Improving quality and expanding the further education and training college system to meet the need for an inclusive growth path

Anthony Gewer

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Contents

Introduction

Further education and training (FET) colleges are entering a critical period in their history. Despite extensive activity in the FET College subsystem over the last decade, the transformation of this subsystem has been undertaken in the absence of a coherent framework for post-school education and training. The creation of a new Department for Higher Education and Training in 2009 has provided the basis for greater coherence in the post-school education environment, and potentially provides a clearer institutional home for FET colleges.

The transformation programme for FET, established by the FET White Paper of 1998 and enacted by the FET Act of that same year, was premised on the need for a more coordinated *FET system*, which included senior secondary schools, colleges and other forms of training for the workplace. The conceptual framework for this FET system hinged on the notion of a system of providers all operating within a particular band, and the challenge was to create coherence within the boundaries of the band (i.e. Levels 2–4 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)). The split in function between the Department of Education and the Department of Labour never allowed for this coherence as there was no apparent enabling mechanism for bringing the supply side of the system into a meaningful relationship with the employer-led SETA system. Within the Department of Education itself, improving the Grade 12 results was a key priority, while the focus on institutional restructuring and curriculum reform in FET colleges occurred in the absence of a clear framework for college effectiveness, and thus the perpetuation of a weak institutional base for delivery.

The current shift towards a *post-school system* suggests that the different needs of post-school youth will be addressed in a more coherent manner, with enhanced access to and articulation with higher education, as well as a clearer pathway to occupational qualifications and the workplace. At the same time, however, there is a recognition of a need to ensure that each of the subsystems within the post-school system has the requisite institutional capacity to fulfil its role if this coherence is going to be achieved.

This shift in approach coincides with the review of the NQF itself with the promulgation of the National Qualifications Framework Act (Act 67 of 2008), which consolidates the responsibility for implementing the NQF with three bodies: Umalusi, the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and the newly formed Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO). The Act also calls for a move away from a highly standardized and prescriptive approach to the design and management of qualifications to a more differentiated approach taking into account the different institutional contexts. Therefore, while higher education institutions may be given more autonomy to develop and manage qualifications, the new QCTO will adopt a more tightly prescribed approach. The role of the FET colleges within this framework is still unclear. For now it maintains an externally driven examinations system at each of the three NQF levels, managed by Umalusi. At the same time, the new Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) seeks to move the FET colleges into a more flexible and responsive framework, allowing colleges (particularly better equipped colleges) to respond to the demands of employers and have increased levels of autonomy. It also

seeks to provide the colleges with more power to assess learners, with strong external moderation, and restrict external assessment to a final examination at level 4 as was originally planned when the NCV was introduced.

At the heart of the complexity, is the dual mission and purpose of FET colleges in this post-school environment:

Primarily, colleges offer post-school youth with a strong theoretical foundation in disciplinary knowledge which equips them to enter into higher education, to access academic qualification, or the workplace to be further trained towards specialised occupations, including through apprenticeships.

In addition, however, colleges can offer school leavers, as well as employed and unemployed people the theoretical components of an occupational qualification that leads to a formally recognised trade or occupation.

These dual purposes form the basis of an understanding of the role of FET colleges and its relationship to other subsystems in the post-school environment.

This paper seeks to analyse the key issues that impact on the capacity of FET colleges to become effective and efficient delivery agents within this post-school system. It sketches the policy implementation context through which colleges have evolved and proposes a conceptual framework for understanding the role of colleges going forward. It then briefly outlines what we know and what we don't know about colleges, and what are the short, medium and long-term priorities that need to be addressed in order to maximise college effectiveness.

Brief overview of progress to date

Following the promulgation of the FET Act in 1998, the critical transformation of the FET college sector began in 2000 with the establishment of a task team to plot the restructuring of the institutional landscape. This resulted in the development of nine provincial plans outlining the new configuration of merged colleges, and the transformation of 152 technical colleges into 50 multisite FET colleges. This process was completed in 2003 with the declaration of the FET colleges in provincial gazettes.

Following this milestone, there were four significant interventions:

- In 2005, the National Treasury allocated a R1.9 billion recapitalisation conditional grant aimed primarily at infrastructure development for modernised programme delivery. These funds were allocated to support the delivery of programmes in priority skills areas from 2007.
- In 2006, a new curriculum and qualification framework (the National Certificate (Vocational) or NCV) was developed, aimed at addressing quality and relevance shortcomings in the college curriculum. The NCV is focused priority skills for the economy and there are currently 14 subfields within the NCV qualification.

The promulgation of the FET Colleges Act in 2006, which stipulated that all public FET colleges become autonomous bodies with their own Councils, thus partially removing this responsibility from the provincial departments of education. Educators at FET colleges would now be employed by the colleges and not by the provincial departments of education. The principal and management staff is still appointed by the MEC in terms of the Public Service Act.

The introduction of a FET college bursary scheme in 2007, with an initial three-year allocation of R600 million to support enrolments in the NC(V) qualification.

Therefore, much of the post-restructuring period was focused on putting in place the necessary conditions for the implementation of a new curriculum, and devolving powers of appointment of staff to the councils. The rationale for the latter revolved around increased flexibility within the colleges to respond to local needs by employing staff in a manner that was most suited to responsive delivery. As such, councils could set policies around post provisioning and the contracting of additional staff where necessary.

The FET Colleges Act also provides the Minister of Education with the powers to determine the norms and standards for funding of FET colleges. The National Funding Norms and Standards for FET colleges links funding of NC(V) programmes to planning and reporting. The funding norms are a key lever for government to monitor the effectiveness of colleges. It allows the DHET to target its funding and it operates off a formula whereby the state funds 80% of the costs of college programmes, while learners are liable for the remaining 20%. The bursary scheme assists learners with the 20% portion.

The National Plan for FET, gazetted in December 2008, seeks to more clearly create a specific identity for the *FET college sector* as opposed to the *FET sector* as outlined in the FET White Paper. The Plan maps out targets for massive expansion of enrolments to 2014 as follows:

Year	National enrolment
2007	25 000
2008	60 000
2009	120 000
2010	177 000
2011	256 000
2012	371 000
2013	538 000
2014	800 000

This translates into between 43% and 46% growth per annum.

The National Plan highlighted the dual role of colleges:

> "the need for initial vocational education to focus on general vocational programmes which support the development of vocational skills with a breadth of knowledge and a strong general education foundation. Linked to this is the role of vocational education and training institutions in supporting knowledge development within occupational programmes, that is, the theoretical learning components of the learnership and apprentice programmes." (page 14)

The National Plan goes on to spell out how the enrolments should be managed:

> "...at least between 70% to 80% of each college's student enrolment capacity should be dedicated to the Ministerially approved FET qualifications (IVET[1]). Between 20% and 30% of each college's student headcount enrolment capacity should be dedicated to CVET[2] which in the South African context may focus on flexible offerings for adult students, formal adult education and training programmes, public-private partnerships, higher education programmes, occupational programmes, as well as many other community development projects which each college can identify in order to respond to the needs of the community that it serves." (page 15)

The Plan lays out a coordinated approach to growth in the FET college subsystem, guided by effective planning and measurable outputs. This Plan preceded the establishment of the new Department of Higher Education and Training but already signaled the need for greater coordination and a shift to a nationally-driven approach to growing the sector. However, the plan neglected to provide any meaningful baseline data that could inform the operationalisation of the plan, save to say that the Department would move urgently to establish the necessary systems to provide this data for more effective planning.

In 2009, the Department of Education published the Draft National Policy Framework for Lecturer Qualifications and Development in FET colleges in South Africa, which aims to develop a national standard for FET college lecturers. The framework sets out the fundamental components for both initial and continuous professional development as resting on:

- Subject matter/occupational expertise in the designated field of study
- Pedagogic expertise which refers to general pedagogic principles that apply to all teaching/learning situations, as well as to subject didactics that transmit the knowledge and skill foundations on which vocational expertise depends
- Up-to-date workplace expertise that facilitates the creation of structured, practical learning environments that prepare students for work under real-time conditions

1 Initial Vocational Education and Training

2 Continuing Vocational Education and Training

- Basic academic competence that provides the basis for further study in both subject/technical and pedagogic areas.

Yet again, the framework operates in a vacuum of available data to guide any meaningful planning. In addition, the framework does not take full cognisance of the differentiated needs of lecturers from different vocational fields.

These various interventions over the last decade have formed the basis for the development of a 20-year vision going forward, under the umbrella of the new Department of Higher Education and Training. The next section outlines some of the key challenges currently facing the colleges and proposes a framework for understanding these challenges.

