Change Management in TVET Colleges

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Introduction

PERSPECTIVES ON PROGRAMMES, PROJECTS AND POLICIES IN THE TVET COLLEGES

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Introduction

The South African Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges (formerly the Further Education and Training or 'FET colleges') seem to embody a fundamental institutional enigma – despite multiple changes intended to improve the quality and efficiency of the colleges, they are still viewed as underperforming, perhaps even impervious to change efforts.

In this context, JET Education Services (JET) was commissioned to conduct the Colleges Improvement Programme (CIP)[1] between 2011 and 2014 in fifteen selected colleges in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo provinces. The idea for this book was conceived during the time when JET teams were in the field.

This collection of papers represents an effort to make sense of the enigma of the colleges from various perspectives, with the aim of contributing to a better understanding of why the cumulative effect of changes in the colleges have combined to generate unexpected, if not disappointing, results. An argument commonly advanced is that the colleges have been inundated by changes that over time have contributed to a condition of malaise and discontent. Too many changes compressed into a short time-space will ultimately become counterproductive as the absorptive capacity of institutions comes under stress, but claiming this condition as the sole cause carries insufficient explanatory value. Limitations on the impact of interventions may be introduced through the policy and planning directives and implementation plans. Policy-driven institutional changes from central or regional government may have design flaws, or may bring about unintended consequences that constrain or contradict the desired changes. Then it may be that well conceptualised change breaks down because implementation is faulty, leading to insipid buy-in and low adoption.

Each time a new intervention is contemplated, quite complex institutional conditions that vary from college to college must be taken into account. The bricolage of local circumstance will shape how colleges respond to each new intervention. This realisation generates an implicit challenge, which is to be able to design an intervention that will have institutional specificity while aspiring to system-wide benchmarks for improvement and performance.

The challenge of designing and implementing a programme in institutions that have been in a seemingly constant state of change or transition motivated this book which attempts to identify, separate, and analyse key influences on change in the TVET colleges.

The complexity of the colleges' responses to change initiatives contributes to the enigma that is the TVET colleges. This characteristic creates grounds for questions regarding programme design and implementation, for instance: What is the most appropriate intervention design and intensity? How much must the design be adapted, institution by institution? Is overarching support and administration sufficient? What preconditions must be achieved before certain interventions can be implemented in some colleges?

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1   Though it was named the Colleges Improvement Project, its scale and long-term intervention timescale made it preferable to refer to the CIP as a programme.

What interventions must start from within the college – from the inside out – and what interventions must be initiated from the outside in? Lastly, in what sequence should interventions in the colleges be introduced? These fundamental questions are raised because this edited book is presented as a means of opening up important debate on how TVET college institutional change should be undertaken. This is not a new discussion, but one that has accompanied the series of changes brought about in colleges over the past three decades.

Accordingly, chapters in this collection address: the political economy of TVET types in different countries which, by comparison, illuminate the South African case; a periodisation of government interventions in the TVET sector over the last three decades; the unsettled state and status of TVET lecturers in relation to their job requirements and conditions of service; and the halting evolution of collegial relationships between college lecturers towards higher collegiality; and employer expectations of college graduates and how colleges are responding.

These chapters were selected because they:

- Highlight key perspectives from macro- to micro- through international comparative study and interrogate how macro-economic and political factors shape TVET systems;
- Provide a perspective on the quality, timing, impacts, and outcomes of government policy, identify key government policy and implementation features, and evaluate their overall impact;
- Bring to light the experience of TVET lecturers who are central participants in any proposal to renovate colleges by unpacking the formal and informal structures which facilitate and constrain TVET lecturer development and revealing fragmentation of lecturer collegial relations which detract from individual and institutional development;
- Draw on employers' perspectives about the preparedness of TVET college graduates seeking work in their respective sectors; and
- Bring forward insights about the monitoring and evaluation of the CIP.

This introductory chapter proceeds as follows:

- First, it presents a metaphor for change in the colleges based on the physics of ocean waves. Waves are taken to represent programmes, policies, or projects aimed at bringing about change in the colleges.
- Second, it briefly introduces the most important underlying assumption of change in the TVET colleges, which is to massively increase enrolment in the immediate short term, to be sustained over the next decade and more. This assumption is placed in juxtaposition with the seemingly unending challenge of imbuing colleges with commitment to financial probity and which undercuts confidence in progressive institutional development.
- Third, it presents an account of the Colleges Improvement Project (CIP) as background to the six substantive chapters. The particular focus of the CIP intervention was on teaching and learning. As such, the CIP contributes a teaching and learning-

focused perspective to the collection of chapters and, while teaching and learning are not explicitly covered, the themes addressed in these chapters do have an impact on teaching and learning.

