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## Change Management in TVET Colleges

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# chapter 4

## A CLIMATE FOR CHANGE? VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL COLLEGIAL RELATIONS IN TVET COLLEGES

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## Introduction

There is little argument that technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges have increasingly moved to centre stage of education and development agendas in South Africa. Where the first two decades of democratic South Africa's education debate focused on the schooling system and, to a lesser extent, the university system, current policy and public discourse sees the post-school system and particularly the TVET colleges as central to addressing a range of social issues, including skills shortages, skills gaps, and youth unemployment. While the institutional setting, the resources, the curriculum, and the governance structures have all been researched, there has been very little focus on the lecturers in the institutions. Where there has been some attention on lecturers, it has tended to focus on their qualifications (or lack thereof) or their work experience. What is not discussed are the daily interactions that make up the quotidian of life in the colleges, and how this may assist or hinder the development of the post-school system and the colleges in particular. This chapter attempts to add to the literature by focusing on the issue of collegial relations and collegiality in colleges and highlight the complexities of working life that shape the climate within which change occurs.

The chapter draws on biographical interview data collected as part of a larger research project into the lives and careers of TVET teachers. The lecturers who were interviewed were selected because they had more than 10 years' experience in the college system and had experienced many of the key reforms during the period 2000–2010. The particular focus of this chapter is on the collegial relations in colleges and their impact on the work of lecturers. The interviews were not explicitly focused on this issue, but it was a major recurring theme that emerged from the data analysis.

The chapter starts by providing clarification of terms such as 'colleague', 'collegial relations', and 'collegiality'. This is followed by a brief discussion on the conceptual framework and methodology, after which the data from the interviews is presented.

## Collegial relations and collegiality

The concept of collegiality in educational organisations has received some attention in the research literature, particularly in schooling and in higher education. The importance of colleagues in the lives and careers of teachers is emphasised both in the literature on school change and in the literature on teachers' lives and careers (Fullan, 1999b; Huberman, 1993; Nias, 1989; Sergiovanni, 2001; Westheimer, 1998). A strong strand of research focuses on the complementarity of collegial relations and professional development, drawing on work by writers such as Senge (1990) and Wenger (2000). The research suggests that positive collegial relations enhance the possibilities for professional development for individuals and groups within schools and contribute to the development of the organisation as a whole (Wedekind, 2001). In one of the very few international studies on collegiality that focuses on TVET institutions, Abebe (2009) confirms this point: TVET schools in Ethiopia 'that facilitate the learning and development of teachers exhibit characteristics of a learning organisation culture where professional collaboration, collegiality and shared leadership are practised' (Abebe, 2009).

A second strand of literature focuses on the role of collegiality in the management and

governance of education institutions. Singh, Manser and Mestry (2007) contrast collegial leadership models with technocratic and managerialist models. They argue that complex institutions such as schools (and we would suggest that colleges are equally, if not more, complex) require collaborative and collegial models of leadership rather than technocratic models. They argue that emotional intelligence that supports collegial forms of decision-making 'matters twice as much as cognitive abilities such as IQ or technical expertise' when looking at effective leadership (Singh *et al*, 2007). A similar discussion about collegial governance in relation to higher education can be found in the recent analysis of the transformation of one university in South Africa (Chetty & Merrett, 2014). Chetty and Merrett, citing similar debates at Oxford University, argue that collegial forms of governance, while seemingly inefficient, engender a passionate devotion to the institution and high levels of trust (Chetty & Merrett, 2014: 25). Indeed, their case study demonstrates clearly how technicist and authoritarian forms of management that undermine collegial forms of governance ultimately destroy the social fabric of the educational institution.

Building on these two strands of schooling and higher education literature and applying them to the college sector, this chapter analyses the biographical data from interviews with college lecturers in order to understand the ways in which collegial interactions enhance or inhibit professional development of individuals and the organisation, and the degree to which collegiality has been a feature of the management, governance, and leadership approaches in the college sector.

## **Conceptual framework**

The approach adopted in this chapter is framed by the sociological concept of figurations as developed by the twentieth century sociologist and social theorist, Norbert Elias (Elias, 1924, 1978). Elias argues for a sociology that focuses on processes rather than states or structures and that emphasises relationships between people. These networks of relationships are termed figurations by Elias and constitute all forms of social interaction.

Much of the earlier literature on organisations reified the formal institutional level and lost sight of the instability of institutions and their dependence on the individuals that constitute an organisation or institution. To be sure, there are sets of rules and resources that are relatively stable within an institution, and thus there is an appearance of solidity and autonomy from the individuals who constitute the organisation. However, anyone who has visited educational institutions will know that firstly, they differ from each other as much as there are similarities, and secondly, that institutions change over time, at varying degrees of rapidity and for a range of reasons, including the direct influence or absence of particular individuals within a school.