Tackling key issues facing FET colleges

The National Plan for FET calls for massive expansion of the subsystem. The large numbers of post-school youth who are not in employment or education creates a significant pressure point for expansion in FET. However, the fundamental questions of what kind of growth and for what purpose needs to be further interrogated. The shift in funding to the Department of Higher Education and Training allows for a more comprehensive analysis of the entire landscape and the development of a strategy which caters for differentiation and targeted support where needed.

Effective planning requires a sound understanding of the nature of the problem. In the first instance, unemployment amongst 15–24 year olds stood at 50% in 2006, twice that of the general economically active population (Simkins et al, 2008). At the same time, post-school education and training remains elusive for many young people. Each year the schooling system supplies around 330 000 Grade 12 school leavers. Around 80 000 to 90 000 of these Grade 12 school leavers gain access to higher education. The remaining 250 000 join the approximately 750 000 young people that drop out or fail further down the system. The large numbers of school-leavers that exit the education system and do not enroll in some form of post-school education and training is a significant challenge for the state as it has the potential to further entrench long-term unemployment for youth.

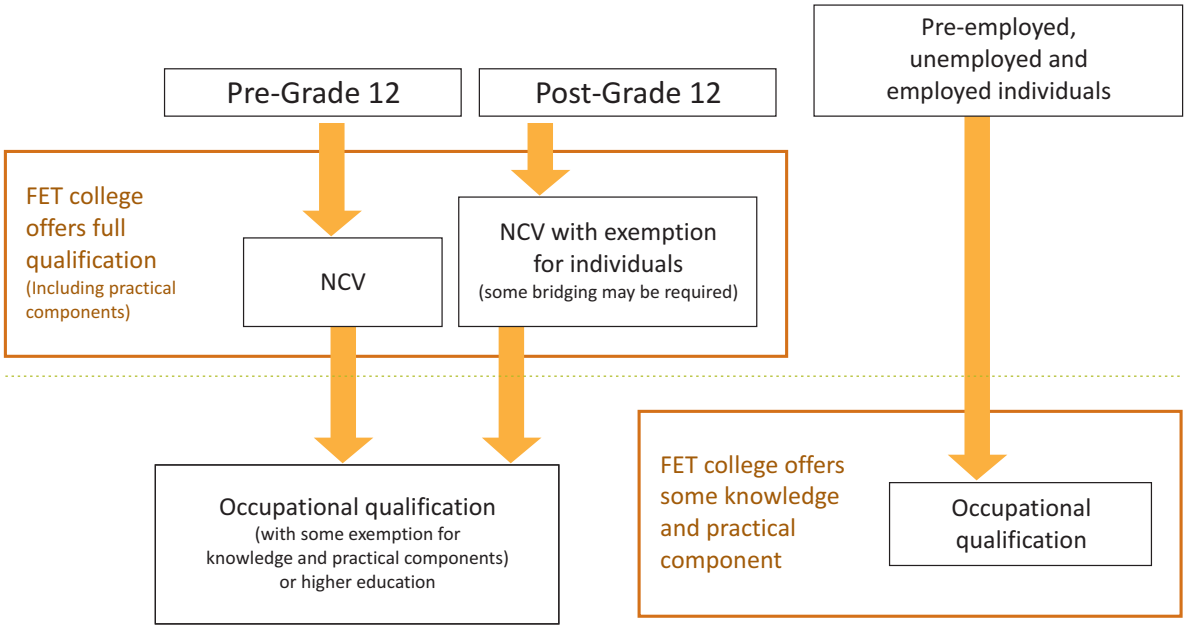
A recent study estimated an immediate pool of 750 000 18–24 year olds who have successfully completed a Grade 12 but have not engaged in post-school education (Sheppard and Cloete, 2009). In addition, there is a further 990 000 young people out of school who have at least a Grade 10 qualification and therefore are prime candidates for FET college provision. Therefore, the country sits with a significant challenge in post-school access to education and training. This lack of access serves to perpetuate and exacerbate the youth unemployment crisis.

The question then arises as to what role the FET college sector can play in addressing this crisis. The policy interventions to date have sought to position colleges primarily to offer a sound general-vocational qualification to a critical mass of school leavers in preparation for higher education or

for entry-level employment and further training in the workplace. A number of issues emerge in relation to this role:

- Should the NCV be targeted primarily at post Grade 9 school leavers as originally intended, or should it also focus on post Grade 12 school leavers?
- How do colleges relate to workplace learning and practice, and the QCTO?
- What is the capacity of colleges to absorb large numbers of school leavers and ensure an acceptable throughput?
- What is the capacity of colleges to offer innovative programmes that are more resource and management intensive?

A coherent model is presented below to answer to the first two questions. The model suggests that colleges can accommodate both pre-Grade 12 and post-Grade 12 learners in the NCV qualification and still facilitate access to occupational qualifications in the workplace or higher education, thereby realising the dual role expressed in the National Plan.



The issue of how to achieve acceptable throughput and cater for diverse groups speaks to a larger challenge of effectiveness within FET colleges. This is discussed below.

The graph above articulates the dual role of colleges. However, the ideal situation is for the full qualifications and the components of the occupational qualifications that colleges would offer operate off a similar platform. This would allow for maximum use of resources within the college, including being able to use the same teaching staff to support both routes.

However, the relationship between colleges, the QCTO and the CHE still needs to be worked out. A common agreement is needed on the respective role of Umalusi and the QCTO with respect to quality assuring this dual role. In addition, the potential role of colleges in offering higher education qualifications still requires further engagement.

The NCV curriculum

The NCV curriculum has been under a cloud since its introduction. The NCV was introduced as an alternative route to a level 4 "matric". However, the NCV policy also stipulated that the NCV at level 4 "enables students to acquire the necessary knowledge, practical skills, applied competence and understanding required for employment in a particular occupation or trade, or class of occupations or trades, or entrance into higher education." (p. 82) Therefore, the implication was that the NCV graduate would be ready for access to enter into a job. The NCV was introduced to provide a general-vocational post-school qualification that could be delivered to a large mass of young people. It is constructed around the delivery of theory and practical components within a college environment. The general feedback from industry is that the NCV provides a general grounding which must then be further developed in the workplace in order to develop the necessary occupation or trade skills.

Furthermore, there is a concern that the content of the NCV does not accurately align with skills requirements in the industries concerned. As a result, in response to a persistent skills supply crisis, five of the largest companies in the construction sector financed the rewriting of the NCV Civil Engineering and Construction curriculum. Companies engaged in the Technical Business Skills Partnership have acknowledged that similar work needs to be done on the engineering curriculum.

The curriculum seeks to ensure equivalence between the language and mathematics subjects in the NCV and those at Grade 10–12 in schools. As such, the suggestion is that post-Grade 12 learners should not need to repeat these subjects as they should have successfully completed them at school. Therefore, there is a call to streamline the NCV for post-matriculants and allow exemption for these subjects.

Once these issues are addressed, the NCV should gain credibility amongst industry and, as long as the NCV produces sufficient numbers of graduates each year, employers are likely to work with colleges and recruit these graduates.

Performance in the FET college subsystem

The table below illustrates the enrolments of young people into NCV programmes since their introduction in 2007. In 2009, the colleges enrolled around 90 000 new entrants into the NCV. Therefore, there has been substantial growth over the last three years.

	2007	2008	2009
NC(V)	26 451	67 512	122 921

However, it is concerning, that of the 26 451 that enrolled in Level 2 in 2007, only 4 991 enrolled to write the Level 4 exit examination in 2009. It is not clear how many of these were successful in the Level 4 examinations but it is clear that the pool of graduates for the labour market in 2010 from the NCV will be small. The supply is reduced further when disaggregated by sector.

This limited supply follows on from a general constriction of supply during the three years in which the NCV was being implemented, after phasing out the NATED programmes which allowed for a more flexible supply on an ongoing basis.

This has raised some concerns amongst industry as to whether the quantity of supply will be constricted indefinitely with the introduction of the NCV. The immediate reaction is to put pressure on the DHET to bring back the NATED programmes.

