

Community College Policy Design Evaluation

Literature Review

This review of literature on community colleges and equivalent institutions looks at their purpose, their conception and policies relating to them, their institutional design and their implementation. It is in five parts:

1. Rationale for systems for meeting the educational needs of youth and adults
2. What is a “community college”?
3. Development of and variability in community college system design
4. Common implementation characteristics of community colleges
5. Impact of community colleges and new policy directions

The literature considered focussed on what could be seen as useful in the development of a **new and effective system of adult education/lifelong learning** which has the characteristics of having the necessary flexibility, multiple access points, dedicated institutions and strong differentiation to meet the multiple needs of adults and youth. In compiling this review, use was made of the substantial international literature review compiled by the Ministerial Task Team on Community Education and Training Centres (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2012a). Given that the purpose and context of that literature review is very similar to this one, some of its key findings have been cited where appropriate.

In addition, the sources for the Task Team review were re-examined for the purposes of this review.¹ Furthermore, a wide variety of other printed and internet sources were consulted. The list of references attests to the range. The voluminous literature on the North American community college systems somewhat dominates the discourse. Wherever possible information from other countries is cited.

It needs to be recognised that, in many countries, community colleges and other further education institutions developed organically over a long period of time and not by policy directive and subsequent implementation plan. Nowadays actual state policies relating to these institutions mainly revolve around funding (and accountability measures relating to that funding).

¹ It looked broadly at the policy and contextual frameworks and environments that inform and impact on adult and youth education and their institutional settings. It focussed on developments the United States of America, the Scandinavian countries and South Korea (among the highly developed countries), Brazil, Russia, India, and China (the so-called BRIC countries) and on Botswana, Cuba and Venezuela (as developing countries).

1. Rationale for systems for meeting the educational needs of youth and adults

The literature review of the Task Team (DHET, 2012a) comprehensively covered the rationale for placing emphasis on a comprehensive youth and adult education sector. Points made by the Task Team are summarised below:

- Youth who are “Not Employed or in Education and Training” (the **NEETs**) are the subject of growing international concern because of their rapidly increasing numbers. From a somewhat narrow and conservative perspective, NEETs are seen as a potential source of political and economic instability.
- However, latterly, the rationale internationally for a comprehensive **youth and adult education sector** highlights the evidence that youth and adults of all ages benefit from being literate and becoming better educated as they are able to improve their life chances, standards of living, and occupationally-based social status and are more able to protect their health, including avoiding sexually- transmitted diseases. Finally they are better able to take care of their own children, laying greater emphasis on their continuing in schooling. At the macro level, estimates of the costs to countries of illiteracy and under-education (in terms of lost productivity) have generated astounding figures for the annual loss to the GDP: Ecuador and the Dominican Republic (US\$25 billion), the State of São Paulo in Brazil (US\$209 billion) (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2010, p. 102), and South Africa (US\$68 billion) (Gustafsson *et al* (2010, p. 4).
- There are however differences between poorer developing countries and developed and rapidly developing countries. Generally, adult education policies in the former tend to **focus on literacy and basic education**, as their schooling systems do not encompass compulsory secondary schooling, or in some cases even compulsory primary education. The latter, notably the BRIC ones, are moving into a **broadier lifelong learning framework**, where adult education is seen as the necessary condition for the development of modern society and economy. **More varied institutional forms (and governance models)** associated with continuing education in a complex society are being developed.
- A number of countries have some kind of **constitutional reference to youth and adult education as a right**. Furthermore, often adult education policies espouse notions of empowerment but in practice they are symbolic embellishments to a mainstream formal system that prioritises the schooling system.

The Task Team makes clear that the international literature examined suggests that a successful adult education system must be backed by having well-articulated, officially ratified, comprehensive adult education policies (allied to strategic plans of some substance) and comprehensive legislation, and not just *ad hoc* funding legislation with short term goals.

Implications for the Policy on Community Colleges

The White Paper on Post-School Education and Training places unprecedented emphasis on the importance of a new institutional type to cater for the needs of an ever growing NEETs group as well as those who were systematically denied all but the most basic education opportunities under the apartheid system. It signals an intention to move beyond the aspirational notions of the right to lifelong learning, found in constitutional and other documents towards the acceptance of a comprehensive system of lifelong learning that recognises the fundamental importance of ensuring that all citizens need to be empowered to participate fully in social and economic life of the country. The Policy on Community Colleges needs to build on the White Paper by giving practical expression to these intentions to systematically create a robust system of lifelong learning, and thus move beyond symbolic support for the system.

3.2 What is a community college?

Community colleges or their equivalent embrace a wide range of institutions providing post compulsory school education for adults and post-school youth that may start with (remedial) literacy and basic education but usually offer employment related vocational and technical training, computer and IT training, and courses for personal development. All of them tend to share an ethos and mission of service to the less advantaged sections of the youth and adult population.

The actual term “**community college**” is particularly associated with the North American institutions by that name but in many other countries these are called **Technical Colleges, Further Education Colleges, [rural] Community Polytechnics, Colleges, and Adult Education Institutes**. They are usually public, state regulated, institutions although there are a growing number of non-state (including for profit and non-profit) ones. They provide post compulsory school education that is distinct from higher education degrees offered at **universities** or ‘**four-year colleges**’ (including **universities of technology** (or **polytechnics** or **institutes of technology**). The actual level ranges from secondary education equivalent, through basic skills training to higher vocational qualifications and associate degrees (two-year degrees). In developed countries such as the United States of America, and many developing countries such as India, adult basic education may also be provided at community colleges and adult education centres.

In the **United States of America**, community colleges² are post-secondary school institutions for **adults** founded on an earlier tradition of evening classes in numeracy and literacy for adults. They are primarily open access two-year public institutions providing tertiary education and limited higher education,³ granting certificates, diplomas, advanced diplomas and two-year associate’s degrees (as distinct from the full degrees of universities or four-year

² Community colleges are also sometimes called **junior colleges, technical colleges, technical institutes, two-year colleges, or city colleges**.

³ Officially they are defined as any institution accredited to award the associate degree as its highest degree (Cohen, 2000, p. 4).

colleges), occupational and technical career education, adult and continuing education and community services⁴, remedial and preparatory programmes, non-formal education and often e-learning or distance education. After graduating from a community college, some students transfer to a four-year liberal arts college or university for two to three years to complete a bachelor's degree and most community colleges provide articulation pathways to (and partial credits for) later degree study at universities.

Current educational programmes are usually employment related vocational and technical training, computer and IT training, and courses for personal development. Courses are often timetabled for evening or weekends. Usually the cost to learners attending community colleges is far lower than other forms of post-school education and training. Community colleges primarily attract and accept students from the local community, and are often supported by local tax revenue.

