

Topic: Transformation of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) into Community Education and Training (CET)

CET CENTRE MANAGERS EXPERIENCES OF THE MERGE OF EXISTING CENTRES

Mr Wee

Programme Director

Ladies and Gentlemen

Warm greetings from the Community Education and Training sector!

I am deeply humbled and honoured to be invited in my capacity as Acting Principal of the Gauteng Community Education and Training to Unisa for a seminar on experiences of the merge from ABET into the Community Education and Training College.

1) Introduction

Adult education in South Africa has undergone tremendous accelerated change from the traditional concept of “night school” to Community Education and Training (CET). One of the highest priorities in the post-school system is to improve the quality of teaching and learning in seeking to address the triple challenges of **poverty, unemployment and inequality**. This would address those who do not qualify for admission to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges or Universities. The **Gauteng Community Education and Training College (GCETC)** is a new type of institution established on 1 April 2015. GCETC represents a third tier of institutions under the auspices of DHET alongside Universities and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges.

Since 1994, adult education has been at a directorate level in both national and provincial departments. Yet we estimate that in terms of the 2011 Census, there are 18 million South Africans who need adult education and training of one sort or the

other. This is larger than our schooling, university and TVET College systems combined and DHET established a CET branch with a dedicated DDG: CET to address the challenges in the CET sector. I am glad to announce that since 1 April 2016, Dr EB Mahlobo is our Acting DDG: CET.

The mandate is to achieve an effective post-school education and training system, to break the back of adult illiteracy, provide second chance opportunities to young people and adults who did not complete secondary school and provide flexible, lifelong and continuing education in communities.

This mandate is driven by the vision in the White Paper for Post-School, Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) Development Strategy, the National Development Plan (NDP), Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF), the New Growth Path, the Industrial Policy Action Plan, the Human Resources Development Strategy for South Africa 2010-2030 and South Africa's Ten Year Innovation Plan.

It is with this background that the GCETC seeks strategies that will increase access, improved quality and relevance, diversification and integration, mobility and innovation. The target is to attract 92 000 full time students with an average success rate of 50% within our institutions until March 2020. The central tenet of such commitment is to address the needs of our out-of-school youth and adults, and generally to ensure that the College curriculum responds to the South African socio-economic landscape.

The GCETC can meet the challenges of educating the young adults and ensuring that they secure a place amongst the winners with smooth integration into the global economy through the:

- provision of quality education to raise community awareness;
- mobilization of resources;
- introduction of gradual community educational programmes;
- promotion of a culture of excellence in education and training in our communities;
- integration of teaching and learning with community development ;

- promotion of sustainable programmes;
- increase capacity building amongst governance and student support;
- fostering of sound partnership with the business sector for additional funding especially for skills/vocational and non-formal programmes.

Leadership, management, and support to staff and students with innovative teaching and learning strategies are monitored and espoused by an inclusive operational plan to enhance students and staff performances. On-going engagements and dialogue on issues of community needs are encouraged with a view to promote informed educational policies and programmes guided by global socio economical demands. To make a significant impact in this sector, there is a need in the CET sector **to think globally and act locally!**

2. BEFORE MIGRATION

In Gauteng there were 47 public Adult Learning Centres, who were established under the Adult Basic Education (Act 52 of 2000). We had 47 Centre Managers who were responsible for managing the day to day running of centres. The centres were governed by Interim Centre Governing Bodies. The main centres were further divided into 312 satellites (learning sites).

Learning Sites: The learning sites were headed by a supervising Teacher who worked hand in hand with the main centre managers in terms of reporting the needs and developments of the learning site. Each centre was responsible for managing finances/ budgets and could enter into contracts with different service providers for : photocopiers machines, telephones, internet, maintenance and many other things that needed attention.

Districts: Each centre was attached to a district office that was responsible for curriculum delivery, Human resource management, and examination and assessment management.

Head Office: The Head office AET unit was responsible for policy development and implementation, monitoring, Human Resource and Teacher development and Skills programmes development

On the 1st of April 2015 (**AET**) all 47 centres in Gauteng were merged into one college officially migrated to the department of higher education. Nationally 9 pilot community learning colleges were established under the CET Act of 2006 with one Council.

3. CURRENT CHALLENGES

3.1) Curriculum Needs vs Staff Qualifications

The College is a new type of institution catering mainly for those who do not qualify for admission to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges or universities. The Community College prepares students for the labour market or for self-employment as well as offering the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC); National Senior Certificates for Adults (NASCA) and General Senior Certificate for Adults (GETCA), as well as the National Senior Certificate (NCS) to support candidates who were not successful in the NSC during their schooling. We do not cater for NATED 550 anymore.