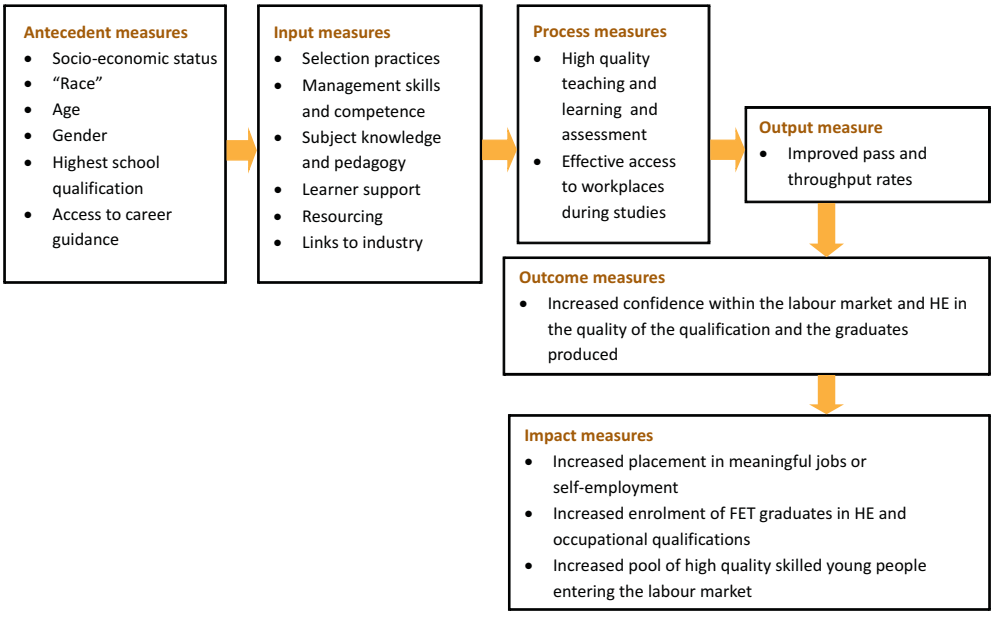
More fundamentally, this context raises questions around the quality and effectiveness of colleges, which in turn raises questions around whether the subsystem should be expanded while it is not able to deliver at its current levels.

It would seem more important to understand the nature of the challenges that colleges face in the delivery of the NCV and to identify the particular interventions that are going to be needed to strengthen the quality of delivery.

A framework for assessing college effectiveness

There is inadequate data to allow a detailed analysis of the challenges underlying effectiveness in colleges. Much of the data collected by the NBI and the HSRC is outdated. This lack of data has a negative effect on planning.

In order to better understand the factors underlying effectiveness in colleges, a simple framework is applied, as follows.



Recent studies have begun to generate some data on the current context and begin to answer some of the institutional issues raised above. The table below outlines the current status of data available.

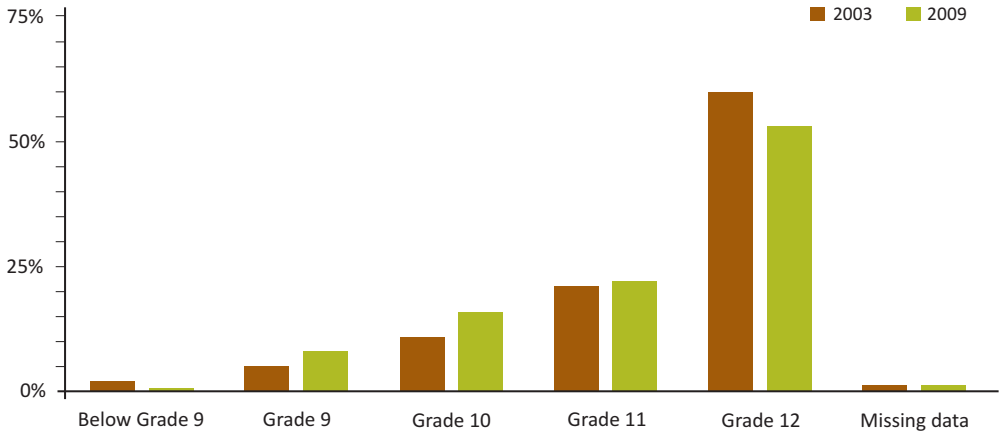
Antecedent measures	**Status of data**
Socio-economic status	Have data from surveys of 9 885 NCV students from 2009 and 10 470 Nated students from 2003
Race	
Gender	
Highest school qualification	
Access to career guidance	
Input measures	
Selection practices	No recent data available
Management competence	No data available
Subject and pedagogic competence qualifications (trade and/or teaching) years and recency of industry experience	Data on 531 engineering, construction and IT lecturers across 17 colleges for 2009
Appropriate teaching and learning resourcing Classroom materials Workshop equipment	Have data from surveys of 9 885 NCV students from 2009 No consolidated data on resource conditions and requirements across the subsystem
Learner support	No recent data available
Linkages to industry	Have data from surveys of 9 885 NCV students from 2009 and 10 470 Nated students from 2003
Process measures	
High quality teaching and learning and assessment	No data
Access to workplace exposure during studies	Have data from surveys of 9 885 NCV students from 2009 and 10 470 Nated students from 2003
Output measure	
Pass and throughput	2009 NCV examination results
Outcome measure	
Increased confidence in quality of qualification and graduate	Data pending, due early April 2010
Impact measure	
Increased opportunities for meaningful employment	Tracer study of 1 218 college graduates from 2003
Increased pool of high quality skilled young people in the labour market	Data source unclear

As indicated in the table, there are significant gaps in the available data and these gaps provide the basis for the kind of evidence that needs to be collected to facilitate policy development and planning. Below is a summary of what the available data is telling us, and the implications thereof for policy and planning.

Students

The data suggests that despite the fact that the NCV was deliberately set up to target post-Grade 9 learners, it is clear that, with the exception of the Western Cape, the colleges are largely attracting post-Grade 12 learners. This situation has not shifted since the phasing out of the NATED programmes implying that, despite its intentions, the NCV has not resulted in any shift in target group.

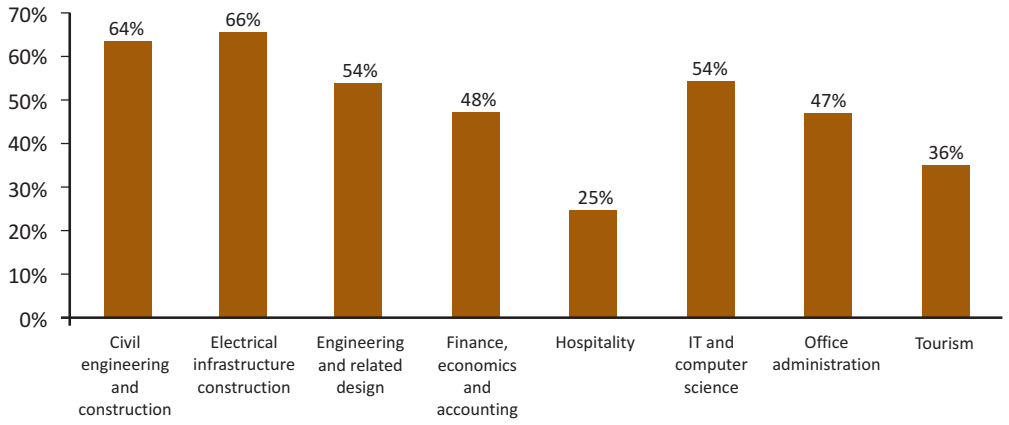
Figure 1: Highest school qualification for college students 2003 and 2009



Source: Gewer, 2010

In addition, as illustrated in Figure 2 below, the engineering and IT fields are attracting more school leavers with Grade 12 certificates, while the business-oriented fields and, more noticeably, hospitality and tourism are attracting more pre-Grade 12 learners. This is a relative shift from past trends, where engineering would attract more pre-Grade 12 learners and business studies was more likely to attract post-Grade 12 learners.

Figure 2: 2009 students with Grade 12 qualification by field of study



There is no absolute consensus on the relative benefits of targeting post-Grade 12 or pre-Grade 12 school leavers for entry into the NCV. Historically, apprenticeships were largely the preserve of post-Grade 9 school leavers who were not coping with the demands of the secondary school curriculum and could gain access to an apprenticeship with the bare minimum of trade theory. However, the evolving skills demands in industry calls into question the type of theoretical knowledge that young people should bring into the apprenticeship. This would apply across the sectors that rely on intermediate occupations. There is a need to engage with industry stakeholders across the various sectors that the colleges serve, to establish what the minimum requirements would be for entry into the sector. However, it would seem that if the NCV is providing the equivalent of Grade 12 for English and mathematics, together with the vocational subjects at level 4, industry should be satisfied with the type of graduate that is being produced. Similarly, if post-Grade 12 learners were to get exemption for English and mathematics, the additional vocational theory and levels 2–4 should equip them to enter the workplace.