They are a major provider of job training and retraining and the primary post-school education provider for the least advantaged. In particular they are a major supplier of workers for middle level or semi-professional occupations such as nursing, computer operations and car mechanics. These institutions grow in importance given the trajectory that in developed economies a large majority of new job openings will require at least some post-secondary education.

North American community colleges provide a **comprehensive** set of offerings including: career education (occupational and technical) – a two year Associate degree for students who will directly enter the workforce; transfer education – for students who aim, after gaining the Associate degree to transfer to a four-year institution to pursue a Bachelor of Arts or Science degree; developmental – compensatory and remedial education for high school graduates who are not academically ready to enrol in college-level courses; adult and continuing/community services – non-credit courses (including skills training) offered to the community for personal development and interest; industry training – contracted training and education paid for by a local company for their employees; distance learning – occurs online using one's computer and proctored (i.e. invigilated) exams; and support services (learning resource centres; academic, personal, and career counselling; information on financial aid and transfer programmes; and writing programmes).

An important finding from the Task Team literature review (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2012a) was that it was not a unique institutional form that was important but rather the degree to which adults and youth had easy access to whatever institutional form was used, and how successfully these provider institutions articulated with the conventional the post school education and training system. The one unique adult education institutional form, the Scandinavian Study Circles, has some limited analogy with South Africa's Kha Ri

⁴ These adult, continuing, and community education divisions of community colleges are often their most dynamic because they are less encumbered by restrictions. They can more easily develop new course offerings (vocational improvement and retraining for those already working, high school completion and adult literacy improvement, personal development and recreational courses, and community services such as arts events) because the courses usually do not carry credit and therefore are less subject to regulation by state education agencies. Community colleges can use non-credit offerings to learn more about the demands of the labour market, particularly in fast changing technology fields. If new needs and ready demand are found, this may lead to similar courses being developed that are credit bearing and articulated into complete certificate or degree programmes (Dougherty, 2010, pp. 100).

Gude literacy campaign structure of small learning groups and the Task team recommended that this campaign structure be integrated as part of the lowest level of a threefold new community college, the community learning centre.

The Task Team on Community Education and Training Centres also placed much emphasis on the notion of **community education** and notes that a proud tradition of such education has slowly diminished since 1994. It highlighted that there are competing ideological and philosophical traditions in community education ranging over the instrumentalist and the emancipatory (p. 56). They stressed that the 'idea that community education is 'organic' and that ideas, needs and wants come from members of the community rather than being imposed by outside people (even if they are 'experts'), is very important'. However they did concede that community education is also seen as 'embracing the formal as well as the non-formal systems, seeking to mobilise all forms of education, especially the primary and secondary schools, into the service of the community'.

Implications for the Policy on Community Colleges

Community colleges (and equivalent FET institutions) generally have a **clear institutional position** in the post-school and higher education systems in the more developed countries where they are post-school institutions (where compulsory schooling generally reaches 12th grade) offering formal higher education qualifications (even though some may provide an adult basic education equivalent to grade 12 for remediation purposes or provide support programmes in English and Mathematics).

The White Paper (DHET, 2013, p.22) outlined some of the programmes that might be expected in the community college sector. These include general, vocational and skills development programmes and non-formal programmes. The policy on community colleges thus needs to create an imagination of the range of programmes that community colleges may offer and how these programmes will articulate to programmes offered by other institutional types in the country. It also needs to provide an enabling framework for active participation of the community in determining the wide range of programmes offered, including those of particular relevance to that community.

3. Development of and variability in community college system design

In the **United States of America**, in origin, community colleges were institutions for **adults** that carried on the earlier tradition of evening classes in numeracy and literacy for adults. The two-year curriculum was a response to financial difficulties – they required fewer teachers, resources and students to operate. A distinction grew between these two-year colleges and the more rigorous four-year universities which did research.

The focus on vocational and technical education grew particularly during the Great Depression and the Second World War. Later the professionalisation of school teaching further developed junior colleges and also, in the 1980s and 1990s led to partnerships with high schools to strengthen the articulation of curriculum and students between secondary and higher education. Conversely many community colleges, began as technical training colleges, but have evolved over the years to also offer the college transfer function.

Canada has developed a similar, though more state driven system of community colleges.

Morocco is piloting a new community college system (Hildebrand and Hirsch, 2014) via the creation of a legal framework for adult education centres; a quality assurance system; setting up a development fund; setting up an information and documentation centre (and virtual library) that provides access to international experiences with adult education centres; a feasibility study to define the partners, topics and financing models; and three pilot institutions. In the **Philippines**, a community school functions as a school during the day and towards the end of the day converts into a community college using the same staff as the school.

In the **United Kingdom** (excluding Scotland) the term ‘community college’ is applied to a secondary school which also provides some additional services and education to the adult community. The equivalent to a North American community college is a post-school **college of further education**, where further education is post-compulsory education distinct from the higher education offered in universities. It includes post-compulsory school education, basic skills training and higher vocational qualifications such as Post Graduate Certificate in Education, National Vocational Qualifications, City and Guilds qualifications, Higher National Certificate, Higher National Diploma, and Foundation Degrees.

Further education may be used as a means to gain an intermediate or follow up qualification necessary to attend university, or begin a specific career path, e.g. Quantity Surveyor, Town Planner or Veterinary Surgeon.

The main institutional forms of further education in the UK (excluding Scotland) include further education colleges and tertiary colleges, specialist colleges (mainly colleges of agriculture and horticulture and colleges of drama and dance), adult education institutes and private training companies which work with colleges and employers to provide practical training and qualifications in subjects such as engineering, construction, ICT and health and social care. Some colleges are more specialised in a particular industry field such as art and design, catering, engineering or finance. They usually have strong links with companies and potential employers.

Courses and qualifications in vocational and academic subjects are offered at many levels. There are also Sixth form colleges offering A-levels, the International Baccalaureate as well as ordinary schools that offer these and further education National Vocational Qualifications.

From 2001 to 2010 further education in England was governed by a Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the then largest quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation (a ‘quango’) which distributed funds through 47 local councils.⁵ It was replaced in 2010 by a Skills Funding Agency as an executive agency of the Department for Business Innovation and Skills. It manages a budget for skills based training which is commissioned from a two tier of network of prime contractors.

⁵ The Learning and Skills Council had a subsidiary Learning and Skills Improvement Service supporting the development of excellent and sustainable further education provision across the learning and skills sector but was closed in 2013. Many of its resources remain on a website: www.excellencegateway.org.uk/

In **India**, the large population engaged in the informal sector of the economy has very low levels of education and training. National skills development policy encourages skill development initiatives in order to make them employable and help them secure “decent work” (Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2009).

Apart from universities, Institutes of Technology and Technical Institutes (all of which offer degrees), India has a large number (about 35 000) of mainly (about 73%) small private colleges, which cannot provide degrees in their own name but are affiliated with central or state universities (Department of Higher Education, 2013).