More recently, 'school culture' is a concept that has been developed to explain processes within schools, although ironically it has itself become first objectified and then anthropomorphised (Fullan, 1999a; Little & McLaughlin, 1993; Nias, 1989; Van Maanen & Barley, 1983). The result is that the concept of school culture is often reified in a way that removes the complex and often unpredictable relations between the individuals – past and present – that constitute school culture (Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000).

A colleague is defined for purposes of this chapter as someone who is connected to a person via a relationship centred on work. Usually the relationship is bounded by a

particular school, college or university, but may also apply across institutions when educators interact at that level. At its extreme, all educators in a specific education system may be regarded minimally as colleagues in that the myriad relationships between them constitute the figuration often referred to as ‘the profession’. Collegial relations in this chapter mean a ‘range and intensity of relations that exist between colleagues’ (Wedekind, 2001: 150). These relations between colleagues are constantly changing over time as balances of power shift, and need to be viewed as processes that are simultaneously generative and restrictive.

One of the possible outcomes of collegial relations, through the generation of resources and capital of various types, is an experience of collegiality, by which we mean a sense of common identity, fellowship, or moral climate amongst the people interrelating. Ideally, the most important features of collegiality include cooperation with other colleagues, civil and noble treatment of fellow lecturers, loyalty to the campus and college, and enhancement of an environment in which authority is shared. Collegiality is taken to be a valued end result of collegial relations and has a connotation of respect for one another as colleagues. Collegiality ‘carries with it a value attribute’ (Wedekind, 2001: 150) and is generally regarded as beneficial (Sergiovanni, 2001). One of the issues that we examine in this chapter is the processes through which collegial relations generate collegiality.

## Methodology

The data on which the chapter is based is drawn from a larger project on TVET college lecturers in South Africa.<sup>20</sup> The larger project was focused on deepening our understanding of lecturers’ knowledge, experience, and practices in the context of a rapidly changing system.<sup>21</sup> The project comprised a number of sub-projects, including three that focused on life histories of various lecturers in the system. In total, 20 lecturers at five different colleges were interviewed between 2010 and 2012 using a focused life history approach, a methodology adapted from earlier work by the author (Wedekind, 2001). The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and an hour each, and each lecturer was interviewed two or three times. Interviews were transcribed and then coded on the basis of emerging themes. These themes form the basis of the analysis that follows.

## Context

There is a growing body of literature that has documented the significant changes that have affected colleges since 1994 (Akoojee, 2008; Kraak & Hall, 1999; McGrath & Akoojee, 2007; Powell, 2012; Wedekind, 2010). While we cannot rehearse this in detail here, it is no exaggeration to suggest that TVET colleges have seen some of the most far-reaching and sustained reforms of any part of the education system. While the colleges have

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20 This research was supported through a research partnership with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This support is gratefully acknowledged. The findings, opinions, and recommendations of the researchers do not reflect the official SAQA position.

21 See: Wedekind *et al* (forthcoming).

remained largely out of the general public eye, they have been a focus for policy-makers and officials who have introduced changes at all levels. These have included the total transformation of the institutional landscape through mergers of about 150 colleges into 50 mega-colleges, as well as changing the curriculum and the type of students being recruited, introducing new funding formulae, changing management and governance structures, shifting the employer from provincial departments of education to college councils (and now back to the national Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET]), introducing new qualification requirements for lecturers, and running various small and large scale programmes through the colleges. There has been significant turnover of college staff over this period as older lecturers have retired, opted to remain with the provincial departments to avoid changes in their conditions of service, or secured more lucrative employment elsewhere. This staff turnover has resulted in quite significant changes in both the demographics of college lecturers and the typical trajectory that lecturers have followed to get into the colleges. Whereas historically many lecturers would have entered a college after experience in the workplace, many new lecturers are being recruited directly from their place of study without work experience.

The analysis of the data from the interviews provides an insight into how collegial relations (both horizontal and vertical) have been affected and shaped by the context described above. The remainder of this chapter examines the patterns that emerge and how figurations alter as a consequence of these relations.

## **Colleagues and collegial relations**

The first section looks at horizontal collegial relations amongst colleagues within a campus. The discussion, which is illustrated with extracts from the interviews conducted with college lecturers, focuses on generational dynamics, race and racism, and disciplinary specialisations as three categories around which collegial relations are shaped.