- Fourth, this introduction briefly summarises each of the contributed chapters and draws links between them, touching on the overarching debates.

Waves of change

TVET colleges have been exposed to various forms of change over the past twenty years. The changes have involved rationalisation of college numbers and size, introduction of new programmes and plans to phase out others, recapitalisation of infrastructure, new forms of college governance, shifts in line-function accountability of colleges, and shifts in staff employment regimes, interspersed with sporadic lecturer training.

In the post-2009 period, colleges have been required to establish or adopt functioning relationships with Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), to pursue collaboration with higher education institutions, and to initiate workable relationships with employers in order to generate opportunities for students and graduates respectively to benefit from experience in workplaces while studying and from work placements upon graduation.

Multiple waves of change have had an impact on the colleges in the period of two decades. The study of ocean waves and fluid dynamics provides a useful physical metaphor for the waves of institutional change to which the colleges have been exposed. Waves work on the ocean floor and coastline to reshape it, while simultaneously the ocean floor and coastline contain and influence the work of the waves. Out of this interaction, the shoreline may be transformed. However, waves do not travel in exactly straight lines and do not arrive at the shore in a straight line, just as a wave of institutional change does not arrive at exactly the same time or work evenly on each institution. In a fluid environment, it is possible for waves to move at different speeds, causing some waves to slow down and allow following waves to catch up. This movement increases the amount of energy that is expended, intensifying the impact of the waves on the sea shore. In the colleges, some waves of change slowed down while others caught up with them, testing the ability of the colleges to cope with the combined impact. Waves respond differently, depending on the shape and characteristics of the sea shore, providing an analogy for how waves of change impact differently, depending on the particular conditions in each college. Finally, when waves begin impacting on the shoreline, they travel at different speeds and in different directions, leading to interference and turbulence which features unpredictable changes. This property of waves is analogous with how interventions may interfere with each other, causing a reduction in effectiveness. An example is the overly high or contradictory demands placed on the colleges' administrative staff.

Expectations for change: Creating the conditions

The burden of change involves expectations of change, then preparation for change, followed by implementation of change. The Department of Higher Education and Training

(DHET) has placed great emphasis on the role of TVET colleges in alleviating and meeting the demand for post-school education, especially among young people who have left school early, attained poor matric results, or who want to obtain vocational skills that might support sustainable livelihoods. In the light of the triple burden of poverty, unemployment, and inequality which disproportionately affects South Africa's youth, there is powerful cause to pressure education and training systems to take on this burden. Though TVET head-count enrolments rose from 345 566 in 2010 and were estimated to be sitting at 650 000 in 2013, the DHET had set targets for head count enrolments of one million by 2015 and 2.5 million by 2030 (DHET, 2013).

These global estimates are formidable indeed, but it is difficult to escape strategies based on expanding TVET, even more so when the share of these institutions in taking on post-school youth lags behind the proportionate commitment from higher education. Data shows that by 2011, the TVET colleges had accomplished a limited enrolment impression of 4.2% on the 19- to 24-year-old age group. This was, by comparison, a small fraction of the participation rates of 18% in 2010 and 19% in 2011 of 20- to 24-year-olds enrolled in the public higher education system (Statistics South Africa, 2013). Even by international standards, South Africa has a disproportionately large group of higher education students enrolled in relation to TVET students. This is in inverse proportion to expected labour market demand in a middle-income country for middle-level skills. The investment pattern that generates this ratio of higher education to college and TVET enrolment is counter-productive to economic growth and skills needs and continues to feed misplaced demand.

Further reason for increasing investment in the TVET sector is evident in the unequal distribution of enrolment opportunity between provinces. Table 1 shows how TVET enrolment in some provinces can be as much as double that of other provinces. Though the location of colleges in relation to provincial boundaries will have distorted the proportions to some extent, this does not detract from an overall picture of inequitable distribution of access.

The high expectations for the TVET colleges to make a superhuman contribution in bringing the sector into alignment with national planning are most certainly daunting. But even more daunting is pressure on the DHET to find a way of coaxing a number of colleges towards implementing appropriate financial controls and accountability. In 2013, nine colleges were under administration. The Finance and Fiscal Commission observed that: 'The sector is facing governance and management problems, especially with regard to financial management. Financial accountability in the sector needs serious attention, to ensure that any additional funding to the sector will be used effectively and efficiently' (Finance and Fiscal Commission, 2013: 36).