There is a distinction between technical education and vocational education. Technical education is overseen by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE). Vocational education is overseen by the Ministry of Human Resources Development and refers particularly to vocational education given in school grades 11 and 12.

There is a National Vocational Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF) for polytechnics and engineering colleges that allows for (All India Council for Technical Education, No date b, p. [4]):

cross mobility of standards and their absorption in Industry with certain skill gained over a fixed period of time or their seamless integration into higher learning that enable them to acquire formal degree and higher skill so that they perform higher level jobs in Industry.

There are five categories of vocationally orientated (and not degree granting) post-school institutions: Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and Centres (ITCs), Polytechnics, Community Polytechnics, Community Colleges, and Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS).

The **Industrial Training Institutes** (ITIs) (state owned) and **Industrial Training Centres** (ITCs) (private) provide technically trained craftsmen and operators to industry. They are open to people who have completed 10 years of schooling and have a Secondary School Leaving Certificate. Courses range from one to three years and successful students take All India Trade Tests to gain a National Trade Certificate in the relevant trade. After two years of practical training in the industry and further testing a National Apprenticeship Certificate can be awarded. A 2003 World Bank report found that the ITIs were producing too many graduates with skills that were becoming obsolete and too few in emerging and informal areas of the economy. Mohankumar and Sanjay (2011) note criticisms of “rigid training structure, inefficiently trained vocational instructors, lack of state of the art infrastructure and weak linkage with industry.” A number of ITI have been upgraded in recent years.

Polytechnics offer professional technical and vocational courses leading to diplomas. They train at the middle level and award diplomas. They are heavily funded by the state and were receiving 50 to 70% of capital costs and 80 to 90% of recurrent costs in the 2000s. Polytechnics are expected to have 5 to 10 extension centres ~~centres~~ in rural villages.(see below on Community Polytechnics) Local NGOs, Industrial Training Institutes and Vocational Secondary Schools should be involved in the establishment of these extension centres (Department of Higher Education, 2009, p. 11) . The whole implementation is to be implemented on the basis of an Annual Operational Plan from each of these polytechnics (p. 16). Funding norms are provided (pp. 19-24) as well as rules for the set-up of various monitoring and evaluation committees (pp. 25-29).

Community polytechnics are specifically devoted to community rural development and technology transfer. They provide short term non-formal, modular courses of 3-6 months duration. Multi-skill training may be offered to make self-employment viable in the rural economy (Department of Higher Education, 2009). In 2011 there were 617 community polytechnics run by the Ministry of Human Resource Development and about 60 others. Many of them are in fact entities within ordinary polytechnics with small staff complements and little integration with the main polytechnic and poor costing of the initiative and documentation thereof. The open access courses they provide are usually of 3 to 9 months duration and the content is often similar to that provided through vocational education in schools but much compressed and they result in no credit or qualification (hence there is no easy articulation with conventional polytechnics). Some free trade training is given and training courses are also run in collaboration with government departments and agencies. Direct community services and youth clubs are also provided.

Community colleges, as an alternative system of education, are a relatively recent development in India aimed particularly at the disadvantaged (All India Council for Technical Education. No date.). They are most prominent in South India and have been largely driven by NGOs. They are meant to provide appropriate skills development courses leading to employment (or self-employment) in collaboration and partnership with local industry. The industrial partners help “in designing the curriculum, providing part time instructors, serving as members of the advisory board and the governing board, taking students for internship and helping them to find job placement. ... The Community College tries to respond to the deficiencies of the Vocational system through industry-institutional linkage, competence assessment, proper certification, training on site, life skills training and job oriented programmes decided on the basis of the local needs” (Mohankumar and Sanjay, 2011). Community colleges are easy to access and open to students from 16 to 47 years of age. They have flexible curriculums with courses in the areas of life skills, work skills, internship and preparation for employment and focus particularly on disadvantaged people (Jacqueline, 2012). Most of the early community colleges were established by non-profit and community based bodies and universities. Community colleges are partly a response to the need to rapidly increase the number of skilled industrial workers in India. Lack of recognition of community college qualifications has been a major problem as well as financial viability ((Mohankumar and Sanjay, 2011).

India also has lower level **Adult Education Centres** as non-formal adult education institutions to provide literacy and early education and locally needed life skills and vocational training. The Adult Education Centres (**Jan Shikshan Sansthan** and previously **Shramik Vidyapeeths**) were initially set up in the late 1960s with aid from UNESCO as non-formal adult education institutions to provide literacy and early education and locally needed life skills and vocational training run by registered non-governmental organisations with lump sum annual recurring grants (with prescribed ceilings for various budget components) from the central government. They are supported by State Resource Centres and the National Literacy Mission Authority and also make use of the facilities of other agencies. Although the centres prepare courses and materials themselves there has been a move towards having standardised curricula. There is a strong emphasis on practice in the courses.

The Literature Review of the Task Team on Community Education and Training (DHET, 2012a, pp. 39, 40, 43) made the findings summarised below:

- The international literature provides **little evidence of *unique* institutional forms** for youth and adult education provision (except perhaps for the Scandinavian study circles system). What was different and crucial about the successful institutional forms used was how easy it was to **access** them and how well they **articulated** with the conventional education system.
- A striking commonality in the literature is that **big and successful delivery systems have governance and planning nodes of some substance at both national and state/regional level** and that they have a **good degree of autonomy from the more conventional schooling bureaucracy**. They have a wide range of programmes in both type and mode of delivery and, because of the complexity of the field, various degrees of devolution. What is crucial is that there are **bodies or nodes of governance for whom adult education provision is their sole concern**, adequate funding, and rigorous assessment, monitoring, and evaluation. In many cases the more operational institutes or centres are paralleled (also at various levels) by inter-ministerial and stakeholder representative councils.
- The main state governance bodies are either a **substantial department or departments within an education ministry** (or equivalent) or a **relatively independent authority or agency** (though often under the formal control of a ministry) or **delegation of responsibility to local agencies** (either of government or civil society).
- Many countries have multiple institutional forms of both **formal and non-formal** adult education all fully funded or subsidised by the state (in highly developed countries adult education provision tends to be done by civil society organisations funded by government).
- Where central government is involved it tends to be in certification and quality control regulation and monitoring.

South Africa's 'Community College' Design

Prior to the 1980s, **South Africa** had a state system of technical schools and **technical colleges**. The technical colleges provided post-school vocational and occupational courses (and provided the theory aspects of apprenticeship education and training). Some were also legally empowered to provide higher education. Over time some also began to offer community courses (Raju, 2006, p. 4). In 1967 an intermediate institutional type was legislated for which changed some technical colleges into **colleges for advanced technical education** (CATE) that could provide higher education sector training and help lessen the shortage of skilled high level employees.

