

Submission to the Minister of Higher Education

Proposal for Action

Adult education capacity in higher education institutions – redressing capacity attrition and galvanizing their support role

Introduction

1. At the meeting of the Minister of Higher Education and Training with the Post-schooling Task Teams on 23 October 2012, the Minister expressed his concern at the past and current attrition of higher education based adult education centres and requested a proposal for action on what such centres would do as a long term resource base for research, practitioner and curriculum development and other activities.

The need for adult education capacity in higher education

2. This proposal does not seek to elaborate in detail on the challenges to adult education provision contained in the *Green Paper for post-school education and training* and in the *Final report* of the Task team on Community Education.
3. In summary, the *Green Paper* proposes policies that, for public adult education, will see a massive expansion in quantity (a 300% increase in proposed) and improvement of quality. This transformation will *inter alia* require the maximum use of existing adult education capacity in universities and elsewhere for policy, planning, practitioner development, teaching and learning materials development, monitoring, evaluation and research. They will be expected to provide considerable, and indeed enhanced support, for Community Education and Training Centres as well as practitioner development.
4. The *Final Report* of the Task team on Community Education recommends that the post-schooling institutional framework includes a third tier alongside those of higher education and FET colleges, namely that of Community Learning Centres (CLCs). These CLCs would incorporate the existing Public Adult Learning Centres, provide support to the delivery of Kha Ri Gude learning network programmes, run restructured literacy and ABET programmes, and offer the GETC, the still to be initiated National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA), as well as vocational and occupational courses and skills, and an envisaged Vocational education orientation programme. Anchor Community Colleges (eventually one in each municipality, initially one in each province)

would provide support and assist with the institutional and academic development of the CLCs. It is envisaged that the target enrolment of youth and adult learners in Community Learning Centres and Community Colleges would be one million people. The report specifically states that:

The training of staff working in CLCs therefore requires an expansion of centres within universities currently offering adult educator training programmes. More HEIs must establish Centres for Adult Education who could serve the needs of CLCs in the different provinces. The need for such units is in line with the proposals in the Charter for Human and Social Sciences.

and

The CLCs ... must also establish strong links with University Adult Education Centres, to help with the development of the sector, research and monitoring and the training of adult and popular educators.

5. Tasks that need to be done by Centres for Adult Education within Higher Education institutions include:

- Policies and regulations to be developed for the new tier
- Implementation plans for the development of the new Community Colleges and Community Learning Centres and strict monitoring and evaluation of the piloting phase tied to a research project so that curriculum development and institutional expansion can be based on a strongly researched base
- Massive and rapid curriculum and materials development
- Practitioner training and upgrading (and the appropriate curricula and materials to aid this) (and the development of clear career trajectories for adult educators)
- Research related to the above and to the mapping of local communities to determine the optimal interaction between the envisaged education and training and the local economy and the human needs of the population
- Urgent research into why the Kha Ri Gude adult literacy campaign has been so productive compared with Public Adult Learning Centres and why its success has not led to throughput into adult education centres.
- Initial oversight by local university adult education of the setting up process of the new institutions (Community Colleges and Community Learning Centres)
- Build leadership and management capacity for proposed centres/colleges.
- Input both direct and virtual by adult education units throughout higher education to a new community/adult education institute (either independent or a substantial sub-section of an Institute for Vocational and Continuing Education).
- Design of effective EMIS and Monitoring and Evaluation systems for the new tier and the analysis of the data that comes into them.

- Need for tie in with Kha Ri Gude (which though it has been immensely successful) has not led to throughput into adult education centres and it has never had the budget to commission research (for example into why it has been so productive compared with Public Adult Learning Centres).
6. In supporting the development of practitioner training for the new Community Learning Centre system there is a need for some kind of dedicated funding scheme for adult educators to obtain/upgrade qualifications (along the lines of the Funda lushaka scheme for school educators) as well as attention to the current problem that though there are currently national recognised adult education qualifications (offered by universities and registered with SAQA), they are not always recognised for employment or REVQ purposes by provincial education departments and other government departments.