Clearly, it is fundamentally important to create the conditions within which TVET institutional change can flourish. The restitution of financial probity remains at the top of the agenda if ambitions for TVET growth are to be achieved. This situation presents a useful point of departure for defining the most appropriate course of action and whether the initiative should come from the inside or from the outside in.

TABLE 1   Participation of 19–24-year-olds in FET college education per province, 2011

Province	19–24-year-olds in the population			19–24-year-olds enrolled in the FET colleges			% of 19–24-year-olds in the population enrolled in the FET colleges		
	Male	Female	Grand Total	Male	Female	Grand Total	Male	Female	Grand Total
Eastern Cape	448 738	448 018	896 756	12 081	12 919	25 000	2.7%	2.9%	2.8%
Free State	167 704	164 129	331 833	10 613	11 379	21 992	6.3%	6.9%	6.6%
Gauteng	567 634	550 238	1 117 872	39 697	28 587	68 284	7.0%	5.2%	6.1%
KwaZulu-Natal	665 025	664 075	1 329 100	22 824	22 334	45 158	3.4%	3.4%	3.4%
Limpopo	362 416	367 273	729 689	15 847	16 608	32 455	4.4%	4.5%	4.4%
Mpumalanga	234 891	230 591	465 482	4 940	5 130	10 070	2.1%	2.2%	2.2%
Northern Cape	63 034	61 508	124 542	2 254	2 400	4 654	3.6%	3.9%	3.7%
North West	187 319	184 296	371 615	6 352	5 532	11 884	3.4%	3.0%	3.2%
Western Cape	276 712	272 694	549 406	14 560	13 964	28 524	5.3%	5.1%	5.2%
All provinces	**2 973 473**	**2 942 822**	**5 916 295**	**129 168**	**118 853**	**248 021**	**4.3%**	**4.0%**	**4.2%**

Source: Finance and Fiscal Commission (2013: 39).

Colleges Improvement Project

Soon after being established in 2009, the DHET began preparations for assuming full oversight and responsibility for the TVET colleges. It was apparent at the time that high levels of dysfunctionality characterised the operations of a number of colleges in which core operational systems were reportedly close to breakdown. The situation was severe enough for the DHET to mobilise urgent action, first to stabilise the situation and then to implement a 'turnaround strategy' aimed at improving functionality and building capacity in the targeted colleges.

These conditions contributed to the DHET's decision to initiate the CIP, aimed at improving the capacity, functionality, and performance of selected colleges in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo. The CIP in Limpopo started some months later than in the Eastern Cape, but interventions in the two provinces were kept in broad alignment.

The CIP became a three-year project in operation between October 2011 and the end of 2014. The DHET appointed JET as the project manager funded through a National Skills Fund (NSF) grant.

The ultimate aim of the CIP was to bring about a turnaround in the performance of fifteen participating colleges in the two provinces. Accordingly, it was important to ensure that the interventions would be institutionalised and could be sustained beyond the life of the project itself.

Project values and principles

The CIP was informed by the value of working collaboratively, which applied to inter-actions between the main participants, especially the provincial departments of education and then the DHET, which was set to include the TVET colleges within its mandate to administer all of post-school education.[2]

The CIP was underpinned by three principles.

- **Each institution should be understood on its own terms:** This required individual institutional problem diagnosis that would necessitate tailoring interventions from a general menu to specific institutional conditions.
- **The project should be strategy led:** This placed the responsibility on leadership and management of each institution to devise an appropriate institutional strategic plan that would serve as the institution's 'roadmap to transformation'. Each strategic plan should inform the annual performance plans and budgets or operational plans and provide the backdrop for institutional monitoring and evaluation and performance assessment.
- **Accountability for performance should be strengthened:** Accountability would be assessed against implementation of strategic and operational plans, based on a college-wide performance management system, including performance contracts for college principals.

In addition, as the project got under way, JET's teaching and learning interventions evolved according to the principle of commitment to building individual competence and institutional capacity wherever possible by:

- Building systems and capacity to contribute to the long-term improvement of students' performance and employability;
- Improving institutional capacity through better, integrated planning for teaching and learning practice; and
- Improving the competence of the teaching staff.

Further, it was determined that as far as possible, the CIP work programme should be planned so that the programme could be accommodated within the planning and budgeting cycle of the college.

Project focus areas

An initial inception period of six months was agreed to, during which rapid assessments of the status of the colleges were conducted, with specific attention to the CIP focus areas.

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2   The FET Colleges Amendment Act No. 3 of 2012 provided for provinces to hand over administration of the colleges to the national department, while personnel transfer was completed thereafter in April 2015.

Data and information from the rapid assessment reports were aggregated to establish baselines of the functionality of the colleges in each province.