In the 1979 the CATEs were renamed **technikons** and firmly placed within the higher education sector. It was recognised that there was a set of higher education qualifications provided by them that differed from those of universities and were more practically orientated. The development of polytechnics in the United Kingdom also influenced these South African changes.

An essential historical resource on developments in the early 1990s is Silas Zuma's 1996 paper (Zuma, 2013) *A review of Community College development in South Africa* which outlines the attempt, finally abortive in spite of all the effort that went into it, to set up a community college system in South Africa in the mid-1990s during the transition to a post-apartheid society. The National Institute for Community Education (NICE), a major influence on these efforts, developed coherent and detailed proposals for a system of community colleges (with open access, democratic governance, partnerships and cooperation, comprehensive curriculum and flexible scheduling and delivery) linked to satellite single- or multi-purpose community learning centres and workers learning centres (NICE, 1994, 1995, 1996). Various regions developed a number of innovative models (Reddy, 2001). By 1998 the National Department of Education had identified 30 of the 61 technical colleges as pilot sites for community colleges and the Human Sciences Research Council undertook a study of nine of these sites (Odora Hoppers, 2001b). Hoppers noted weaknesses in current policy developments and institutional practice (Odora Hoppers, 2001a, pp. 10-12).⁶ Eventually these models and proposals were ignored.

Meanwhile, the post-apartheid 1997 Higher Education Act recognised three types of institutions: universities, technikons and colleges as part of a differentiated higher education system. All the qualifications would be aligned to a new National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the Ministry of Education would approve the particular qualification programme mix at particular institutions. Though the Ministry of Education regarded the technikons as providing career-orientated diploma qualifications they were subsequently renamed Universities of Technology. Universities of Technology may in fact be edging towards being "comprehensive universities" (Mentz, Kotze and van der Merwe, 2008, p. 36).

In 1998, Further Education and Training Colleges were formally instituted by law and all the previous technical colleges were in 2001 declared FET colleges and later in 2007 recapitalised and merged into 50 multi-campus FET colleges (with, on average five campuses per college). Subsequently control of these colleges has slowly transferred from being a provincial competence to a national one, with the process completed in the first quarter of 2015. In 2011 they were considered to be operating at only 75% of their student capacity with 300 000 students. They are generally considered to be underperforming and to being burdened by underprepared students though current policy envisages their massive expansion to serve 1 250 000 students by 2030 (National Planning Commission, 2012, p. 40) or even more according to Department of Higher Education and Training targets for 2030 (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2012b, p. 12) .

As part of the Department of Higher Education and Training's attempt to create a more coordinated post school sector, the FET colleges were renamed Technical and Vocational Education and Training Colleges in 2014.

Typically, they currently focus on three types of programme offerings:

⁶ These were: Too long a period between policy formation and effective policy implementation; Little understanding of the substance and opportunities in existing policy; Department of Education ignoring of ongoing innovations in pilot sites; Lack of linkages between Departments of Labour and Education at provincial level; Lack of security of tenure for senior education leadership; Weak academic support programmes; Lack of a centre for curriculum development; Volatile and incomprehensible funding decisions.

- The national Curriculum Vocational (NCV). This is a three year qualification with a technical / vocation orientation. It is registered at level 4 of the NQF and is offered in parallel to the school-based National Senior Certificate (NSC) which has a more “academic” focus. The NCV curriculum is structured to include 60% theory and 40% practical. However, this qualification does not prepare students for immediate entry into the work place. After completing the NCV, students are required to do approximately two years of work experience. Thereafter doing so they may sit the national trade test skills in their field of specialisation to complete their qualification.
- The Report 191 lists national programmes N1 - N6 which are largely theoretical in nature and require candidates to complete an extended apprenticeship before sitting the national trade test.
- Since 2012, occupational programmes have been offered by the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs). These are typically skills based programmes with structured work integration.

The 2012 DHET Statistics show that the majority of students - 60% are registered on the N1-N6 programmes and 40% on the NCV programmes.

Grade 9 is a minimum qualification to enter into the NCV or N1-N6 programmes, although a growing proportion of students have Grade 12.

One of the key challenges of the South African TVET sub-system is the fact that currently there is no articulation between the TVET and any other education sector.

Implications for the Policy on Community Colleges

The international evidence is clear that a variety of institutional forms, funded and governed in a variety of ways, can be used to deliver post school education and training (at Adult Basic Education, Further Education and Training and the lower reaches of Higher Education) that would meet the South African requirements of redress, social justice and economic development. Some countries have a solid single institutional model (the North American Community College), other have a flexible variety (such as India). South Africa could obviously learn much from, and benefit from the resources of, these countries.

What is important is that the White Paper (DHET, 2013) recognises that a *new* institutional type is to be developed, so whatever is implemented needs to cater for the wide range of educational needs of the target group, that are not catered for by the TVET and other existing Colleges and University sectors. In particular the institutional model, including its governance arrangements, need to be tailor-made for the purposes to be served and not to simply replicate arrangements in place for existing sectors.

4. Common implementation characteristics of community colleges

The institution of the community college and its equivalents, formed over a long period of time and not by clear policy or implementation planning directives, does however have a number of characteristic features that provide shape to the institutional form and the implementation of its operations. A number of these characteristics are examined below.

The demographics of community colleges

In the **United States of America** community colleges, some 96% of which are public institutions, comprise a quarter of all higher education institutions and serve about half of all post-secondary vocational training. Some 40% of all undergraduate students attend community colleges. They are the fastest growing sector of post-school education and training and growing twice as fast as four-year colleges (with growth increasingly made up of adults not youth). Community colleges enrol the greatest proportion of adult students in post-secondary education institutions (Van Noy and Heidkamp, 2013). They are particularly valued because of their local accessibility and low-cost – they attract students who live in geographic proximity and who seek low-cost post-secondary education. Attendance of students with less-educated parents is increased by the proximity to a college near to home.

There has also been a relative increase in adults choosing private, for profit institutions because their programmes are more demand-driven, flexible and shorter than semester-based community colleges. For-profit institutions enrol a disproportionate share of low-income students and those who are under-prepared for college.

In the United States of America community college students tend to be older and more ethnically and racially diverse (39% are 20 years or older compared to 27% at universities) and less dependent on their parents (65% against 90%) and from families with lower family incomes than university students and whose parents who had no post-secondary education. They are generally academically weaker than university entrants (Coley, 2000, pp. 10-13). Perhaps a majority of students see them as the route to future economic security, which is backed up by economic evidence (Barrow, Brock and Rouse, 2013, pp. 4, 7). The majority of students attend part-time (part-time being defined as attending less than twelve contact hours per week) and, as few community colleges are geared for residential students, only about 20% live in college residences.