### **Generational diversity amongst colleagues**

A generation is a group of people defined by age boundaries and who were born during a certain era and shared similar experiences and social dynamics when growing up (Pilcher, 1994). In the context of this chapter, two cohorts of TVET college lecturers, namely, those who have worked in TVET colleges for more than 10 years and those who have fewer than 10 years of work experience in a TVET college, constitute different generations. Each of these cohorts appears to have its own distinct values, attitudes, habits, behaviours and needs determined by the lecturers' experiences in their lives and work. These experiences have shaped the identity of these individuals, differentiating them from their colleagues in the college environment, and the differences between older and younger lecturers surfaced during the interviews. Besides the generational gap, differences due to gender, race and ethnicity were also touched on.

The interviews revealed that older staff members perceive that their younger colleagues see them as dictatorial, conservative, dogmatic, and rigid in their thoughts and actions (Levin, 2001). While older staff members perceive some younger staff members to be respectful of others, well behaved, hardworking and willing to share their

expertise and listen to other peoples' ideas, the majority of younger staff members are seen in a negative light. Here follows an excerpt from an interview with an older member of staff:

*Lately, the majority of lecturing staff in this campus is very young. I began to notice this when the NCV started.<sup>22</sup> There are about five of us who are between 40–53 years old. The majority are young men and women below 35 years, some of whom have been in the college prior to the NCV. The age difference is sometimes a big problem. There are things we do and younger staff members think we are being conservative. Likewise, their way of doing things sometimes seem very immature to older staff like me.*

This intergenerational diversity leads to differences of opinion and differences in values, ideas, and choices that may affect work dynamics and lead to misunderstandings and conflict.

Older interviewees also mentioned that some of the younger staff members have modern views and perceive their older colleagues as having obsolete ideas and not being open to change and new concepts. This tends to confirm that older staff members become 'ardent complainers' (Huberman, 1993: 10), in line with Huberman's notion of conservatism. (Huberman 1993). Levin (2001) argues that older staff members are often more discreet, shrewd, sceptical of reform, and less tolerant of younger staff members. Older lecturers feel that they are wiser because of the experience that they have accumulated over the years.

An older interviewee felt that some of the younger lecturers mingle too casually with students and as a result find it difficult to discipline students who are out of line. As lecturers, they are professionally and bureaucratically accountable and need to uphold educationally meaningful standards. The interviewee further suggested that while the experience of older staff members should be seen as an asset to the college community, their ideas are sometimes side-lined in meetings, and more so when lecturers are required to work in teams.

All except one lecturer interviewed for this study affirmed having had experiences of intergenerational misunderstandings with colleagues. Lecturers agreed, nonetheless, that working together at a horizontal, peer, and collegial level is important, especially to allow the cross-pollination of ideas in meetings and when working as teams. The responses of interviewees point to the need for better generational understanding to enhance the working environments of lecturers and improve collegial relations for the benefit of college communities.

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22 The National Certificate Vocational (NCV) is a qualification introduced in 2008. The NCV is a full-time, three-year programme that is equivalent to Grades 10–12 in the schooling system, and its introduction signalled a shift in the function of colleges to delivering a more school-like curriculum to younger students.

## Race relations

A number of interviewees described traces of hostility that sometimes exist between colleagues due to racial tensions linked to the apartheid past. Mergers of colleges rearranged and reshuffled lecturing staff, bringing together people with 'diverse socio-genetic differences' (Wedekind, 2001: 268). The intermeshing of staff of different races has not been easy for lecturers – when people work together, emotions are involved. Kelchtermans (2005) argues that 'emotions are understood as experiences that result from teachers' embeddedness in and interactions with their professional environment' (Kelchtermans, 2005: 997). Furthermore, Nias (1996) argues that a teacher cannot be 'disengaged from his or her cultural, social and historical contexts' (Nias, 1996).

The majority of the lecturers interviewed affirmed that they had, in one way or another, been affected by the social divisions created by apartheid:

*I started teaching at campus [XX]. I was the second black lecturer on campus. I can show you a picture. Here, this was us. This was in 1997. Being a black staff member at a predominantly white campus was hard. Uyazi ke isitulo siyashisa uma umnyama phakathi kwezinye izinhlanga ... [You know that the seat is hot when you are black amongst people of other races ...]*

The expression 'that the seat is hot' indicates that things are uncomfortable for a black person in a predominantly white environment, and the response seems to suggest feelings of exclusion, discrimination, and alienation of people based on race. This mirrors societal divisions that still exist in reality and in peoples' minds, even in the post-apartheid era. Such a situation is unlikely to lead to positive collegial relations unless it is addressed by concerned college staff and management.