Originally, there were six functional areas across which the CIP was expected to support the colleges in building policies, processes, systems and capacity (Finance, Governance and Management, Human Resources, Planning and Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), Student Support Services, and Teaching and Learning). Each of these areas is dealt with in the following section:

- The project design made improvements to **teaching and learning** the core focus of programme interventions and concentrated in particular on strategies to strengthen and promote quality teaching and learning and building competencies of students and lecturers.
- Regarding **student support services**, the project aimed to form an integrated system of support to enable students to achieve success in their studies and employability. Targets for achievement as indicated by pass rates and workplace readiness and employability were agreed to.
- The project's approach to **human resources (HR)** included building capacity, competence, and confidence in HR personnel, ensuring that human resources management had the required facilities and technology, that HR had established protocols for working with other units, and that a comprehensive set of policies was in place.
- In the project design, five areas critical to proper **management and governance** at colleges were identified. At the apex of these was building a culture of planning and accountability. Also emphasised was college council leadership in changing the culture of teaching and learning.
- In addressing **EMIS**, the scope of work in the work programme was seen to underpin all other focus areas. Improving EMIS depended on clarifying the roles and responsibilities in EMIS management, asserting the role of EMIS policies and protocols, ensuring functionality and effectiveness of the systems and technology employed for EMIS operation, and compliance management in EMIS.
- The scope of work in the **financial and risk management** area originally included ensuring that a comprehensive set of policies and protocols was in place, with suitable systems and appropriately capacitated staff. This work programme was taken away from the CIP when the DHET entered into a partnership with the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) for the provision of assistance relating to financial management and administration.

The DHET's partnership with SAICA brought additional external assistance to colleges in the areas of finance and human resources. This reduced the spread of focus areas under the responsibility of the CIP to:

- Teaching and learning;
- Student support services;
- Governance and management; and
- EMIS.

The process according to which the CIP focused its operations is represented in the following figure.

FIGURE 1   CIP activities to enhance college functionality
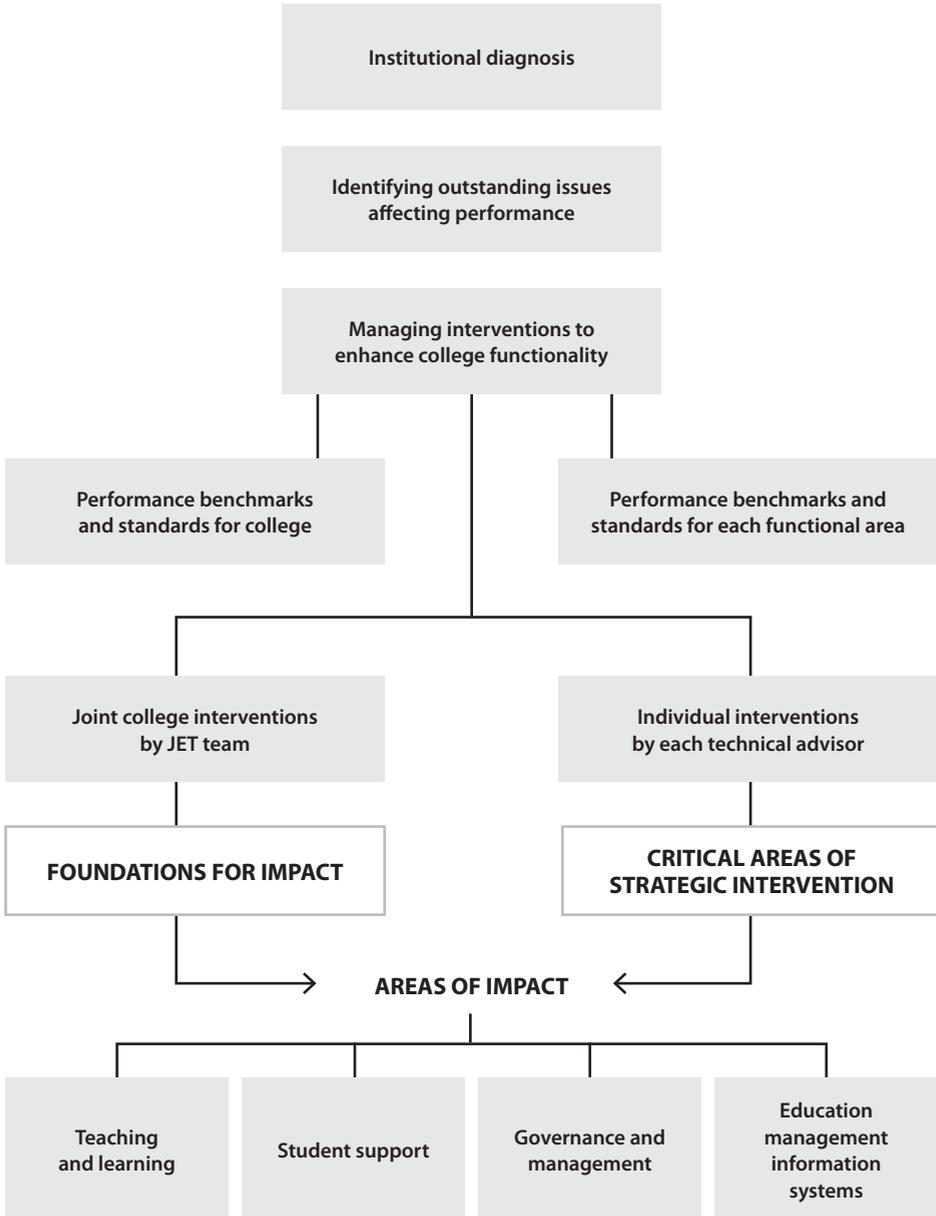
Improved quality of teaching and learning: The centripetal goal of the CIP