The key challenge would be how to attract more pre-Grade 12 learners into the colleges. The Western Cape seems to have adopted a deliberate strategy to attract these learners through coordinated and targeted marketing. The colleges would collaborate, under the leadership of the Provincial Department of Education to drive this strategy. A similar approach could work in other regions, but would require the colleges to proactively take the lead, particularly as the functions of the provincial Departments of Education get transferred to the national DHET.

Ideally, enrolment planning aimed at growth in the colleges should seek to get a good balance of post-Grade 12 and pre-Grade 12 learners across the various subfields in order to address the post-school challenges of both these groups. Therefore, any deliberate marketing strategy should have a dual focus in order to attract post-school learners from both groups.

Quality of teaching and learning capacity

The 2009 examinations results as indicated above, suggest substantial inefficiencies and poor quality of delivery in the FET college subsystem. The FET Colleges Act of 2006 shifted the powers of employment of educators to college councils. In this process, lecturers were given the option to remain within the college or be deployed to schools. It is understood that through this process colleges lost many lecturers with expertise (around 36% in one case). Lecturing staff opted for deployment to schools because they did not trust their new employer and did not want to put their government employment benefits at risk. Part of this challenge has emerged from the absence of a clear framework for lecturer qualifications and minimum requirements for appointment. There are also concerns that the councils are not suitably equipped to appoint and manage staff and there are large numbers of vacancies. There is a need to create conditions to bring lost expertise back into the college sector. However, more data is needed on the current status of lecturing staff in order to assess what the scale of the problem is.

A recent audit of 531 engineering, construction and IT lecturers provided some measures of educator competence. High percentages of respondents in all three fields (average 98%) reported having post-secondary or trade qualifications, but much lower percentages reported having a university qualification. Ideally, college lecturers require a balance of technical and pedagogical qualifications, as well as industry experience. Of the sample of 531 lecturers:

- 41% possess technical qualifications at NQF levels 6–8 but most of these do not have the necessary pedagogical qualifications
- 26% of the respondents have technical qualifications at NQF levels 2–5 but most have no pedagogical qualifications
- 33,5% have no technical qualifications but is the largest group of lecturers with pedagogical qualifications

Therefore, lecturers generally either have technical qualifications or pedagogical qualifications but it is not the norm for lecturers to have both.

Over 50% of respondents in Engineering and Construction are or have been at one time registered artisans, and on average 87% of these respondents have maintained their artisan status. However, only 30% of engineering lecturers have had recent industry-based work experience (i.e. in the last three years). Almost half the engineering lecturers that reported having had industry experience, had last been in industry more than 10 years ago.

Last/most recent year of experience	All three fields	Construction	Engineering	Information technology
2009–2008	26%	28%	22%	40%
2007–2006	12%	20%	8%	22%
2005–2004	8%	10%	8%	7%
2003–2002	7%	6%	7%	11%
2001–2000	7%	5%	8%	4%
1990–1999	21%	12%	25%	11%
Before 1990	14%	15%	16%	0%
Year not specified	5%	4%	6%	5%
Valid total	**100% (N=394)**	**100% (N=81)**	**100% (N=258)**	**100% (N=55)**

The draft National Policy Framework for Lecturer Qualifications and Development outlines the minimum requirements related to lecturers' qualifications, which includes a basic academic qualification (NSC or NCV), a qualification at level 6 or 7 that is relevant to the subject matter they are teaching, a pedagogic qualification at level 5, and practical instructors must demonstrate

occupational competence by means of a recognised trade/technical qualification if they are teaching the practical component of vocational subjects of the NC(V). The framework expects current lecturers to upgrade their qualifications to meet the minimum requirements. These are onerous requirements, especially if one considers the current context.

As it stands, only a low proportion of lecturing staff in the sample meet the subject-related requirements (i.e. Level 6 or 7). However, there is a need to more effectively benchmark subject and pedagogic competences for lecturers in colleges. The data above suggests a concern on both the technical and pedagogical competence of the lecturers. However, this will vary across different subfields and there is a need to level the playing fields when it comes to prescribing minimum qualification requirements, as upgrading to a standardised level across fields may be more time consuming for lecturers in some subjects than in others. The study has shown that lecturers' exposure to relevant industry-based work experience can be improved, and innovative ways of arranging such experience should be explored with industry leaders.

The very high rate of projected enrolment growth requires a managed transition to a high-quality FET system, including a carefully targeted investment strategy to ensure that weaknesses in lecturer development are identified and prioritised. Funding for higher education institutions that can provide relevant lecturer training with a disciplinary focus should be ringfenced to ensure maximum benefits for the FET sector.

To inform this managed approach, a study of lecturer supply, utilisation and demand is urgently required to support the planned enrolment growth in the FET sector through detailed research and careful projections per field and per college. The study should include consideration of the age and qualifications of the current lecturer population and their training needs per discipline, as well as how to ensure future recruitment of competent lecturers into the sector.

College-industry linkages and facilitating access to the workplace

Since the decline of apprenticeships toward the end of the last century there has been increasing distance between colleges and industry. While there has been pressure on colleges to create more effective linkages with industry over the last decade, this has had limited success. There is an absence of current data on college-industry linkages but there is an indication that pockets of good practice in this regard do exist. There are a range of examples of colleges who continue to offer the knowledge components of learnerships and apprenticeships and also provide short courses and skills training for industry.

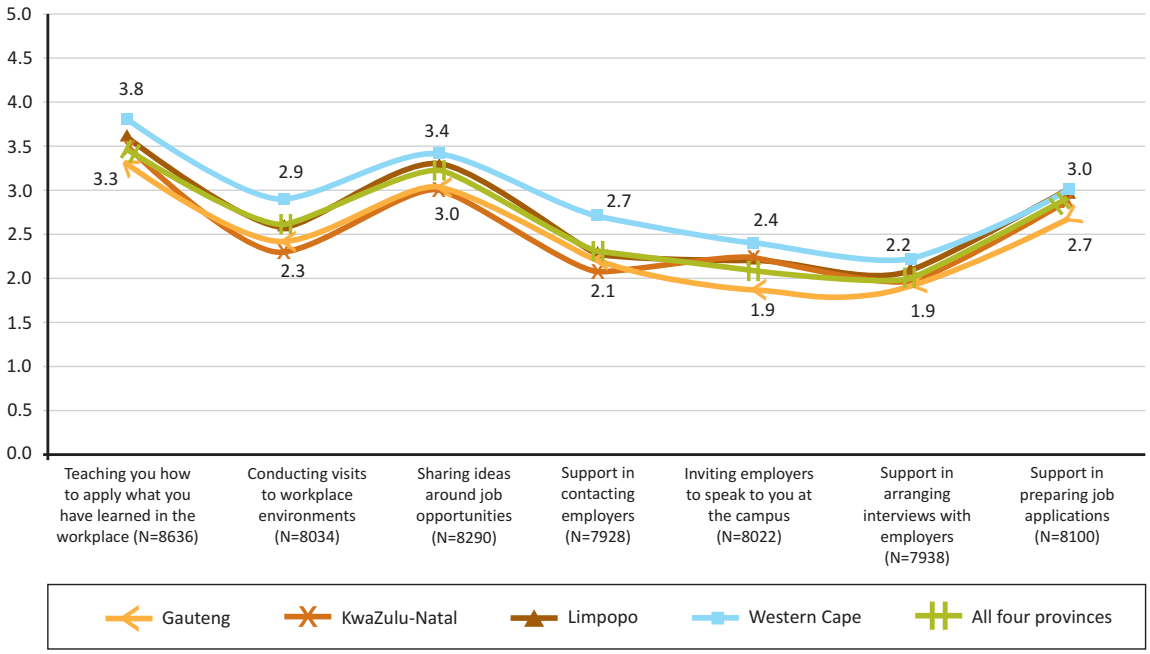
However, the general perception is that the NCV has further disrupted any attempts to forge relationships with industry. The suggestion is that the continued reliance amongst industry on the NATED programmes, distrust for the NCV and the constriction of supply created through the first three years of NCV implementation, has caused industry to turn to other sources, including

taking Grade 12 school leavers. Industry has demonstrated some commitment to working with colleges and there are examples of partnership projects emerging, such as the Technical Skills Business Partnership and the College-Industry Partnership. However, for the moment, these remain projects and do not permeate the core operations of the college. In addition, there is concern that while industry is prepared to invest in supporting colleges, there needs to be a reciprocal commitment to quality delivery and sufficient output.