The challenge is that we have an oversupply of lecturers who are qualified for GETC qualification and the majority of our students (65%) are registered for the FET band. Shortage of lecturers to teach gateway subject e.g. Mathematics, Mathematics Literacy, Science, Life Science and Accounting just to mention a few does not teach long in our sector due to unfavorable conditions of services. This contributes to our high dropout rate and low pass mark in these subjects. It is envisaged that conditions of services which is currently under severe pressure will be finalized by the end of this year.

To make matters worse a lot of former district curriculum officials have either been transferred or have resigned because of the uncertainty in the department of higher education; subsequently leading to little or no support for curriculum delivery at centre level. This has an impact on the results. The exam unit is still

under the department of Basic Education which means the centre must still report to the Basic Education which has created a lot of its own confusion to handle.

The skills programmes have not been implemented due to lack of infrastructure, capacity of SDF's and resources (machinery) in the centres. The partnerships with TVET were coming on very well until we suffered budgetary constraints because the TVET themselves do not have some accreditation for some of the skills programmes we needed.

3.2) FINANCES:

The financial function has been taken away from Centre Managers and is supposed to be administered by the College. However, the Finance deputy principal (CFO) position has not been filled, all duties are currently being performed by the department of DHET who in return have given it to TVET colleges to administer on a 5% commission. The responsible TVET colleges are not performing in unison due to lack of synergy in their procurement policies. This has resulted into serious procurement problems for different Community learning centres, and has left a lot of frustration in performing the day to day duties. E.g. Major repairs take about 3 months to be attended to. The issue of LTSM has not been finalized in some centres because of lack of understanding of the Publishing Industry and usage of individual publishers. For instance, some centres would order few copies or one copy from this Publisher and another one from a different Publisher – Publishers cannot go on print for a copy or few copies and later engage in the same process of printing copies that have already been printed; it is not cost effective for them, they are running businesses and cannot afford to work at a loss.

It is envisaged that the Academic, Finance, Corporate and support staff positions will be filled by 1 August 2016.

3.3) TRANSPORT

Centre managers are not happy with the tariffs implemented by the council because they are using their own cars to perform office duties which only reimburse them for kilometres travelled, without considering wear and tear and insurance. The managers recommend that centre cars and buses should be purchased to perform such official duties since they have to travel broadly too far off places and terrible pot-holed streets to visit their learning sites and at times to ferry their staff to capacity building workshops.

4. GENERAL REMARKS:

- 4.1) On the whole one can safely say we moved sooner than the systems were in place, because Change Management principles have not been adhered to. Our merger seems to have been more of a political point than service delivery for transforming the South African's socio-economical, educational and self-sufficiency.
- 4.2) The merging of 47 centres and 312 satellites with 89 000 students and 2200 lecturers into one pilot college is impractical and has huge implications for curriculum management and delivery.
- 4.3) The fact that there is no college infrastructure is discouraging in the achievement of the vision of the college.
- 4.4) Lack of support of different structures e.g. the council needs to be improved.
- 4.5) Centre Managers, SRC, lecturers, PS Staff, Regional and Examination staff needs workshops on their new roles and responsibilities in the CET sector.

I hope I have tried to clarify some of the issues that continue to haunt the CET institutions which are pivotal in trying to address the country's triple challenges and push back the frontiers thereof. It is only in confronting these aforementioned challenges head on can we safely say that we are on the right track in ensuring that those left behind in our education system are catered for so that they take their rightful place within society.

Despite these challenges our task today is to work effectively and efficiently and to lead a new breed of students towards the attainment of skills, knowledge and confidence which would embody the finest in human development nurtured on the system of community education of the most advanced societies. We therefore believe that it is our moral duty to contribute to the building of a critical mass of well-educated men and women who are committed, responsible and concerned about the development of South Africa in Gauteng.

Nothing solid can ever be built on the shaky and precarious ground of ignorance and obscurantism, especially in the increasingly complex world we live in today, characterised by the ever breath-taking technological innovations and challenges. As the saying goes “only people can create wealth”. GCETC is meant to be a beacon of hope and is committed to provide a safe haven and a conducive environment for our out-of-youth and young adults who need a second chance in life. Therefore, we believe in promoting community education through the established GCETC.

I thank you.