The findings of the initial rapid assessment of the colleges revealed that teaching and learning activities were not receiving the level of attention and resources needed to be carried out effectively. Informed by these findings and responding to the overarching objectives of the CIP – to improve the capacity, functionality, and performance of the project colleges – the JET intervention teams sought to reinforce teaching and learning as the core focus and function of TVET colleges central to all aspects of college planning and operations through focused systemic interventions. The bottom line was improving pass rates and improving employability to enable more students to complete their qualifications within a reasonable time frame and to equip them to compete confidently in the labour market. Concurrent CIP programmes brought in specialist technical input to improve the governance and management systems of the colleges as well as data management, monitoring and support, and student support, which were all directed towards supporting teaching and learning.

Student performance

As the project progressed, JET increasingly focused on student performance and success, with the aim of improving pass rates and improving employability – enabling more students to complete their qualifications within a reasonable time frame and equipping them to compete confidently in the labour market. Across the broad scope of the project, different aspects of the programme which were developed to address college functionality – from student enrolment planning and management to teaching and learning in the classroom, from curriculum management to academic support to workplace-based experience – were channelled towards informing and supporting improvements in students' performance.

Lecturer development

Training and support for lecturers formed an important component of the programme. Over the longer term, a solution to the concern around college lecturers' qualifications is required, and the DHET is in the process of developing professional level qualifications and a full qualifications structure for college lecturing staff. Looking at the short to medium term, JET addressed this concern with a number of interventions to strengthen lecturers' capacity and teaching practice, as well as providing support to curriculum managers and staff in the colleges. Since the CIP was limited to three years in duration, the need for a longer-term solution to low levels of college lecturer qualifications was anticipated.

Curriculum systems development

Importantly, the programmes discussed above were extended to support curriculum managers and staff as well, since curriculum services such as advice on incorporating ICT or other learning media into teaching and designing and authoring learning materials can substantially impact the quality of teaching and learning. Lecturer development and training for curriculum management and college staff included:

- Lecturer induction, induction resources for curriculum staff, and induction training workshops;

- Training in assessment and moderation (essential to improving certification rates/ pass rates);
- Mathematics topics workshops (for lecturers);
- Imparting best practice in lesson planning and teaching strategies, and facilitating lessons;
- Classroom observation and feedback sessions offering support to lecturers in their teaching practice; and
- Support and mentoring of curriculum managers in implementing plans.

In addition to teaching-related interventions, the CIP also involved systemic developments in related facets of the teaching and learning value chain:

- Facilitating integrated curriculum management;
- Instituting integrated curriculum monitoring and support;
- Training on the use of subject and assessment guidelines; and
- Establishing college and campus performance committees (including academic registrars at central offices and heads of departments at campus level).

Peer tutoring

One of the concerns identified in the rapid assessment of the colleges at the beginning of the CIP was high levels of repeated failure among students in the core subjects of Mathematics and English. This caused students to take more years to graduate and negatively impacted student throughput and certification, raising the per-graduate cost in state subsidy as well as the average private costs of graduation.

The JET project team introduced an innovative approach for improving student's curriculum knowledge and self-confidence. In this case, a student to student peer tutoring intervention that was implemented had positive benefits for students and lecturers.

While Mathematics was the main focus of the CIP peer tutoring programme, English language is also often a serious stumbling block for students, especially in more rural colleges where some lecturers conduct their lectures in the vernacular, even if English is the prescribed teaching medium. This is problematic during examinations, because even if students understood their lectures in whichever subject – Mathematics, Engineering and Physics – in their home language, they might not understand the same material when presented in English in examination papers.