A second interviewee confirmed this state of affairs, asserting that while apartheid may have been destroyed constitutionally, it still exists in some lecturers' minds and manifests itself in their behaviour:

*If you get into our staff room you will find the majority of lecturers seated according to race. I mean people of the same race usually sit together. I don't think people do it consciously, it just happens like a habit. There could be many reasons why it occurs. One of them may be is that our historical backgrounds still affect us a lot; separate development still lives in our minds I think. So far it's not easy to get rid of it in our generation. May be our children and grandchildren will be able to but it's difficult for us. Sometimes it's more about being comfortable because you will speak your own language. But sometimes it's because there are people you don't trust who will use anything they know against you.*

In addition to reflecting the consequences of apartheid's separate development ideology, the response also reveals group-building push and pull factors in relation to distrust, tension, and fear of backstabbing.

Over and above race, another lecturer argued that being female as well as black aggravated the already strained collegial relations:



*My first job was at [XX] Technical College in 1997. I had not planned to be a teacher but that was the only job I could find at the time. This was a white technical college and I was the second black female to be hired in that institution. We were the only blacks there. Challenges of being a black female member of staff in a white institution were enormous. Although a few colleagues were very accepting, the majority were very cold towards us. In meetings we, black females, were close to being invisible. I am not a shy person and am very assertive but I ended up feeling that my opinion did not matter. You would always find the two of us sitting together and there was always that feeling of being treated like a stepchild.*

The responses quoted above affirm the existence of in-group advantage and out-group disadvantage among college lecturers. In-group advantage refers to a situation in which members of a group perceive themselves as better than and superior to members of another group. The other group then becomes the out-group and is at a disadvantage, especially if its members are in the minority. In the above instance, the black female college lecturers perceived their white colleagues as a group that consciously or unconsciously alienated them. The black female lecturers were themselves drawn to each other due to their being new and to their shared skin colour, language, culture, and gender.

The black female lecturer further expressed feelings of 'not being seen' or not being acknowledged by her colleagues during meeting interactions. The tone in her response suggests that she believes her contributions and opinions are not valued by colleagues. However, she perceives her abilities differently and does not accept being belittled. A sense of alienation is evident, as she chooses not to contribute and even sits alone in the staff room. This severely limits her social interaction in the work environment and demonstrates unhealthy collegial relations.

Another interviewee spoke about the way intergenerational diversity is influenced by racial inequities and injustices of the past: older staff members come largely from one racial group and cultural background, while new staff are much more diverse. This interviewee added that some of the lecturing staff at the college are foreign nationals:

*In our campus it is not bad but in others like campus [XX] which is close to Swaziland and Mozambican borders xenophobic misunderstandings and conflicts amongst staff occur quite often ...*

As xenophobic attacks have been prevalent in South Africa in recent years, TVET college lecturers are not disconnected from these dynamics, and college campuses need to be understood as smaller units of a bigger global picture.

Some lecturers revealed feelings of distrust and suspicions that they were being set up for failure and attributed this to racial differences. Some lecturers asserted that they feel under pressure to prove to their colleagues that they possess the required pedagogical and content knowledge, and resented insinuations that they may not be knowledgeable enough or may be inadequately equipped to execute their teaching roles as lecturers:

*The subject I had come to teach had a high failure rate. This is the main subject that was allocated to me to teach. There was no induction and mentoring. Things*

*were very hard at first. I felt like I was thrown at the deep end to either swim or sink. I felt like management and senior colleagues in the college wanted me to either fail or prove that I could do it. I did everything I could, including extra classes, to see to it that I did not fail. I think a combination of hard work, luck and God being on my side helped me to pull through. Results for the subject slightly improved that semester. But I can tell you that it is very hard to work in an environment where one has to prove herself all the time.*

Although most of the lecturers' responses to questions regarding race were negative, one interviewee indicated that relations improved over time as lecturers got to know one another. This demonstrates the positive effect of familiarity. The interviewee explained that during the first few years of the merger, collegial relations were severely constrained, but difficulties were gradually minimised due to continual peer interaction. Diversity is seen by this interviewee as presenting opportunities to learn more about other people, even from negative experiences. This lecturer emphasised the need to turn negative experiences into learning experiences from which to grow and sees spending time on negative reflection as a futile exercise that affects healthy collegial relations. The interviewee criticised chronic negativity:

*Diversity is quite interesting because you learn a lot from it even if negative things come up. Challenges with regards to relations as colleagues have always been there and some have been very bad incidents. I have taught myself to learn something even if it's a bad incident at work. Like harsh criticism, why not look at it closely and see if there isn't a lesson or two from it? I am not saying it never hurts but negativity is stressful and I always want to come out of it a better person.*

The interviewee further stated that people may be quoted out of context and incidents blown out of proportion and wrongfully labelled as racist, which does not contribute towards building healthy collegial relations:

*But I think there are times when I might have misread or misinterpreted what was happening or what was said. For example, this group of older female colleagues who are senior lecturers and are perceived to be claiming being better than and looking down upon others. I used to believe this although I had never witnessed or had a direct negative encounter with them as alleged. But I have worked with them for many years now and I am beginning to think that there are other issues other than race. Surely what brings them together is a combination of things like age, gender, seniority and also race. I am neither condoning their acts nor perceiving them as saints but I am saying there might be other factors at play ...*

Interestingly, some responses suggest that colleagues from a particular campus see themselves as a cohesive group in relation to other campuses, and in these instances racism seemed to fade. The shift from singular to plural words like 'we', 'us' indicates a sense of belonging and loyalty to their particular campus and illustrates Elias's (1978) views on the use of pronouns. Elias argues that one's sense of personal identity is closely

connected with the 'we' and 'they' relationships of one's group, and with one's position within those units of which one speaks as 'we' and 'they' (Elias, 1978: 128):

*We at campus [XX] and [XX] are not fairly treated. You would swear we are satellite centres or stepchildren ...*

*Lecturers from other campuses are more privileged than us. They get everything they ask for in terms of resources. I think we are not treated equally ...*

All lecturers are woven into the network of people on their specific campus, regardless of the other divisions that exist between these individuals. A spatial dynamic thus also interweaves identity in so far as common issues on a campus may provide the basis of a common identity.

Being accepted, recognised and liked by one's colleagues matters:

*One incident I will never forget was when I got married in August. More than half the colleagues, of all races mind you, even management, came to my wedding. I thought I was dreaming when I saw them at my wedding! It was such a good feeling. It made me realise that I am one of them!*

This is the same lecturer who described how she 'earned respect of and acceptance by colleagues' when results for her subject which had had a very high failure rate improved. The lecturer was gradually establishing more reference groups (Nias, 1989) to identify with, a crucial aspect for one's survival and for the creation of a better work environment. The lecturer went on to explain that these were critical incidents in her work life that made her reconsider her way of thinking and caused her to change her attitude towards others and establish a new sense of self (Huberman, 1992; Schempp, Sparkes & Templin, 1999; Sparkes, 1994).

## Specialisations

TVET colleges offer approximately 18 National Certificate Vocational (NCV) programmes and a variety of National Accredited Technical Education Diploma (NATED) courses. Different sub-field programmes make provision for a high degree of specialisation, with the major specialisations being Engineering, Business Studies, Information Technology, and Primary Agriculture. Bigger and more isolated campuses may provide all of these under one roof, depending on the demands of the communities the colleges serve. In colleges that have different campuses in close proximity to each other, a campus may be responsible for only one or two major specialisations. We interviewed lecturers from the fields of Engineering, Information Technology, and Agricultural Studies, and this section will therefore focus primarily on issues of collegiality and collegial relations within these academic departments.

Collegial relations amongst people who are specialists in the same field tend to be stronger than relations amongst colleagues in general. Elias (1978) argues that it is possible that people bond to each other due not only to the division of labour or occupational

specialisation, but also to a common sense of identity and shared antagonism towards others (Elias, 1978: 175). Sharing a specialisation thus brings people closer together and colleagues form small beneficial communities within their areas of specialisation:

*But I relate better to people who also teach computer related courses like me. I am talking about people of all races. We are able to rely on one another for support because of what we teach. We discuss things, share ideas and get information from experienced colleagues. Most of them are not selfish at all ...*

Areas of specialisation were found to be good environments for learning through collaborative efforts. Sharing of ideas and information enables personal and professional development.

The issue of the perceived dominance of Mathematics, Engineering and Pure Science subjects over 'other' subjects was communicated in the responses of lecturers who teach the 'other' subjects, such as Primary Agriculture. The dominant subjects are accorded a higher status and regarded as academic disciplines because of their perceived value in intellectual fields and their link to economic growth and profit, while the 'other' subjects are regarded as 'soft disciplines' and are looked down on. When interrogated further, lecturers identified Marketing, Management, Hospitality, Cosmetology and Tourism as 'other' subjects. The labelling of different areas of specialisation and identifying lecturers in this manner does not contribute to positive collegial relations; lecturers in the so-called 'stronger' disciplines may be resented by lecturers in the fields considered 'weak':

*I teach Soil Science and I love it ... but the stigma of being a 'weak science' falls on my subjects too ...*

The perceptions of colleagues about each other's status and what they think and say about each other has an impact on the work environment. An interviewee indicated that teaching in a field that is regarded as second-rate results in feelings of inferiority and discomfort when amongst other lecturers, and may lead to low self-esteem which adversely effects relations with colleagues and performance at work.