More fundamentally, there appears to be persistent absence of an enabling framework for colleges and industry to work together. Colleges lack the capability and credibility to engage with industry on equal terms. Employers on the other hand are reluctant to work with colleges and do not have faith in the college's ability to produce quality graduates. There is uncertainty about what the NCV will produce and what level of output will be achieved. It would seem that such relationships require the role of a strong intermediary, as in the case of the National Business Initiative in the two partnership projects highlighted above. Another example of this is the FET colleges project being funded and managed by the Swiss-South Africa Cooperative Initiative (SSACI). In this project, SSACI has played a strong intermediary role, facilitating the initial relationship between colleges and local industry, in order to provide access for NCV learners to the workplace for brief exposure during their studies.

At present, the perception of students as indicated by the ratings below, is that colleges are not being proactive in creating links with industry, particularly for the purpose of facilitating access to the workplace for students for a period of brief exposure in order to enhance their learning in the college.

Figure 3: Ratings by NCV of role of college in preparing them for world of work



On average the colleges score higher on support in the classroom aimed at preparing students for the labour market. However, colleges are weak in exposing students to workplaces and were particularly weak in creating opportunities for students to meet with or be interviewed by employers.

Kind of experience	% of valid total who selected the experience listed				
	Gauteng	KwaZulu-Natal	Limpopo	Western Cape	All four provinces
Part of a learnership/apprenticeship	21%	19%	21%	31%	22%
Through a company with college links	9%	8%	11%	9%	10%
I found a company that took me in for work experience	13%	17%	13%	19%	14%
No work experience	57%	60%	58%	41%	56%
Other	7%	3%	6%	8%	6%
Valid total	2 910	711	3 659	1 078	8 358
Did not complete question	551	201	623	152	1 527
Grand total	**3 461**	**912**	**4 282**	**1 230**	**9 885**

Industry linkages and access to work exposure is important not only for enhancing teaching and learning, but also for enhancing access to meaningful employment. Recent data from a tracer study, conducted in 2009, of a cohort of FET college students from 2003 has demonstrated the importance of workplace experience during studies and access to employment that is appropriate to what one studied.

The table above indicates the low level of access to workplaces during studies, except in the case of learnerships and apprenticeships. Colleges appear to play little role in facilitating access to workplace. The tracer study suggests that, when controlling for factors such as socio-economic status, race, gender, field of study, locality and others, graduates who have had access to work experience during their studies had 82% more chance of finding employment that was related to what they studied.

When students asked which route they had used in finding their first job, four routes emerged as important:

- Advertising and employment agencies were the most important routes to finding their first job
- Personal contacts and family relations accounted for 35% of the responses, suggesting they play a more important role than the students anticipated.
- Support from college staff did not feature as strongly as had been anticipated.

An analysis of the relationship of the different routes to finding employment and being employed in a job that was related to what they studied provided the following results.

How did you go about finding your first job	Significance
Through employment agency	0.021**
Through support from college teaching staff	0.037**
Through college links with employers	0.484
Through placement	0.484
Through family relations	0.521
I joined family business	1.000
Through personal contacts in the family	0.11
Through holiday jobs during my period of study	0.308
I worked for the same employer before my studies	0.075
Through a newspaper advertisement	0.788

Of the four primary routes to finding employment (employment agencies, newspaper agencies, personal contacts and family relations) only employment agencies are able to achieve the necessary match to appropriate employment. Employment through college teaching staff was not reported to be a prominent means of finding employment. However, the analysis suggests that if this route were enhanced, it would add value to enhancing employability.

Therefore, it would seem that emphasis needs to be placed on strengthening the capacity of colleges to form relationships with industry. This may be difficult with the ageing contingent of white lecturers that have come from industry and therefore continue to have networks in industry. The relationships will need to involve direct engagement where industry plays a direct role in ensuring practical training in the colleges is aligned to their needs, while college lecturers will need to spend time in industry in order to develop the understanding of industry's requirements.

The significance of the role of employment agencies illustrates the importance of a dedicated intermediary function, with the skills to better match the output from colleges with industry needs. This implies that if private employment agencies were incentivised further, their role in facilitating access to meaningful employment for college graduates could become crucial.

Key knowledge gaps

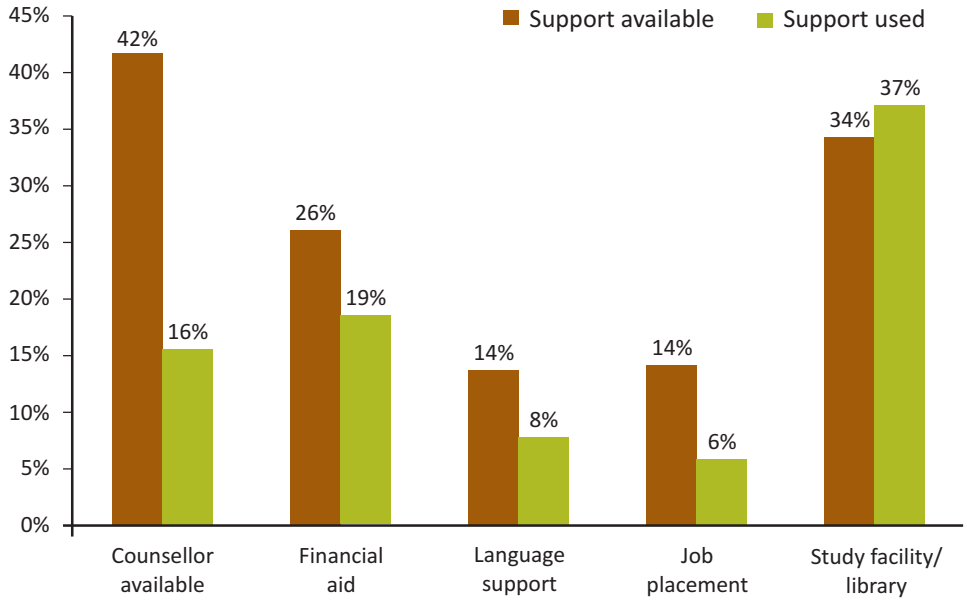
Management

There is insufficient knowledge around the current capacity of college management. The post-merger creation of new management structures and the redeployment of staff within colleges to different management portfolios has not been matched with a systematic plan for developing the capacity of these managers to drive the college mandate in a strategic and effective manner. An audit of this capacity is imminent and will be important for addressing any gaps going forward.

Learner support

Similarly, there is limited knowledge on the effectiveness of learner support services within colleges. Data from a survey of NCV learners in 2009 suggests that there are limited learner support services available and where there are services they are not being utilised by the students.

Figure 4: Availability vs use of college support services



Any analysis of the effectiveness of the learner support services requires a framework of what constitutes best practice in college learner support. The Department of Education produced a framework for learner support in 2007, but this framework was not based on an analysis of the weaknesses in the system and the capacity of the colleges to deliver. Therefore, the development of a framework for learner support combined with an analysis of what the support needs of learners are and what capacity is needed to address these needs, should precede any learner support planning.

Resourcing

The R1.9 billion recapitalisation programme provided an important impetus for the delivery of high quality programmes. The recapitalisation proposals incorporated an analysis of the strategic needs of local industry and the local economy more broadly. However, it is clear that the level of resourcing across college campuses remains highly unequal. There is insufficient data to provide an analysis of the outcomes of the recapitalisation programme and the extent to which it has added value to college provision. It is therefore necessary to get a full national picture of the resource base of the colleges, and to map this against the local labour market context to assess what campuses should and are able to deliver. This would then form the basis for a differentiated funding mechanism.

Medium- and long-term recommendations and interventions

The DHET has embarked on a process to revisit the current National Plan for FET and develop a 20-year vision for the FET college sector. The key ranked priorities during this time and the associated medium- and long-term recommendations are captured below. In formulating the recommendations, there is a recognition that there are different levels of capacity within the subsystem and a differentiated approach is therefore needed. As such the recommendations are general in nature and the prioritisation relates to the general capacity of the subsystem rather than individual colleges.

Furthermore, while there will be a temptation to move ahead faster with some of the longer-term recommendations, the overarching recommendation is to recognise the capacity constraints in the subsystem and take account of the scale and depth of the challenges. Therefore, it is believed that a measured approach is needed and that the subsystem should be strengthened and stabilised before any long-term changes can be effected in a sustainable manner. The experience of the last 10 years should be an indicator of how substantial the challenges are and the time required to address them.

