine how senior management might foster linkages. Groups reported back to plenary on their discussions and proposals for inter-institutional action plans.

Engineering

The Engineering group identified three areas for collaborative action, as follows:

- It would be practical to devolve orientation programmes, rather than access or foundation programmes, to FET colleges. This would constitute a valuable contribution to the discipline, as the colleges could help filter students into HE or skills programmes as appropriate. It was suggested that a formal meeting be called, with representation from Engineering faculties of every FET college in the province and from the HEIs.
- The group noted existing linkages between technikons or universities and FET colleges, and proposed developing such linkages further. In addition, some linkages between the old technical colleges and HEIs that had fallen away in the college restructuring process could be resuscitated with the new FET colleges.
- There was a proposal for joint marketing and dissemination of information on Engineering programmes to secondary school students, as a form of career guidance.

Humanities

The group agreed to meet the following week, to undertake conceptual planning. It was hoped that a proposed joint action research process might provide important insights into articulation issues, and lead to agreements on mainstreaming, credit transfer, RPL, assessment and sustained partnerships. A lower-level small, medium and micro enterprise (SMME) course was seen as one possible area for articulation with HE programmes.

Commerce

The group suggested that most linkages would emerge between technikons and FET colleges, although, in the longer term, the FET colleges could establish linkages with universities. A need was identified for systemic mechanisms—including the development of credit transfer or exemption systems—to promote the access of FET

college graduates into HEIs. The group also identified the exciting potential for both staff and student exchanges, which would promote closer collaboration and have a positive impact on institutions that entered into partnerships.

Health

The group proposed two projects:

- The first proposal was for a generically-oriented project, to bring together representatives from HEIs to serve on the existing provincial FET Colleges Best Practices Forum Curriculum Task Team. This would allow the forum to focus on articulation issues including credit transfer, bridging programmes and RPL. An initial focus on the Health disciplinary area could in the long term extend to all disciplinary areas.
- The second proposal focused on Somatology and Cosmetology disciplines. Four goals would guide the inter-sectoral initiative: an access goal, an articulation goal, an information goal, and a preparation goal.

Agriculture

The group identified some existing patterns of transfer of students from FET and Agricultural colleges to HEIs. However, graduates of FET-level programmes do not always meet HEI programme entrance requirements. Some institutions have existing curriculum and linkages units that are responsible for examining curricula and promoting articulation. It was proposed that college curricula (often based on unit standards) be sent to receiving institutions to assess the responsiveness of the courses to their requirements. Other areas that could receive attention were the accreditation of assessors, and RPL.

Senior Management

Several college principals and other senior managers met to examine the institutional barriers to articulation between FET college programmes and programmes of the HEIs. This was seen as important because institutions need to provide top-down as well as bottom-up leadership in building linkages between the sectors. The group proposed to meet the following week to pursue the discussion.

Meeting of Workshop Facilitators and Convenors

The workshop facilitators met convenors of the respective groups, to offer support in their development of concrete proposals for inter-sectoral linkage projects. Convenors were asked to take national systems, such as qualification and accreditation systems, into account when developing their projects.

Information on the processes to be followed in developing and submitting proposals was contained in the *Participant Manual* and additional documentation supplied.

Thanks and Closure

Mr Enver Motala (CEPD) thanked workshop participants for an extraordinarily useful two days' of discussion. The workshop had drawn together key people who worked in the education system across a diversity of FET and HE institutions in the province. There had been a lively discussion, personal relationships had been established, and the groups had come close to developing concrete ideas for inter-sectoral linkages. He re-iterated that the Bronx Community College and CEPD members would like to take the New Linkages project forward, in collaboration with institutional members.

Mr Motala thanked the speakers, facilitators and rapporteurs for their contribution to the workshop. He thanked the CEPD conference organisers for their effective planning of the workshop. He also thanked the Bronx Community College members for their vision and collegiality in developing the New Linkages project.

Dr Carolyn Williams (President, Bronx Community College) thanked participants for the openness of the discussion and the achievement of the workshop objectives. She thanked everyone who had made the workshop possible and contributed to its success. Dr Williams noted that the Bronx Community College members were richer for the experience, and would share their insights with others in their sector.