The urgent need to redress the attrition of adult education support capacity in higher education

7. In the period of the late 1970s until the mid-1990s a number of adult education units, centres and departments were built up in South African universities. Although this obviously required the support of the respective universities, much of the growth their capacity and impact was not funded directly by the universities but from self-generated income (such as through fees for extra mural programmes for the general public) and from donor funding and research contracts that formed part of the aid given to the broad anti-apartheid movement within South Africa.
8. Many of these units gained a reputation of being some of the best university-based adult education centres in the world. Prominent amongst them were the units at the universities of Cape Town, Western Cape, Witwatersrand, Natal (later KwaZulu-Natal), Transkei (later Walter Sisulu), and the North (later Limpopo). Many of them played a significant supportive role to the mass democratic movement in the struggle years of the 1980s (particularly at Natal and the Western Cape) and they also played a role in the pre-democratisation education policy option initiative, the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI). The Centre for Adult Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal has played a significant role in policy and planning of adult education and has pioneered the sue of the National Professional Diploma in Education for upgrading FET College lecturers' teaching qualifications. These units have also played key roles in what universities now called community service and/or engagement. The staff in these units enhanced the value the role of universities as important public spaces that nurture critical citizenship and democracy.
9. The period after 1994 provided great possibilities for growth and expansion of adult education, as proposed in various documents, programmes and projects including the *Multi-Year Implementation Plan for Adult Education and Training* (1997) and the Nationals Skills Development Strategies. Unfortunately, due to a range of negative

circumstances in the post-1994 period, most of South Africa's higher education based resources for youth and adult education (supporting literacy and adult basic education, worker and trade union education, through to FET College lecturer training and upgrading) have been downgraded and undermined within the universities.

10. Since the latter part of the 1990s, the support given to these units has withered and they have suffered the following debilitations:
 - Internal university restructurings have seen the organisational integrity of many of these units destroyed as they have been merged or incorporated into other schools or departments and asset stripped of key staff (largely into conventional education masters and doctoral studies because of their income generating capacities for the universities).
 - Mechanical funding formulae based on regular formal university student enrolments (which did not take into account the role these centres for adult education played in non-formal education and community engagement) reduced their size (as they were "not profitable" or "paying their way"). The failure of the Public Adult Learning Centre system to grow and provide career paths for new adult education professionals played a part in this decline.
 - Donor funding dried up as foreign donors (understandably and correctly) redirected their aid to the new democratic government or to other more needy countries.
11. Five examples of the damage done to this national resource are the fates of four of the most prominent centres.
 - At the University of Cape Town the Department of Adult Education and Extra Mural Studies was closed. A few relict staff serve in a unit devoted to Higher Education Transformation.
 - The University of the Witwatersrand closed its Department of Adult Education and its Centre for Continuing Education.
 - The University of South Africa closed its Institute for Adult Basic Education and Training (which had trained nearly 80 000 ABET practitioners many of whom form the bedrock of the successful Kha Ri Gude literacy campaign and engaged in many partnerships with the state, for example in training Community Development Workers), though its staff were incorporated into a College of Education school.
 - The University of KwaZulu-Natal closed the School of Adult and Higher Education, and the Centre for Adult Education's current status is obscure and seemingly restricted to some non-formal work. Existing posts, such as one devoted to non-formal work in African languages materials production has been identified by university management as "no longer required".

- At the University of the Western Cape, the Centre for Adult and Community Education (CACE) was absorbed into a Division for Lifelong Learning (mainly focussed on formal university provision) and is about to close as a unit.
12. The proposed enormous expansion of direct youth and adult education provision will need substantial support from the currently university based expertise in adult education policy, curriculum, materials development, research, and, above all, practitioner training – yet is it being dismantled. The existing resource will need to be re-galvanized and enlarged if it is to perform the role identified for it in the *Green Paper* and Task Team *Final Report*.
 13. We suggest the following mechanisms to assist in this re-galvanization:
 - a ministerial advisory notice request, addressed to to institutions of higher education as well as the National Research Foundation requesting them to ensure that the surviving capacity in this field does not suffer further attrition but is preserved and enhanced, to assist in the Ministry's endeavours to transform the field of post school education and training (and that at the very least a moratorium be placed on any further attrition of the adult education base at South African universities).
 - that such a moratorium be backed, if required after an analysis of the costing of such adult education centres in the universities , by the ringfencing of a proportion of the subsidy given to universities, specifically for this purpose. The funding of these ringfenced amounts could be sourced from the National Skills Fund.

A consultation with university adult education centres

14. In 2011 adult education staff at higher education institutions around the country met and resolved to set up an association to further higher education's role in supporting youth, adult and community education in the country. The Minister is encouraged to meet with representatives from this body, particularly in relation to research capacity and the need for a national initiative, as soon as possible after the publication of the report of the Task Team on Community Education and Training Centres.
15. As a preliminary to this, the members from the Task team drawn from Higher Education institutions be authorised to hold consultations in three places (at a central university site in Cape Town, Durban and Pretoria) to discuss the findings of the Task Team and prepare them to develop their individual action plans prior to the meeting with the Minister.