Working together in teams for the realisation of departmental and campus goals leads to gains in the form of professional development and empowerment. Interactivity and reciprocity is solidified by the ability of people to work together in a team. In this study, data revealed that knowledge accumulated through experience was shared with new and inexperienced colleagues, although one interviewee felt his experience was not valued by younger members of staff. Collaboration, teamwork, peer coaching, partnerships, mentoring, and professional development were all mentioned as important mechanisms for building collegial relations within academic departments.

## **Relations with college management**

The discussion thus far has focused on what we have termed horizontal collegial relations amongst colleagues at campus and academic department level. Section two turns to a discussion of the vertical collegial relations between lecturers, campus leadership, and

top college management based in a central office or college headquarters.

A TVET college may have five or more campuses and is headed by the college principal. Each campus is under the leadership of a campus manager who reports to top college management at the central office.

Our research revealed significant resentment from lecturers directed at central office management and the college councils. College councils are made up of external representatives nominated by the Minister of Higher Education and Training as well as community and local industry representatives. The council is the highest governance structure in a college. At the time of the interviews, college councils were also the employers and there was significant unhappiness with how colleges were being run. Dissatisfaction with government as the originator of policies affecting the lecturing staff in colleges was also expressed. Most of the lecturers interviewed raised systemic and institutional challenges. The thorny issues that have led to bad relations between lecturers, college management, and government revolved around ineffective facility and resource management, management capacity, centralisation of power, and lecturer employment status.

Before these issues are discussed in more detail, we briefly highlight the significance of complex networks of interdependent lecturers and officials and their shifting, asymmetrical power balances. In his game models, Elias (1978) elaborates on how the order of complexity in a social change phenomenon increases as the number of players involved increases. The number of interconnected players in different tiers makes the situation more complex, thus making the change process increasingly unpredictable and beyond the ability of any single individual or group of players to control (Dopson, 2005).

### **Dictatorship, nepotism and lack of collaborative strategies**

The majority of lecturers interviewed in this study demonstrated very low levels of trust in their managers and perceived the managers as ineffective. The lecturers believe that the government hires people whose competencies are questionable. The majority of respondents are of the opinion that members of interview panels hire their friends or relatives. Lecturers seem to be convinced that people who are well qualified may not necessarily be employed if they are not acquainted with management in one way or another. The majority of lecturers believe that limiting the selection of candidates for college posts to acquaintances hinders progress and is a grave error which will have long-term effects:

*Most people in senior positions in our campuses and central office are not fit to be in those positions. Some of them know nothing about technical and vocational education. How does a school principal who has never worked in technical colleges become a rector in a TVET college? Most of management do not have a clue about what we do here. We always wonder how most of them get the top jobs. Is it through bribery or nepotism? We have capable people within the sector that we believe can do the job but those are rarely selected ... this needs to be addressed otherwise it will take a long time before colleges work effectively ...*

A second interviewee concurred that there is a dearth of competent managers in TVET colleges, but added that senior managers (heads of departments, campus managers, the principal and his or her deputies) are struggling due to lack of capacity and training and the expectations placed on them:

*I don't think our senior managers have the capacity and ability to handle the changes themselves. They are also under pressure to facilitate change and demonstrate to us that they understand what is happening. I think deep down they are also struggling especially because they too never had adequate training to be able to manage the changes ...*

Some of the lecturers think it is unfair of management to demand high quality work when managers themselves have a superficial grasp of the challenges faced in the colleges. An interviewee described being disappointed with the 'aloof' response of a deputy manager alerted to a problem being experienced in a workshop. The deputy manager responded that 'I don't want people who come to me with problems but I prefer those who also provide potential solutions to those problems. Right now I am busy and you are wasting my time'.

*I was disappointed. I believed that he should have given us a chance for further discussions because we did have suggestions about what could be done about the problem. Dismissing us like that made me feel like a school child in the principal's office. I felt put off and I vowed to never go there again ...*

The lecturers expected to be listened to, but the deputy manager's response made them feel unwelcome and that their contribution had no value. Other negative experiences with management relate to lecturers' workloads. For example, some lecturers were not given the opportunity to teach their major subjects or to choose which subject they would teach, but were allocated without consultation to any subject that lacked a teacher at the time.

Elias (1978) draws our attention to the concepts of 'function' and 'power' in a relationship. According to Elias, unevenness of function and power signifies interdependencies which constrain people to a greater or lesser extent. He argues that 'when a person lacks something which another person has the power to withhold, the latter has a function for the former'. He further argues that people who are interdependent are not necessarily equally interdependent (Elias, 1978: 78). Allocation of lecturers to subjects without consultation is an example of a lecturer-management relationship which is uneven and conflict bearing. The scenario illustrates how uneven relationships can damage professional work and the emotional well-being of the people concerned, inhibiting the implementation of reform.