Finally, the recommendations work from the premise that any plans going forward should build upon what has already been achieved rather than around making wholesale changes to the system. The interventions of the last decade have shaken the system and it is currently operating within a fragile space. The interventions should be focus first and foremost on increasing the resilience of the system and then creating enabling conditions for innovation.

Recommendation 1: A FET college monitoring and evaluation system

The continuous collection of data is a necessity for effective planning. Despite sporadic attempts to collect empirical data over the last 10 years, there is a dearth of data to guide planning. An effective monitoring and evaluation system would assist the DHET to monitor efficiency and effectiveness indicators on an ongoing base and thereby improve planning processes for growth and development.

In the m*edium-term*, the DHET should design, test and implement an IT-based system that enables monitoring of key efficiency and effectiveness measures across the system. The initial stages of development should focus on designing and testing the tools, and populating the system with baseline information. The system should be located centrally, with feeder systems from each of the colleges. The system should be systematically tested and implemented to ensure optimal capacity to use it. By the 10th year the M&E system should have been regularly collecting, analysing and publishing key data on the performance of the subsystem.

The M&E system should enable the DHET to establish the factors that are impacting on performance and thereby enable the Department to put in place the necessary interventions and support mechanisms to address these. This would also inform enrolment planning and the management of growth. This requires that the DHET initially puts in place the necessary resources to conduct site visits to campuses, for the purposes of quality assuring the data and supporting colleges to reflect on the data and design appropriate strategies to improve performance.

In the *long-term*, however, the DHET should have moved to a process of college self-evaluation. Once there is a level playing field for collection, collation and analysis of data, this function should be devolved to the colleges, and colleges should have to report on the key indicators on a yearly basis. This self-evaluation would operate off a set of benchmarked standards for effectiveness against which colleges can begin to measure and compare themselves. Self-evaluation would also enable colleges to set targets for manageable growth and enrolment planning.

Recommendation 2: Enhanced quality in teaching and learning

The data emerging through the recent staffing study seems to suggest that the development of lecturers is a critical lever for enhancing learner performance. The current profile of lecturers in the selected fields provides some indication of why learners are not coping with the demands of the curriculum.

In the *medium-term*, the DHET needs to design and implement an educator supply, utilisation and development strategy which will ensure that colleges are adequately equipped with the necessary skills to do justice to the curriculum. In the first instance this requires a national study of the current profile of lecturers across the system, and a more detailed understanding of current teaching and learning practices in the classroom. The strategy should identify the developmental needs of the current educator workforce as well as how new welltrained educators are going to be brought into the sector. If the findings from the staffing survey in 2009 are an indication of the scale of the programme, it is likely that the solution is going to take at least the next 10 years. Higher Education Institutions, and particularly the Universities of Technology, must be brought in upfront to participate in the design of the strategy and to be key partners in the delivery thereof. Employers should also be brought in to provide access for educators to the workplace as part of their initial and continuing development. The focus of the strategy will be on ensuring that, as far as possible, all lecturers develop a well rounded set of technical, pedagogical and practical skills and that they are able to apply these in the classroom.

In the *long term*, the DHET will need to establish a common standard for lecturers that will guide their training and practice. This standard should take cognisance of the different knowledge and skills need across the subfields and set clear performance criteria and a performance management framework.

Recommendation 3: Funding mechanisms

As stated above, funding remains the primary lever for accountability in the subsystem. However, the limited resources for core funding of programmes will inhibit growth and limit flexibility. The integration of the SETAs, the National Skills Fund (NSF) and the FET colleges expands the potential funding base and allows the DHET to support the development of colleges in a differentiated manner.

In the *medium term*, the focus should be on ensuring that a funding strategy is based on meaningful data. Therefore, more data on the functionality and capacity of the campuses, the resource base and the local labour market conditions must be collected and analysed. The funding strategy should be managed centrally, and based on a principle of coordination and equitable resource distribution. The core funding should be targeted at differentiated programme provision across campuses according to local labour market needs, particularly in rural areas. This may require increased specialisation at rural campuses where there is a clear absence of industry to support programmes being offered at urban campuses. Linked to this is complementary funding through the NSF to support the development of weaker campuses and better equip them to offer these programmes.

There also needs to be greater integration between the SETAs and the colleges for the purpose of funding the knowledge components of occupational qualifications, as well as targeted short courses and skills programmes where industry demand for these exist. This requires a more deliberate strategy on the part of SETAs to work with colleges and channel resources appropriately.

In the *long term*, the funding mechanisms should continue to work off a sound planning and coordination framework, but should reflect the differences in the subsystem. A direct link between funding and college self-evaluation will be required, with colleges given increased autonomy to determine their funding requirements.

Recommendation 4: Refining the curriculum

The introduction of the NCV has been a significant milestone for FET colleges. Despite its shortcomings, the NCV has required the colleges to engage with a more demanding level of teaching and learning. It has also positioned colleges to better prepare school leavers for occupational and learning pathways. However, there are concerns that the curriculum is not optimally aligned to the skills demands of employers. One of the common complaints is that the Department of Education did not consult sufficiently with industry when designing the curriculum.

In the *medium-term*, the DHET should engage with each industry sector to assess the relevance and accuracy of the NCV and thereby ensure fit-for-purpose, without undermining the broader knowledge principles underlying the curriculum. The industry engagement will focus on identifying

the minimum requirements for level 4 graduates and the scope of knowledge that the curriculum needs to deliver. On the basis of this engagement, the DHET should initiate and implement a collaborative approach to revising the NCV where necessary. This would entail working with curriculum experts who have an understanding of the subject matter and technical experts from within the industries concerned.

In the *long-term* the DHET should initiate a process of curriculum review every five years in order to ensure that the NCV remains up to date and relevant. This will also ensure industry's continued buy-in to the NCV. It should also review what additional programmes could be brought into the college to add diversity as the demands of the labour market change. These will include programmes that will be quality assured through the QCTO or the CHE and funded through the skills development levy. In particular there is a need to focus on innovative programmes for small business development that will tackle niche markets and value-added products along the value chain. This will require a more sophisticated resource utilisation and delivery structure within the colleges and should only be introduced in colleges that are ready to do so.

Recommendation 5: Management and governance

The policy interventions to date have not fully appreciated the context on the ground and the implications for achieving well managed institutions with responsible and optimal resource utilisation. The merger and restructuring process was not accompanied by a strategy of support and development for new managers, principals and councils, particularly in weaker institutions. The push to delegate powers to the councils through the FET Colleges Act of 2006 did not take account of the weaknesses within the councils and the manner in which such councils are constituted. Still today, many colleges are struggling with the challenges associated with multi-campus management, with varying management capacity across campus and unequal resources.

In the *medium-term,* it may be necessary to revisit the terms of the FET Colleges Act and reverse some of the powers of councils in weaker institutions. A focused mentoring and support programme for councils should be designed and implemented, and a framework for effective governance must be created. This includes a more rigorous focus on the make-up of councils and the particular role of industry therein.

In addition, a comprehensive management development strategy and programme should be instituted based on the identified needs of the management cohort in the colleges. Industry expertise should be brought into to mentor and support college managers as part of the development of college-industry relationships.

In the *long-term*, colleges can be given increased levels of autonomy as they begin to demonstrate the capacity to manage and govern themselves in a responsible and sustainable manner.

Summary and conclusions

The creation of a more coherent post-school education environment is an important step for FET college transformation. The transition to a national competence enables a more strategic approach to planning that can address needs across the subsystem in an equitable and differentiated manner. This transition brings with it many short-term challenges, particularly in terms of the performance and capacity of the subsystem. There is an urgent need for more data to fill the knowledge gaps and inform better planning, within an overarching framework for college effectiveness. The current data suggests that the scale of the challenges is significant but also provides an indication of what is needed to enhance college effectiveness.

The DHET has embarked on a process of stakeholder engagement and a review of the National Plan. This signals a strong focus on stakeholder involvement, and particularly industry involvement in defining the mission and purpose of colleges. This bodes well for achieving greater coherence and articulation.

Key recommendations include:

- Putting in place the systems required for monitoring and evaluation in order to better understand performance in the system and the factors that contribute to this.
- Addressing the quality of teaching and learning through a systematic analysis of educator capacity and the development of a framework and strategy for upgrading the current cohort of educators and developing a new cohort of well trained educators.
- Reviewing the funding norms with the aim of providing targeted funding for differentiated programme provision and development of weaker institutions.
- Working in collaboration with industry to address weaknesses and inaccuracies in the NCV curriculum and continuously review and improve the curriculum in the future.
- Address the management and governance weaknesses in the colleges to support increased efficiencies and effectiveness, including drawing in industry expertise to support this.