To address these circumstances, particularly in the Mathematics and English language subjects, the CIP first provided Mathematics revision and extra lessons in Saturday classes and during college holidays. However, these raised costs for the colleges in payment for lecturer's services and supervision. In any case, the extra classes were not well attended by students. The successor to this idea was the peer tutoring programme.

The idea of using Level 4 National Certificate Vocational (NVC) students to tutor Level 2 NCV students who were struggling with Mathematics evolved during the course of the project and most of the colleges took up the programme. JET provided support in designing and structuring the tutoring programme. At each campus this involved the senior curriculum manager and the student support services manager. The programme was structured to provide for oversight/supervision, timetabling for tutorials, and the

monitoring and recording of attendance and progress. The materials addressed basic Mathematics concepts, which is where the gaps in understanding were found to be. By addressing these gaps and giving students a clear and sound foundational understanding of Mathematics, the tutoring sessions made it easier for students to move on to the higher levels of Mathematics required in TVET courses – particularly in Engineering, Accountancy, and other such studies.

It is important to consider the successes of the peer tutoring programme within the broader CIP. The tutoring programme succeeded in regenerating and promoting a culture of learning. Among students, JET witnessed a renewed enthusiasm for learning, for wanting to do well, and college principals, staff, and lecturers generally responded positively in discussions on the proposed interventions and their implementation. College staff members were responsive to suggestions from the project teams, open to new possibilities, new ways of doing things, and the challenge to do better, rather than just doing the same things that they had done over past years. This project, though aimed at students' needs, ended up becoming a vehicle through which lecturers bought into the process of college improvement and affiliated with other lecturers with whom they shared common goals as teachers.

An unanticipated benefit of the peer tutoring programme was that, as the project progressed, colleges realised that student support services staff were not aware of the kind of academic support that their students needed because student support staff were not involved directly in curriculum and teaching activities. The peer tutoring programme and other CIP interventions demonstrated that academic support should be recognised as a dedicated function and resourced appropriately. The CIP also demonstrated how important it is that the student support services work with academic units to ensure that students are supported inside and outside the classroom.

Conclusion

The team commissioned to conduct an output-to-purpose review (OPR) of the CIP found evidence that the programme had managed to improve the capacity, functionality, and performance of the project colleges and, further, found evidence that the project was being institutionalised at all levels of the system, even in colleges with serious structural weaknesses. However, a series of caveats were put forward:

- First, recommendations included a refinement of the intervention and improvement of the approach, taking into consideration that the scope of the CIP was thought to be too wide given the resources available, including time.
- Second, the JET implementation team recognised that 'the turnaround process could not possibly be completed in the transition period, and that more medium- to long-term efforts would be required' (JET, 2012, cited in Scott, 2015: 19).
- Third, it was argued that to be sustainable, systemic changes require an enabling institutional environment. The project colleges in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo were at varying levels of institutional development and this affected the pace of change and the colleges' capacity to assimilate and sustain the intervention activities. Since conditions varied between colleges, the actions referred to above were not

necessarily implemented with equal success in every site – whether main campus or satellite campus.

- Fourth, attention was drawn to the general levels of preparedness of new cohorts of students registering at different colleges each year. Depending on their catchment areas, the academic background of students registering at one college may differ substantially from those at another college in a different environment. In the drive to increase enrolments, colleges do not necessarily apply admissions criteria. There are no publicly set standard entry-level requirements for students to enter TVET colleges, or for any of the study programmes offered by the colleges. This means that students of widely differing abilities and aptitudes may be admitted for the same class. Graduation rates are affected by admissions policy, and there is evidence that directives regarding admissions contradict the need to improve graduation rates.

One of the objectives of the project was to establish the reasons behind the dysfunctionality of the colleges. The CIP successfully identified shortcomings and designed programmes to counteract dysfunctionality in the teaching and learning domain.

Nevertheless, to focus only on the teaching and learning function would not necessarily have served the purpose of the project. Therefore, the aims of the project included taking on conditions that had been created in previous incarnations of institutional change. The CIP was therefore obliged to deal with the baggage of previous experience, by, for example: fostering stability through settling outstanding issues affecting college functionality; securing strategic alignment of strategic and operational planning; supporting the foundations for good governance of each function; laying the foundations for enhanced performance in each functional area; strengthening all delivery functions in the college; and building a culture of performance.

In the interests of forging a strong TVET sector, the function of this book is to scrutinise assumptions about how to bring about change in the TVET college sector.