The interviews also revealed a great deal of resentment directed at college management from lecturers who are on the college council payrolls. Interviewees complained that lecturers' salaries are not market-related and payment dates and amounts fluctuate constantly. Interviewees constantly referred to management as 'them', identifying managers as part of a distinct, other group. The physical distance between management and the

campuses and the isolation of central offices which are far from campuses aggravates the resentment and results in emotional detachment and disaffection, a situation which does not yield collegial relationships.

It is not only senior managers who are resented and seen as not doing their jobs properly and timeously; managers in the human resource units of campuses, central offices, and government offices are also the subject of lecturers' disaffection:

*HR at our campus is of no help. We only go there to pick up our pay slips and you are lucky if you found an administrator who will be willing to give you help. The central office is worse, you won't find help there. I know for sure they wouldn't have helped me especially because I am still under government payroll. If your employment has not been transferred to Council yet, it's better to bypass them and deal with government directly ...*

The use of negative phrases such as 'these government offices', 'HR is of no help', 'the central office is worse' 'you won't find help there', and 'bypass them' is indicative of a lack of trust, teamwork, and support. In any educational institution, administrators, managers, and professional staff need to work collaboratively to ensure proper coordination and execution of the institution's day-to-day activities and long-term plans. Constrained relations between staff members at different levels adversely impact the effective and smooth running of an institution.

Generational and race dynamics which, as discussed earlier in this chapter, affect horizontal working relationships in the colleges may affect vertical collegial relationships in the same way. For example, an interviewee asserted that intergenerational misunderstandings may occur and may be aggravated by cultural and gender differences, as well as the unique South African historical experience of racial segregation. This lecturer also feels that people have to be conscientised about these differences because they influence people's attitudes and could make or break collegial relations:

*Take our campus management, for example, they are older, White, Afrikaans speaking females. They may be influenced by culture, historical background, age, and gender. This doesn't necessarily have to cause problems when handled well by both management and staff. But it isn't, as the dividing line becomes too thick and most people see them as very alienating and this is bad because they are in management and should be getting along well with staff. Unless people are made aware of these factors, misunderstandings are bound to occur. This definitely does impact organisational relationships or the working environment positively. Management should lead by example in sorting these things out.*

Colleagues and senior staff members who are in management positions should be proactive in sorting out disparities that arise from differences in culture, gender, history and race.

## Centralisation and decentralisation of power

This study also highlighted tensions and contradictions resulting from centralisation and decentralisation of authority in the educational reform processes. Rogers (2010) argues that in centralised approaches, the overall decisions of reform are controlled by the state, as opposed to decentralised approaches that are client-controlled with wide sharing of power and control among stakeholders (Rogers, 2010). In South Africa, key decisions regarding the TVET colleges rested with national and provincial governments without much participation at institutional level. Interviewees feel that this authoritarian attitude supported by an oversized bureaucracy results in the stagnation of change processes and the alienation of lecturers as professionals and critical role-players in the diffusion of innovations. The reform process is perceived to be a closed box that excludes and silences professional input from the majority of lecturers.

Although TVET college lecturers understand the advantages of centralising authority, such as ensuring accountability, they feel that the management of colleges is over-centralised; even trivial issues that could be handled at a campus level are required to be dealt with by the central offices:

*Even if you want seeds for our gardens, you have to send paperwork for a request to the central office that is 200 km away from campus. Things take a very long time to be processed. Bear in mind that planting is seasonal, by the time the money to buy seeds comes the season for that vegetable is already over. Imagine! Out of season! When you question things you are reminded of the famous motto: 'We have to follow protocol!'*

This lecturer's statement indicates the extent of the bureaucracy and unnecessary red tape and illustrates the type of decisions that could be devolved to campuses. Since campuses are the sites of activities, campus staff are better able to attend to some issues than the staff at the central offices. Further, an interviewee described how major decisions that 'come from above', that is, are taken at central-office level, do not always match the context in which they are intended to be implemented:

*At one stage a top-down decision for production of grass at our agricultural campus failed. Management had to ask for our comments. The project wouldn't have survived in that climate. We know the area and its demands better. I think no viability study was done before directing this project to our campus. We lecturers have better ideas about what could work this side of the country. When things fail it is bad for us in the eyes of community. We have to explain and it is hard. It is funny how we are never asked about what we think and be given a chance of being professionals.*

The interviewee was made to feel insignificant and disheartened by top-down decisions from the central office, and feels that lecturers should be allowed to give input as they are closer to the 'customer' (Moyo, 2007). In this context, customers are students and local communities whose needs the campuses are meant to respond to. Not being given



discretion at campus level, and being dictated to by central office, leads to resentment towards management and the lack of a 'collaborative educational environment' (Singh *et al.*, 2007: 542). The interviewee's tone suggests a breakdown in collegial relations between the campus and central office. Further, central management's lack of understanding of local conditions led to the failure of the project which damaged the community's trust in the college.