Discussions – 14 April 2010

A presentation based on the paper prepared for the DBSA, "Improving quality and expanding the further education and training college system to meet the need for an inclusive growth path" (Gewer, 2010), was made and extensive discussions followed. The key issues raised included:

1. The FET colleges are "it" for intermediary skills

Participants noted that it was generally clear what the remit for basic education and for HEI subsystems are; there are international benchmarks and relative stability in these sectors (in terms of expectations). However, there is an expectation for FET colleges to meet a variety of needs, for a wide spectrum of target groups (elaborated in point 2) and there is a range of institutional arrangements and systems internationally. It was noted that against this expectation this subsector traditionally has and continues to receive a small percentage of the education budget – R3,1 billion of a total education budget of R160 billion. The first 10 years post-1994 was focused on restructuring the sector and some effort was made to recapitalise it from 2007 onwards.

In the last five years attention was given to finalising policy on the curriculum and funding of the sector. In that period, Ministers have made statements about the poor enrollment and performance of the sector on the one hand and the importance of the sector for producing skills needed for the economy on the other.

A number of research studies since 1994; NBI's Colleges Collaboration Fund in the early part of last decade and the information available on the first implementation of the NCV, highlight the low enrollment, lack of confidence in the colleges, and poor resourcing and performance of the sector.

There is a strong view that vocational and occupational training must be a public provision responsibility. However the key to addressing the scale and breadth of the needs may lie partly in better quality inputs from the basic education system in the longer term, and in meaningful participation by industry so that these institutions can play their rightful role. (The system in Germany was referred to in this regard as a well functioning system with strong workplace links).

In the short term, some form of differentiation is required, and all options for provision need to be considered, both public and private, and the particular needs of the group referred to as NEET (not in employment, education or training) needs to be problematised and creative solutions found.

It was noted that the current condition of the FET system is that colleges are making a valiant effort (with some succeeding more than others) but overall the system is extremely fragile, is not achieving a reasonable return on investment, at a budget of R 3,1 billion less than 4 000 students

would have completed in 2009. In spite of these conditions, the current national plan expects this sector to grow to 1 million by 2014.

In the workshop, participants argued that it is critical to first stabilise the system, improve current quality and efficiency through very actively implementing a change management process to turn the system around. The ambition to expand numbers and responsibilities must take note of this fragile state and what resources are available.

A range of further questions were raised, some of which will be addressed in the discussion below: What are other options for the large number of youth who would most benefit from a college education/training? What is the role of Technical High Schools; How extensive is private FET provision?, e.g. there are estimated to be 548 private FET sites, and the artisan programmes in big companies are a major contributor. Some participants mooted that the role for SOE's should be increased again to what it was 20 years ago? What can learnerships contribute? Participants were not convinced that all forms of FET provision had been covered in the discussion.

Other issues relate to the image of the sector, better selection by students and colleges (ensure students know the options or opportunity available); the need for quality inputs from basic education and whether quality will be improved if the student is funded to make a choice of college. That quality assurance is looking at articulation and accreditation between school and FET and FET and HEI.

Additional institutional forms that need to be considered may include: franchised FET level training through the internet, through internationally accredited bodies and through NGOs and CBOs.

2. The need to understand the whole skills system

It was noted that in order to address the range of needs and to arrive at an understanding of the purpose of the FET colleges, the "whole skills system" needs to be understood. This includes:

Shape of the system: What is known from international experience is that the shape of the education and training system has large numbers at the base in general education; that the next largest volume of students are located in technical/vocational education and training and at the apex consists of higher education with the smallest population. (The ratio is three in vocational to one in higher education). In South Africa, the ratio is approximately two higher education students to one FET level student.

So the need for the FET system to grow substantially, is clear.

Target Group: However, in South Africa there is the added dimension of those who drop out of basic education and post school institutions and those who may have the required pass at school but

cannot access work or education and training opportunities. There are one million school leavers each year, at least half of which do not find work, or go to tertiary institutions. There is already a pool of 2,8 million 18–24 years olds who are out of school, not at work or in further education.

The population of potential students that a government VET system may serve is extremely diverse (at least nine broad groups based on age/prior qualifications/work experience/employment status):

- People without completing the compulsory phase of basic schooling Grade 9, who must acquire an occupational qualification. The age and work experience of this 'second chance' group will vary widely.
- Young people having successfully completed the compulsory phase of basic schooling/Grade 9, then seeking an occupational qualification.
- Young people with a school leaving certificate i.e. Grade 12 seeking an occupational qualification.
- Young people seeking a vocationally oriented qualification at an equivalent level to the school leaving certificate i.e. post-Grade 9.
- Young people with a school leaving certificate i.e. Grade 12 seeking a vocational qualification seeking an equivalent occupational qualification.
- Young people with a vocationally oriented qualification seeking an occupational qualification.
- Employed people who seek part time upgrading of their current occupational skills.
- Employed people who seek to re-train preparatory to taking up an new occupation.
- Workers receiving custom designed training on the initiative of the employer.

The skills system and resources: It was noted that the whole skills system needs to be understood; that the related mission/mandate/responsibility of the institutions should be articulated more clearly. Is there need for another form of institution/programme? The responsibility of the public sector and private sector needs to be understood, (e.g. what should the various players pay for? viz: should the public sector focus on trainability and employability and that further training then takes place in the workplace?) The funding through the norms and standards for FET is not the only source of funding. What contribution can the skills levy, the National Skills Fund and other training sources play? It was stated that there was a view amongst some business people that it is useful to get people into work and for learning to take place on the job. It is not clear what this means in practice.

Needs of the Economy: What is the nature of the economy and its needs? What is needed in terms of government programmes and initiatives – various sector programmes (social, health, safety, environment) as well as in relation to industrial and other policies. What is the value of training in the face of the availability *or lack of jobs* and opportunities for those who complete? It was noted that surplus skills is not likely to be an issue in the medium term and that many countries train for "export". There was much discussion about the role and value of short courses, where employed people are sent to upgrade their skills while at work. Is there a role for short courses in preparation for trainability of young people out of work?

There are multiple expectations of the FET system and its programmes: The NCV is designed at the same NQF level as Grades 10–12 of basic education. Both are NQF levels 2–4. The intention is for the NCV to recruit students who complete the GETC (NQF level 1) through passing Grade 9. However, indications are that enrolments consist largely of students who have completed the Grade 12 school leaving examination, the Senior Certificate Examination. The aim for FET learning to serve as a bridge to higher education is not seen as the main purposeof FET training. Though this option is recognised, the desired proportion of this group moving straight from FET to higher education out of all FET graduates is not clear. The new NCV is intended to operate as a general vocational qualification which must then be complemented by further occupation specific training. In practice, the aim for the NCV of bringing together theory and workplace experience is falling short as a result of difficulties in securing access to workplaces.

It was noted that what is expected of the system is a debate that has continued over the past 20 years or so, where there is an expectation to "deal with everything, and nothing gets done"; there is need for realism and caution and small incremental steps is the way to go.

The question, what is an ideal FET system was posed? It was noted that more mature education systems such as in Germany stream into vocational and academic streams at the ordinary school level – at the equivalent of the local Grade 9 level. The South African FET system currently has to make up for basic education, improve its own image, its own performance and achieve clarity on its core purpose before it evolves into a mature system. It was noted that a conference on an ideal FET is scheduled for May 2010.

Poor outcomes of basic education: It was noted that the size of the population of young people who are NEET (i.e. Young people who fail NSC and NCV, or drop out earlier in their school career), is a consequence of the poor outcomes of basic education in combination with poor labour market absorbtion. It was further noted that as the basic education system improves; the post school system can evolve.

3. Return on what has been Invested since 1994

Participants noted that the establishment of a single department offers an opportunity to generate synergies in the post school domain, but there is no quick fix and a long term view and plan must be developed. It was noted that "we have come a long way". This refers to the following achievements in the FET colleges: restructuring of the FET system; recapitalisation; policies on norms and standards for funding, some progress on the curriculum (this needs urgent and further work, as part of the first bullet below); the introduction of a bursary scheme; a national plan; lecturer qualification framework. The information available indicates that there is very poor return for this investment to date, however there is no option but to build this part of the education and training system.