Chapter overview

The six chapters in this book are introduced to the reader in this short summary.

In Chapter 1, *Three decades of restructuring in further education colleges: Divergent outcomes across differing global vocational education and training systems*, Professor André Kraak, Centre for Research in Education and Labour (REAL), University of the Witwatersrand, adopts a historical and comparative international lens in approaching the FET/TVET institutional form from a global perspective. Though national systems of FET/TVET are widely divergent, Kraak draws upon particular national systems that he identifies as exemplars of two contrasting models of building TVET systems: a 'social solidarity' TVET system based on participative processes, as in the Netherlands; and a 'statist, prescriptive system of market-driven TVET', as in the United Kingdom. Analysis suggests that the former model is more successful than the latter. Based on these models, Kraak derives a set of axes according to which a national system of TVET may be plotted. Accordingly, in the social solidarity TVET system:

- Components in the TVET system are aligned;
- Processes are employer-led;
- Comprehensive reform in TVET system change is supported by industrial and labour market policies;
- Change in the TVET system is stable with elements of continuity; and
- Equitable access and growth of high-skill labour force is facilitated.

Based on conditions in the colleges of the Eastern Cape and Limpopo that participated in the CIP, there is evidence in the South African TVET system of poorly developed coordination and cooperation capabilities and disruptive change. In the presence of these macro-institutional conditions, to what degree would change management programmes such as the CIP have sufficient purchase to turn the participating colleges around?

In Chapter 2, *Unfinished business: Managing the transformation of FET colleges*, Dr Anthony Gewer, TVET consultant, addresses successive periods in the evolution of the FET (TVET) colleges up to the present. Gewer offers a periodised account of three phases in the transformation of the FET colleges system in South Arica since the advent of democracy. The early policy-oriented period saw colleges placed in the Department of Education rather than Labour which limited engagement with industry, and drew to a close with the promulgation of the 1998 FET Act (Act No. 98 of 1998). The Act located academic and vocational institutions alongside each other in the FET band, downplaying traditional distinctions between these institutional types. The second phase involved system-wide mergers and restructuring which combined enrolments and created opportunities to benefit from economies of scale, creating demand for new forms of management and relationships within colleges. The third phase involved extensive institutional recapitalisation, as well as 'recurriculation' via introduction of the NCV in 2007. This phase was characterised by consolidation of the colleges from the nine provincial departments of education into the DHET as part of establishing a coherent post-school institutional environment. Gewer argues that despite these advances, not enough has been done to address 'fundamental issues about the identity of the colleges, the curriculum they offer, or the role they are expected to play.' Government has sought 'to direct and drive transformation centrally, in the absence of a longer-term strategy, and this created mixed messages as to the policy trajectory for colleges.' These assertions are relevant to understanding the progress and impact of current institutional improvement projects such as the CIP that prompted the conception of this edited book.

In Chapter 3, the focus of this collection shifts from the broader landscape of institutional change and TVET college relationships with government and business, to internal relationships. Professor Ronel Blom, also of REAL, in her essay titled *Throwing good money after bad: The barriers South African vocational teachers experience in becoming competent educators*, identifies central challenges that college educators face. During the initiation phase of the CIP in 2011, rapid assessments of the status of the participating colleges were conducted, confirming that the central focus of the CIP should be on teaching and learning. Blom sets out to interrogate the non-subject matter barriers that confront TVET teachers in their efforts to achieve and retain their levels of competence

and motivation to meet the academic and social needs of students. The five areas of concern identified include:

- The tremendous diversity and multiple levels of current TVET teacher qualifications which defy simple skills development or policy solutions and even contribute to 'capacity-building barriers';
- The effects of inequitable or insecure conditions of service that many TVET teachers have borne;
- Conditions of teaching at TVET colleges, including: rising student numbers; widening range in student ability; and limited introduction to new curricula;
- That TVET teachers have to cope with the sociological demands of alienated students, communities' lack of understanding of TVET, student learning difficulties, and students' difficulties in adapting to the college environment; and
- The TVET college funding model that encourages 'gaming' of the system to raise income and is a disincentive for articulation of programmes.

Blom argues that 'indiscriminate expansion in student enrolments is placing a huge burden on an already weak and poorly managed sector. The sheer pressure of student numbers will render policies ineffectual if concurrent improvements are not made in respect of TVET teachers themselves'. The author raises issues that bear relevance to the CIP project, many of which are linked to system policy issues external to the colleges. To what extent can programmes such as the CIP be expected to manage change successfully in a college 'from the inside out' when countervailing policy conditions 'from the outside in' are so powerful? Finally, embedded in the title of this contribution is the author's two-part plea: not to make poor investment decisions (the bad money) and not to waste more money pursuing the same or a similar course.