Community college students have a much higher set of **risk factors** negatively associated with persistence and attainment compared to university students. The seven key risk factors are: delayed entry, enrolled part-time, worked full-time, financially independent, have dependents, single parent, and no high school diploma (See Coley, 2000, p.15). Though community colleges are open access, Haskins and Rouse (2013, p. 2) note that:

only 34 percent of students from families with income in the bottom fifth enroll in college, compared with 79 percent from the top fifth and 68 percent from the next tier. Even worse, only 11 percent of students from the bottom fifth ever graduate, compared with 53 percent and 38 percent of students from the top two fifths.

Students whose financial aid is tied to academic performance tend to do better than those without this incentive (Barrow, Brock and Rouse, 2013, p. 8).

Proximity to a college near to home has a greater positive effect on college enrolment for children of less-educated parents than for other children (Jenkins and Rodríguez, 2013, p. 200).

Implications for the Policy on Community Colleges

The demographic data reinforces what are the main strengths of community colleges – **low cost**, **easy or open access** and **local**. These are what advances the case for community colleges as a means to reach people disadvantaged by poverty and inadequate schooling. The Policy on Community Colleges needs to ensure that it reinforces the characteristics that enable access to poorer communities, but that it is also cognisant of the systematic effort that will be required to ensure reasonable success rates amongst those that enrol.

Open access and responding to under-prepared students

Because in many cases the first community colleges and universities in the **United States of America** were instituted before there was major provision of secondary education there is a much stronger tradition than in other countries of **open access** (and the necessary corollary that the institution itself determines the capabilities of students admitted and provides preparatory programmes (remedial and developmental, including medium of instruction courses (in the United States of America English language instruction courses make up as much as one-third of humanities instruction at community colleges)). In recent decades the federal government has funded such developmental expansion which has encouraged enrolment growth and widened the demographics of student enrolment.

Scherer and Anson, (2014) (also see Fain, 2014 and Rao, 2004) argue that the open access admissions policies of community colleges allow in unprepared students (and particularly the already socio-economically disadvantaged) who have minimal hope of gaining a degree (given that half of community college students fail to complete a credential of any kind within six years of starting college) and who end up accumulating debt.

In community colleges assessment and placement tests are used to determine the appropriate class level and basic skills or development courses or English language courses that may be required prior to enrolment in college level courses.⁷

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Current evidence shows that various standardised readiness tests are poor predictors and there is also no clear evidence that the most popular programmes and strategies for improving student success actually work and are cost-effective (Barrow, Brock and Rouse, 2013, p. 12, Venezia and Jaeger, 2013, pp.117, 120).

Community college students are more likely than university students to be unprepared for the challenge of study at this level (Coley, 2000, p. 3), often lacking basic content knowledge, skills (including the application of such content knowledge to real-life situations and analytical skills), and habits of mind (including critical thinking, curiosity, acceptance of critical assessment, and toleration of frustration, ambiguity and occasional failure) (Venezia and Jaeger, 2013, pp. 119-120). Many such students who enter community college do not appreciate that they will struggle with college work unless they had achieved a certain level at high school (Bueschel, 2003, p. 30). Most community colleges provide assistance to adults in completing their secondary education by providing adult basic education, remedial (“developmental”)⁸ and “transitional courses”⁹ courses though it is debatable whether community colleges really succeed in teaching the basic skills that schools failed to do. The open access policy of community colleges exacerbates this problem and may lead some high school students not studying effectively in high school as they know they will get into community college anyway (Colley, 2000, p. 30). A 2012 report (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2012) looked at practices, institutional structures and policies that could support community college student success (see in particular pp. 33-40).

Generally, students who start college in adult basic-education classes do not succeed in eventually graduating with an Associate degree. Various projects are piloting schemes to improve this situation.¹⁰ In other words, the idea that community colleges can easily “fix” under preparedness is false – remedial or “developmental” courses are not a panacea. Remedial education programmes that accelerate the pace of instruction and those that combine basic skills acquisition with college-level coursework may be the most effective. Remedial courses are also seen as often having a low level of academic demand thus not genuinely preparing students for later transfer to a four-year university.

The situation is worsened by universities increasingly abandoning remedial activities for underprepared students and redirecting students to community colleges (where, the assumption is, correctly, that there is more support for underprepared students) (Coley, 2000, p.4). “As a result much community college curriculum is remedial in nature.” (Colley, 2000, p. 30, Grubb *et al*, 2011). Wombly and Townsend (2000, p. 296) also pose questions about whether community colleges need to distinguish between their role in adult basic education and their role in remediating (by providing for a second time what schools are meant to do).

⁸ According to Dougherty (2010, p. 100) there are difficult organisational issues related to whether developmental courses and programmes should be centralised in one unit or distributed throughout the college. Centralisation “allows for creating a cohesive, well trained staff of developmental educators.” A distributed structure allows for more contextualisation in each discipline.

⁹ Transitional programmes prepare non-traditional adult learners for college study (see Spohn and Kallenbach, 2004; Alamprese, 2004).

¹⁰ Only 3 percent of students who start college in adult basic-education classes earn a credential (Gonzalez, 2011). There are a number of projects aiming to improve this situation such as Accelerating Opportunity: a breaking through initiative (formally ABE to Credentials) (Mwase, 2012; Jobs for the Future, 2014) and Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) (Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, 2014). Some studies (e.g. Jenkins, Zeidenberg, and Kienzl, 2009; Wachen, Jenkins and Van Noy, 2010; Zeidenberg, Cho. and Jenkins, 2010; Van Noy and Heidkamp, 2013) suggest that results from these programmes have been very positive (e.g. I-Best students were three times more likely to earn college credit and nine times more likely to earn a credential (Gonzalez, 2011)).

There is growing public concern that the educational system teaches the same individuals multiple times for the same skills at tax payers expense and that the schooling system should not be allowed to pass its ill-educated learners off to the next layer without accountability (Wombly and Townsend (2000, p. 288).

However, over the last 10 years, some 200 Community Colleges have come together in a network called *Achieving the Dream* which now leads the most comprehensive non-governmental reform movement in the USA for student success in higher education history. The network is committed to four overarching approaches to close achievement gaps and accelerate student success nationwide; guiding evidence-based institutional change; influencing policy reform to establish an environment that supports community college student success and completion; generating and sharing knowledge; and engaging the community to reach a common understanding of the barriers to student success and forged commitments to a shared success agenda.

Meanwhile, some writers argue that community colleges are a ghetto for the non-elite who are not in the universities and that the students are being trained to fit into business and industry in an environment designed to lower their educational aspirations and plans. (A counter-argument is that a community college may serve as a relatively low-cost place for students to explore post-secondary education options and clarify and make realistic career plans.)