All of these policies would benefit from review based on its implementation and experience and the expanded expectations placed on the FET college system.

There was extensive discussion on the NCV programme, the difficulties experienced in its implementation, the debate on reintroduction of the Nated programme and other programmes, the emphasis on funding based on 80:20 in favour of the NCV. It was noted that the NCV is scheduled for a review after three years since its introduction in 2007, which makes it in this year. However it was noted that the NCV has only just completed its first cycle, there is need for stability, some points were raised on the scope of this first review, it was noted that who would undertake this review and how it would be undertaken will be decided by the DHET.

Noting the above perhaps four strategies need to be considered:

- In the short term, to 2014, stabilise the situation based on current resources. Ensure meaningful implementation of programmes already agreed by government that will provide opportunities for young people; EPWP II; the proposed wage subsidy scheme; the work of the Youth Development Agency. These responses are based in government departments other than the DHET and must be considered complementary to DHET initiatives addressing the needs of the NEET population.
- Manage a strategic, "ruthless" zero based, change process with the existing set of public providers for the medium term to 2020. This will involve ensuring staff have both technical and pedagogic skills, good selection process for students, appropriate links with the workplace, and improved governance. Increase the pool of providers through incentives to private and nonprofit providers as part of the mix.
- For the longer term, based on improved performance of the basic education system, work towards a more mature system, that streams students, offers good mix of programmes and is confident of the employability of its graduates.
- Investigate other responses for those who do not make it through the education system.

Much of the discussion focused on what needs to be done in the medium to long term, however there was some concern about the short term, these points are noted in point 4 below.

4. Stabilse the situation in the short-term

Participants noted that the transitional arrangements regarding FET moving from a provincial to a national competency, needed to be managed effectively. This refers to retaining skills and knowledge at provincial departments on FET; follow through on the short term decision made regarding SETA's (whose current period was extended by a year) to focus on using FET as a delivery mechanism; provide clarity on the relative emphasis on the NCV in relation to other instructional offerings in the program mix and the related matter of funding; clarify the status of college councils as employers; address vacancies and manage "autonomy" gradually and carefully; secure budgets from Provinces. Securing budgets and other short-term issues is already a priority of the DHET. This was discussed at the Roundtable held on 9 April 2010 and a process to a summit in August is underway to ensure clarity as the 2011 academic year commences.

5. Institutional issues

The change to a national competency has implications for the capacity of the DHET as well as how the sector relates to national structures such as Hedcom and CEM, the transition needs to be managed. Also whether there should be systemic links with SETA's and the NSA was raised but not discussed further.

Within the sector, the need for a formal structure to assist in managing the transition; improved dialogue; establishing best practice and supporting development of colleges and for developments in the longer term was noted.

6. Broadening the curriculum

The presenter noted that currently the dual mission of the system is largely understood to be, the provision of theoretical foundation that could offer access to further training or further training in the workplace towards a specialised occupation.

Participants pointed out, that colleges have over the years provided/innovated a wider range of programmes. These must be meeting needs if they continue running and get funding from non-public sources. These need to be documented and retained where they are responsive to some need.

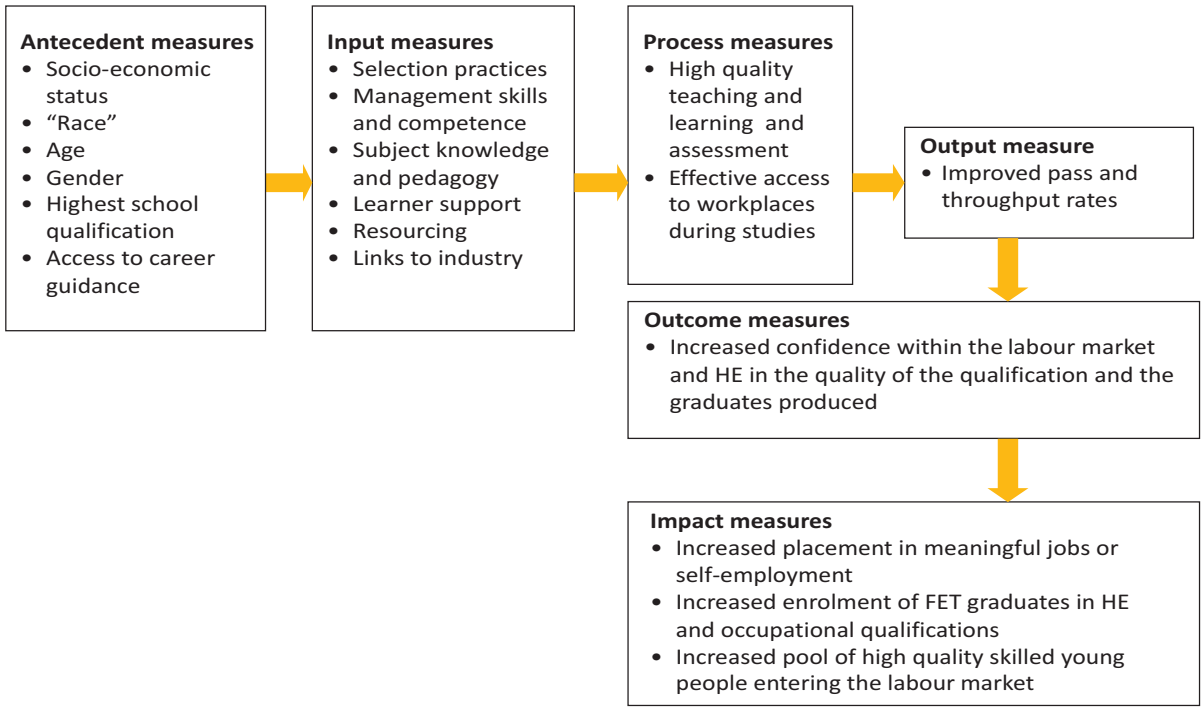
It was noted that the HRDS-SA process at its first Council meeting discussed the skills needs across government programmes and expect the FET system to respond to the training needs of government programmes.

As noted in point 2 above, the need to clarify the purpose of FET colleges is essential.

7. Information

Considering the expectations of the sector, the longer term potential for contribution to skills needs, social mobility for young people, resources and planning decisions, there is a need to ensure the gathering of valid and reliable information, commissioning of research and its analysis to steer the system. Compared to other subsystems, very little is known about the FET colleges system.

A proposed framework for measuring effectiveness was noted, this provides some indication on what will need to be measured and used for decision making.



The presentation further noted that there are extensive gaps in information required to make short-term decisions. This included:

- Actual throughput and performance
- Scope of exodus of lecturers and where they are
- Impact of exodus of lecturers on capacity
- College management capacity in post-merger context
- Relationship between qualifications/years of industry experience and quality of teaching and learning
- Learner support capacity within best practice framework
- Post-recapitalisation resource base.

8. Workplace exposure critical

It was noted that workplace exposure was *critical* for several reasons:

- This experience is vital in preparation or readiness for work.
- For appropriate work placement in terms of their qualifications of students. In a study it was found that 82% of students with exposure found appropriate work.
- Interaction with the workplace is also valuable for ensuring that the curriculum is current and meets the developments and expectations of potential employers.
- Workplace exposure could play a role in keeping knowledge of the teaching staff current.

It was noted that arranging these placements was not an integral part of many college programmes; that attention needed to be given to building partnerships; that there is a cost to such placements; that not all aspects of a workplace are suitable for learners (e.g. not suitable when risk to public and plant could be high) and that commitment was required from all players to facilitate this very important element of the curriculum.

9. Recommendations in the paper

It was noted that with a few amendments in terms of wording and emphasis, there was general support/ no disagreement at a general level for the recommendations made in the paper and presentation. These were (see paper for details):

- *A FET college monitoring and evaluation system:* in the medium term to design, get buy in, test a system and in the longer term use for planning, self evaluation and establish benchmarks for effectiveness.
- *Enhance quality in teaching and learning:* In the medium term to design and implement supply of educators and links with the workplace and in the long term to set standards for teaching staff, with clear knowledge and skills needs identified and a performance management framework established.
- *Funding mechanisms:* In the medium term review norms to ensure based on meaningful data; integrate with SETA's and support workplace experience in the long term to base on sound planning and elements of the subsystem.
- *Refining the curriculum:* In the medium term review NCV with industry and in the long term build in a review process on a five year cycle.
- *Management and governance:* In the medium term revisit the FET Colleges Act, make appropriate decisions about responsibilities of councils and in the longer term increase autonomy as capacity of councils and colleges is built.