In Chapter 4, *A climate for change? Vertical and horizontal collegial relations in TVET colleges*, Professor Volker Wedekind and Zanele Buthelezi, once again from REAL, observe that hitherto minimal attention has been given to understanding the lived experience of lecturers in TVET colleges. They cite arguments from the literature that 'positive collegial relations enhance the possibilities for professional development … and contribute to the development of the organisation as a whole' (Wedekind, 2001). Yet their research based on a qualitative methodology strongly suggests that 'collegial relations, both horizontal and vertical, are generally poor or problematic'. Intergenerational, gender, seniority, race and occupational specialisation or the 'division of labour' relationships with management in colleges are implicated. There is little evidence that lecturers consistently practise modalities through which collegial relations are developed or strengthened, such as mentoring, peer coaching, collaboration, partnerships, team work and professional development. Lecturers express antipathy toward their college's central office management and council; and dissatisfaction with government policy which is perceived as contributing to systemic and institutional challenges. A disjuncture between centralisation of managerial/bureaucratic power and uncertain lecturer employment status prevails on some campuses. The authors explore and interpret underlying narratives, some of which depict deep-rooted relations of distrust.

In a slack labour market characterised by low or slow growth and poor demand for labour, how graduates transition into work can present a serious bottleneck that frustrates and damages their future expectations. Colleges are adopting programmes to facilitate this transition. In Chapter 5, *Preparing TVET college graduates for the workplace: Employers' views,* Professor Joy Papier, Seamus Needham, Nigel Prinsloo and Timothy McBride of the Institute for Post-School Studies, University of the Western Cape, focus on employers' expectations of college students and graduates from training programmes in the Tourism and Hospitality, Engineering, and Wholesale and Retail industries for which colleges traditionally offer training. Employers' perspectives were elicited about their knowledge of and interactions with TVET college graduates seeking work in their respective sectors. In addition, the study explored perceptions of employers regarding the employability of college graduates. Employers averred that graduates needed training in:

- Being professional, for example appearance, work ethic;
- Communication, for example customer relations;
- Understanding the workplace, for example rights and responsibilities;
- Values and ethics, for example honesty; and
- Application of college learning to the workplace, for example preparedness to put skills into practice and engage with workplace social relations.

Elements of the skills deemed by respondents as missing in graduates were found to exist across the N4–N6 courses in the National Accredited Technical Education Diploma (NATED) syllabus. Lecturers addressed the desired skills but not in a systematic way for explicit workplace preparation. Based on employer recommendations, a prototype 'workplace preparation programme' as a supplement to the N6 programme has been designed and implementation is being monitored with a view to assessing impact. Firms viewed work placement as an opportunity for both parties – employer and graduate – to evaluate each other's potential for a mutually beneficial contracted relationship. Respondents argued in favour of closer relationships between industry and colleges around work placement, taking the position 'that companies should be involved sooner rather than later'.

In the concluding piece, Chapter 6, *What will it take to turn TVET colleges around? Evaluation of a large-scale college improvement programme,* Carmel Marock, Independent Research Consultant specialising in skills and education, Eleanor Hazell, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Manager, JET Education Services, and Bina Akoobhai, formerly Specialist Manager, JET Education Services, offer the opportunity to consider how the CIP, a large-scale and relatively long-duration intervention programme, impacted the TVET colleges. This chapter addresses the complex parallel processes of implementation and institutional response. In reading the final offering in this collection, the reader has the advantage of being able to browse the preceding chapters for more contextual detail as needed. Carmel Marock and Eleanor Hazell view the CIP through a monitoring and evaluation lens and bring to the table learnings from the M&E process which drew on different data sources and methods including developing a logic model: an initial rapid assessment, in-depth case studies, documentary analysis and interviews as well as

baseline, formative and summative evaluations. The M&E programme addressed core intervention-specific questions such as: What did the CIP produce, deliver, and achieve in the context of what challenges and impediments? As importantly, the M&E process raised the following three critical questions: Which challenges could a programme such as the CIP be expected to address with reasonable expectations of positive impact? What needs to be in place for such a project to succeed? And: what needs to be in place to support sustainability? In the course of the CIP, a strategic decision was made to focus in particular on teaching and learning, which included capacitating college lecturers, as the key theme. Effectively the aspiration of a 'college turnaround' was set aside, though expectations remained high. The analysis suggests that the key to sustaining newly acquired practices lies in the capacity of the DHET to support a closer working relationship with colleges.

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