Implications for the Policy on Community Colleges

The Policy on Community Colleges needs to make clear its stance on access conditions to community colleges and to the various programmes offered. The policy needs to address the enormous challenges required in terms of placement test developments and remediation instruction that are needed to make open access real rather than a false mirage. Given the international evidence that even well-resourced community colleges and further education institutions in rich countries struggle with underprepared students, the issue of underprepared students must be confronted in the new South African community college policy as well as the cost of capacitating and running developmental programmes factored in.

Partnerships and community linkages

Local state and local government partnerships and links with the local community are a strong feature of the community college system in North America. The first full community colleges, as with universities, were local, municipal and denominational, rather than national initiatives, and legislation dealing with them followed their rise rather than initiated it. In addition **adult and continuing education and community services** have always been strongly supported by community colleges (Dougherty, 2010, p. 100). Community colleges often have extensive collaboration with local high schools.

The recent introduction in Morocco of three pilot community college/ *université populaire* type institutions ~~im~~ has stressed the aim of developing a diversified system of adult education that would take seriously the anchoring of adult education centres in the community and their partnerships and cooperation with various partners in education and urban development (Hildebrand and Hirsch, 2014).

Implications for the Policy on Community Colleges

In places such as North America and the United Kingdom further education was originally very much a bottom up development, done by local government and districts. South Africa's nationally driven highly centralised new policy described in the White Paper (DHET, 2013) is somewhat at odds with this and strategies to encourage strong local community partnerships will be required.

Transfer and articulation

A notable characteristic of community colleges in North America and further education institutions in Europe and elsewhere is the ease with which students can transfer to universities though there are ongoing problems with credit recognition for articulation (previously mainly done on an inter-institution basis though there is increasing state regulation of this). Pressure for such articulation is provided by the increasing number of jobs in advanced economies that require a degree (Wellman, 2002, p. v).

In the **United States of America**, overall about 22% of community college students transfer to universities and succeed there as well as students who began at university, and generally full-time community college students transfer twice as often as part-time community college students. However, students wanting to do a degree are less likely to succeed if they enter a community college rather than a university, Dougherty (2010, p. 96). There are varying views on this finding. Baker and Veléz (1996) argue that students who were able to attend a university but instead studied at a community college do as well and at a lower cost.

There are a variety of transfer and articulation structures to ease the transfer process. Predictably, the better staffed and better resourced community colleges have better transfer rates (Gross and Goldhaber, 2009).

Implications for the Policy on Community Colleges

The emphasis on articulation is evident. In South Africa, in spite of the National Qualifications Framework, transfer and articulation between further education institutions and universities has been poor. The issue of transfers of credits between community colleges and TVET colleges would also need to receive serious attention.

Governance

In the **United States of America** most community colleges have their own policies and regulations for governing the college and the employment of faculty¹¹, though in some cases there are state-wide Boards which regulate community colleges (and other higher education institutions). Good examples of institutional policy documents, regulations, procedures and guidelines are those of the Tennessee Board of Regents (2014a, 2014b) and the Alabama

¹¹ These regulations usually cover regular, full-time personnel at institutions whose regular assignments include instruction, research, and/or public service as a principle activity, and who hold academic rank as professor, associate professor, assistant professor or instructor, senior instructor, or master instructor, and as senior vocational teacher, intermediate vocational teacher, vocational teacher) and academic tenure.

Community College System (2014a, 2014b)¹², which can be accessed on the internet.

Other states have associations which provide similar regulation and policy development (e.g. Texas Association of Community Colleges (2013a) and the Community College League of California (2014a)). The Community College League of California's Policy and Procedure Subscription Service provides "template language" for over 370 board policies and administrative procedures for California community colleges. Subscribing districts receive legal updates annually that alert them to changes in laws, regulations, or practice (Community College League of California, 2014b, 2012).

Richardson and Santos (2000, pp. 52-53) argue that having a single state-wide coordinating board to which the boards of all higher education institutions report enjoy advantages over other governance structures, particularly as they are more dynamic and open to change.

There are also national statements and resources on community college governance such as that of the National Education Association's 1989 *Statement on community college governance* (National Education Association, 2014).

In **England** further education is now governed by an executive Skills Funding Agency of the Department for Business Innovation and Skills. It manages a budget for skills based training which is commissioned from a two tier network of prime contractors (colleges and private training providers). The colleges themselves are independent institutions, managing the day to day running of their corporation including, managing their business, funding agreements (which are not solely reliant on government funding), staffing and its plant and other assets.

Implications for the Policy on Community Colleges

Given that the 2014 White Paper requires the creation of an institutional form new to South Africa, drawing appropriately from the North American and European experiences and models of governance would seem wise rather than imitating the arrangements in place in South for a rather different TVET College system.

¹² In Alabama the State Board of Education, upon the recommendation of the Chancellor of the Alabama Community College System, is authorized to (Alabama Community College System, 2014b):

- Make rules and regulations for governing the Alabama Community College System;
- Prescribe the courses of study and the requirements for granting certificates, diplomas, and/or degrees;
- Appoint the President of each institution with each President to serve at the pleasure of the State Board of Education;
- Direct and supervise the expenditure of appropriations for the Alabama Community College System;
- Prescribe qualifications and establish a salary schedule and tenure requirements for faculty;
- Accept gifts, donations, and devises and bequests of money and real and personal property for the benefit of the Alabama Community College System;
- Promote interest in the Alabama Community College System among the citizens of Alabama.

Funding and student finance

In most countries where there are community colleges or equivalent, **public funding is distributed to them not at national level but via states/ provinces/regions or municipalities** and, where civil society providers are funded by the state, there are often legal criteria of non-profit and effective accountability and reporting. Provinces or states may have to provide matching or supplementary funding. Many countries (particularly in the European Union) now have a skills levy system for vocational and technical training (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), 2008). Some countries or states have means of adjusting funding so that disadvantaged and poor regions or groups of people receive **preferential support**.

In the **United States of America** there is generally a mix of public funding (federal, state and local), private funding and income gained from tuition fees (though it is common for adult basic education to be free of tuition fees). According to the American Association of Community Colleges (2015), on average 45% of community college funding comes from state grants and contracts, 21% from tuition and fees, 19% from local government, 5% from federal government, and 10% from other sources.

Because community colleges perform an eclectic variety of educational roles, those in the USA have had to be adept at responding effectively and flexibly to the increasing demand for post-school education as well as changes in funding support (as in the 1980s and 1990s when personal development courses were reduced and work related ones expanded). They have been able to adapt to changing socio-economic conditions much faster than higher education institutions though the volatility of state funding (in addition to the cuts in the post 2007 recessionary period) have some damaging effects, particularly on access for low income students. Funding formulae that relied on the number of students enrolled rather than on the number of students who complete their studies worsened the problem because of the pressure to increase enrolments (Barrow, Brock and Rouse, 2013, p. 4)

Though there is growing pressure to graduate more students, it is difficult to graduate more students at lower costs without sacrificing quality. The two common strategies used by such institutions to cut instructional costs – increased use of part-time instructors and increased student-educator ratio – have done little to improve productivity and efficiency and may well have harmed it (Wombly and Townsend, 2000b, p. 295); Goldrick-Rab, Harris, Mazzeo and Kienzl, 2009a, pp. 3-4).

Increasingly some states are basing their funding of community colleges on successful outcomes (completion rates) rather than enrolment (though an effective funding formula needs to ensure that infrastructure and core operating capacity are enhanced as well as completion rates).

The complexity of applying for and managing financial aid and student loans may deter many students from applying (Barrow, Brock and Rouse, 2013, p. 7). Increasingly students have to rely on loans rather than grants (Wombly and Townsend, 2000b, p. 285) and the debt students incur may be too high relative to their income after leaving college and, in particular, the costs to students of attending for-profit institutions is likely to outweigh the benefits (Liu and Belfield, 2014).

A noted problem is that, in many cases, state mandates (for example, to increase enrolments over a set period or to generate data for reporting or for a host of administrative actions) are not funded. (See Wombly and Townsend, 2000b, p. 286 and Texas Association of Community Colleges, 2013b.) Unfunded mandates often increase the number of administrators colleges have to employ.

However, it is important to note that the real average cost per completed community college credential linked to academic transfer declined by 24% between 1987 and 2008 (Jenkins and Rodríguez (2013, p. 195) and the average cost of all community college qualifications (certificates, diplomas and degrees) was two-thirds of those for universities (Jenkins and Rodríguez (2013, p. 193).

Levine (1996) notes that in **Canada** colleges were encouraged to change from multi-functional institution with a comprehensive curriculum and a broad mission to adults and communities, to institutions even more explicitly oriented toward training for employment (in an increasingly technological environment). They were viewed “not as educational organizations, but as instruments of economic policy and workforce development, and as institutions which are expected to re-make and re-structure themselves” (Levine, 1996). These financial pressures put under threat programmes not specifically targeted to employment or workforce training (such as adult education, basic education, special education, academic education, and community education); library, counselling and community services; and the working conditions of college staff. There was a stress on efficiency, reduction of duplication and streamlining of operations, sharing of resources and expertise, stronger accountability measures and learners having to pay a higher proportion of costs.

In **England**, since 2010 Further Education Colleges receive state funding via a Skills Funding Agency, an executive agency of the Department for Business Innovation and Skills It supports adult further education and skills training in England, including high-quality apprenticeship and traineeship¹³ opportunities. It manages a budget for skills based training which is commissioned from a two tier network of colleges and other contractors. This executive agency has the power to impose conditions of funding and even remove the institution from the Register of Training organisations eligible for funding (Skills Funding Agency, 2015). For formal qualifications for youth aged 16 to 19 grants are received from the Education Funding Agency, an executive agency of the Department of Education (for formal qualifications for youth aged 16 to 19) (Education Funding Agency, 2015).

The actual colleges are responsible, as independent institutions, for managing the day to day running of their corporation including, managing their business, funding agreements (which are not solely reliant on government funding), staffing and its corporation’s estate.

The sector is under pressure because of reduced state funding, and a more cautious stance by banks on lending.

¹³ A traineeship is a short (six month) training course with work experience for those not yet eligible for a formal apprenticeship.

Implications for the Policy on Community Colleges

As the above demonstrates, given that community colleges serve a variety of functions – from satisfying the human right to basic literacy through providing the skills necessary for the economic development of a community to preparation for higher education, their funding is often victim to oscillating political choices. Any funding formula needs to be consistently responsive to the varying demands for different types of programmes. A careful balance needs to be reached between funding enrolments and funding completion. The Policy on Community Colleges is fortunately supported by the establishment of a Task Team to give detailed consideration to the various issues. However, the Task Team needs to be careful not to replicate funding models developed for very different segments of the post school sector, namely the university and the TVET college systems. (It should be noted that the current funding model for Adult Education and Training is clearly problematic, resulting in two provinces reporting expenditure of around R10 000 per part-time student per annum, while two provinces reported around R8000 and 5 provinces around R4000¹⁴(Auditor General Report on Adult Education and Training programme of DHET, 2014).)

Staffing

In the **United States of America** the teacher/student ratio is about 1:38 (or 1:18 if students not studying for a qualification are excluded) and class size averages at between 25 and 40 students. Faculty concentrate mainly on teaching, not research, and usually have a Masters degree. *More than two-thirds* of community college faculty are part-timers, compared to less than one-third at public four-year universities and colleges. These part-time adjunct lecturers have little incentive or opportunity to invest in their own professional development. The cost-cutting by using part-time instructors and increasing student-staff ratios may in fact reduce productivity and efficiency. Compounding the problem is that two-thirds of faculty members are between the ages of 45 and 64, and the pool of qualified younger applicants with specific in-demand skills (particularly in the fields of nursing, allied health, and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) may be quite small (Goldrick-Rab et al, Harris, Mazzeo and Kienzl, 2009a, pp. 6-7).

In England, from September 2007, further education teachers ~~in~~ were required to gain a professional teaching qualification that covers both taught and practical skills over a five year period and are also required to undertake 30 hours of mandatory continuing education. An evaluation published in 2012 found positive benefits from these regulations (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2012).

The Task Team on Community and Adult Education(DHET, 2012a) found in its literature review that generally, there is a **strained supply of trained practitioners** (partly because of insufficient practitioner development institutions), **poor career prospects** (partly because of the way formal schooling bureaucracies manage staffing of adult education), and, particularly for the lower level practitioners, **poor conditions of service**. In many countries adult education is going through a process of professionalisation as the way for adult and continuing education to claim its rightful place as a respectable sector in the education field.

Implications for the Policy on Community Colleges

Practitioner development (and research and monitoring capacity) has also not grown but actually declined because of the dismantling by university administrations of the modest infrastructure of adult education departments at universities and the threats of closure of the Higher Certificate programmes run by some of them (the legacy of which was crucial for the staffing of the Kha Ri Gude literacy campaign).

Creating a community college system in South Africa will thus be beset with a severe educator capacity problem. The Policy on Community Colleges will need to have robust intentions and plans for how to create a vibrant cadre of adult and community education educators. The appropriate balance between part- and full-time staff will require serious attention.

E-learning and Open educational resources

More than a third of United States college students take at least one online course during the year. Some studies suggest that academically underprepared students at community colleges generally do worse in online courses than in those where instruction is face-to-face. There is however increasing evidence that well supported so-called ‘blended’ learning courses (a in which a student learns at least in part through delivery of content and instruction via digital and online media with some element of student control over time, place, path, or pace) can be more successful than face to face courses. Similarly, online academic support programmes may poorly serve students who lack the experience and sense of agency to access and use them.

A number of community colleges and community college consortiums now favour the use of open educational resources. For example, the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges now require open licensing on publicly funded materials resulting from all Chancellor’s Office contracts and grants (Creative Commons, 2013). Any college can both view the materials or reports and reuse, share, and improve upon it with updated information and data. This also saves taxpayers money by not funding duplicate work that may only be accessible on the local level. The tax-paying public shouldn’t be required to pay twice or more to access and use educational materials, first via the funding of the research and development of educational resources and then again when they purchase materials like textbooks they helped fund.

Implications for the Policy on Community Colleges

Any use of distance education or elearning would require careful design to combine the appropriate mix of independent study, engagement and support. Given that one of the main weaknesses of the PALCs is the lack of adequate learning and teaching support materials, the establishment of a central body (like SAIVCET) that will be responsible for coordinating the development of high quality curriculum and support materials will be central to the success of the community college.

Quality assurance

Productivity in post-secondary education is commonly defined as “the ratio of changes in output (credit hours and degrees) to inputs (labour, purchased materials, and capital)” expressed in terms of full-time equivalents (Sullivan, Mackie, Massy, and Sinha, 2012. p. 63 and see 61-85 on their post-secondary education productivity measure; Jenkins and Rodríguez (2013, p. 190). Quality is traditionally measured by standardised tests, external examination and certification, learning outcome standards, and graduate earnings (Jenkins and Rodríguez, 2013, pp. 190-199).

Accountability and benchmarking are compromised by known data problems, such as the lack of information on part-time students when estimating graduation rates and the high variation in the backgrounds and motivation of community college students.

The United States of America has a Voluntary Framework of Accountability that has a detailed *Metrics Manual* with key measures being the First-year retention rate, the Three-year graduation rate, Undergraduate credentials awarded per 100 FTE undergraduate students, Change over time: credentials awarded per 100 FTE students, and Median family income of geographical location (American Association of Community Colleges, 2013, 2014).

Implications for the Policy on Community Colleges

Clearly the almost total data incapacity of the current adult education and training system in the Public Adult Learning Centres is a huge problem that will have to be overcome in the setting up of an accountable community college system. Furthermore, the Auditor General (p.4, 2014) made clear that the DHET Directorate was conducting little of the monitoring expected of it. Finally the two quality assurance agencies tasked with quality assurance of the system, Umalusi and the QCTO, have not been active in the adult education field in South Africa and will need to develop the necessary capacity.

Research

In the United States of America there are a number of research organizations and publications who focus upon the activities of community colleges. Because community college focus on teaching this has meant few resources for conducting rigorous longitudinal, cross-institutional research themselves about their own students (Pascarella, 2006).

The Community and Adult Education Task Team (DHET, 2012a) found that healthy youth and adult education systems have good monitoring, evaluation and research and that all of these require excellent flows of accurate data. Universities, and departments of adult education in them, play a particularly important part in such work.

Implications for the Policy on Community Colleges

Logically, given no current capacity at all in the current adult education and training system, research capacity will need to be built up over time and for the foreseeable future use made of the dwindling resources of adult education units at universities. These units in turn will need to urgently fostered and resourced.

5 Impact of community colleges and new policy directions

Impact of community colleges

Coley (2000, p. 25) summarises Pascarella (1999) thus on the evidence on the impact North American community colleges have on students:

His analysis suggests that the evidence is very complex and is summarized below.

- There is some evidence, although hotly debated, that community college attendance has a dampening effect on attaining a bachelor's degree.
- Evidence suggests that when community college students transfer to four-year colleges and complete their bachelor's degrees, they are about as competitive in the labor market as similar students who start at four-year colleges.
- Evidence suggests that community colleges may have cognitive and developmental effects on their students similar to the effects that four-year colleges have on their students.
- Community college attendance can give some students a chance to transfer into schools that are more selective than the schools they could have enrolled in directly from high school. This is particularly true for low income students who did not perform well in high school.
- Community college degrees or credentials, in and of themselves, provide substantial economic advantages over a high school diploma.

Since community colleges are considerably less expensive than four-year colleges, they can provide a more affordable way for substantial numbers of students to obtain the first two years of postsecondary education, with little differential effect on their intellectual development or competitiveness in the market place.

A recent 2015 study of the entire California Community Colleges system and linked administrative earnings records finds average returns to Career-Technical Education (CTE) certificates and degrees that range from 12 to 23 percent. The largest returns are for programmes in the healthcare sector; among non-health related CTE programmes estimated returns range from 5 to 10 percent (Stevens et al, 2015).

On the down side students tend to progress very slowly through community college formal qualifications. Only 1 in 10 students entering community college in 2002 completed a two-year associate degree within three years. Nearly half of community college students fail to complete a credential of any kind within six years of starting college (Goldrick-Rab, Harris, Mazzeo and Kienzl, 2009a, p. 3).

The United Kingdom's Review of Vocational Education (The Wolf Report) (Department of Education, 2011a) evaluated the impact of vocational education and made numerous criticisms of the current provision and recommendations for change, which were all accepted by the government (Department of Education, 2011b).

Implications for the Policy on Community Colleges

Impact analyses such as the above are extremely important, but not prevalent in the literature. South Africa needs to ensure that whatever funding arrangements and monitoring and evaluation systems are put in place need to ensure ongoing analyses of the impact of the new sector while allowing the system enough time to develop on the basis of ongoing reflection.

New policy directions

The United States of America literature on community colleges (see particularly Townsend and Twombly, 2000a; Coley, 2000; Welman, 2002; Goldrick-Rab, Harris, Mazzeo and Kienzl, 2009a, 2009b; National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2011; Haskins and Rouse, 2013; Barrow, Brock and Rouse, 2013; American Association of Community Colleges, 2013; Van Noy and Heidkamp, 2013; Miranda, 2014) shows that the main foci of current policy development include proposals to:

- Establish national postsecondary goals that reflect the multiple missions of community colleges
- Create a performance measurement system with greater focus on completion and quality, not enrolment
- Increase federal funding for community colleges roughly split between capital and instructional enhancement
- Have financial aid encourage full-time attendance
- Stimulate instructional innovations and practices
- Upgrade information technology resources as a way of both expanding access and cutting costs
- Support the improvement of (real-time) student data systems
- Ensure that states have a reliable, robust college transfer system
- Have common course numbering system so that all institutions recognize credits from courses that cover the same material
- Have better school preparation for college course work and the need for a consensus on what is “college-ready” (and the role of secondary schools in building it)
- Have some 2% of the annual education budget should be devoted to a coordinated plan for research and evaluation.
- It is worth noting that the various community college associations also engage in policy lobbying with Congress (e.g. American Association of Community Colleges, 2013).

Implications for the Policy on Community Colleges

The above list is a useful summary of the kinds of issues which the Policy on Community Colleges process needs to address over the next five years. The development of a Community College Association of some kind should be encouraged.

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