The lecturers' comments as a whole seem to be a call for more flexibility and collaborative decision-making, especially in matters concerning the community. Veugelers and Zijlstra (2002) argue for collaboration and participatory leadership as strategies that promote collegiality because they are attempts to balance top-down and bottom-up approaches. Such strategies could contribute to a collegial environment in which staff, parents, management, and other stakeholders participate to take the TVET colleges forward. A mismatch between community needs and what the college campus provides puts campus management and lecturers in a difficult situation, as the TVET colleges have to account to the communities with which they work. The need for college and campus managers and lecturers always to consider the broader figurations consisting of parents and the immediate communities served by the colleges emerged in the interviews as a recurring theme.

Comments of some of the interviewees give rise to the perception that transformation of colleges and furthering the skills development mandate is being undermined by the lack of management and leadership skills, including emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence, from a management perspective, requires management to understand the positive and negative feelings of staff and share leadership in order to work collaboratively and allow collegiality to flourish (Gardner & Stough, 2002). This calls for intellectually capable leaders who also possess emotional intelligence. Thilo (2004) argues that emotionally intelligent leaders have a better chance of improving relationships with staff, lowering employee turnover, improving collaboration amongst colleagues, experiencing greater job satisfaction, and succeeding in their leadership roles.

There were a few instances mentioned of positive managerial practices that enhance collegiality. Most of the collegial learning and sharing of ideas happens during meetings:

*We have meetings every Thursday afternoon. We are usually tired at this time of the day but these are important as we share what has happened during the week and plan for the following week. No one wants to be out of the loop, so most of the time everybody attends. The HoD chairs the meetings but sometimes chairing of meetings rotates so that we all get a chance to learn. I gain a lot from these meetings because our HoD allows us to discuss issues and make decisions.*

Many lecturers said that they were motivated by commendations, recognition of achievements, and gestures of affirmation from senior management:

*At one stage, colleagues referred a new member of staff to me as a mentor in computer teaching. This says a lot in terms of being regarded as good at what you do. I felt good and this made me more confident ...*

Overall, managing mega-colleges with multiple campuses is a task that even experienced, appropriately qualified, vocationally oriented managers are battling with (DHET, 2013; Moyo, 2007; Nzimande, 2010). This section suggests that the harmonisation of centralised and decentralised management approaches is a necessity to improve collegial relations between college management and staff.

## Conclusion

In summarising his findings from a study on the professional development of TVET teachers in Ethiopia, Abebe (2009 : 244) encapsulates many of the central issues discussed in this chapter:

*The results of this research pointed that there is no strong culture of support and collaborations among teachers in the TVET schools. This has limited the potential to learn from one another. Culture of collaboration and support must be established for professional development activities to be successful and bring about changes in beliefs, attitudes and practices in the teachers.*

*Among the factors that help the development of culture of support within the school include developing norms of collegiality, openness and trust, creating and supporting networks, collaboration and coalitions among teachers, and the distribution of the role of leadership among teachers (Lieberman, 1994). Collegiality and collaboration in schools are promoted when there exist openness, trust, respect, ease of communication, and supportive school leadership, among others. (Kurse et al, 1994; Barth 1990; Arnold 2005b)*

Collegiality is thus not simply about being congenial. A collegial environment has a direct bearing on the potential for professional development, lecturer identity formation, and efficient management. Furthermore, collegiality is not only about colleagues relating to and supporting each other, but is also critically about how management interacts with professional staff in the colleges and the degree to which people in colleges identify with each other.

The dominant picture that emerges from the lecturers interviewed for this study is that collegial relations, both horizontal and vertical, are generally poor or problematic. Amongst other issues, lecturers describe traces of hostility between colleagues due to racial tensions of the past, and a tendency to bond better with colleagues of their own racial group. Antagonistic behaviour due to generational diversity and differences in ethnicity, nationality, and gender was also noted.

There is however, some evidence of collegiality. Interviewees asserted that they are drawn towards people who teach in the same subject. Some lecturers spoke about the professional development that occurs through working collaboratively with experienced colleagues. Some management strategies, such as formal and informal meetings in which responsibilities are shared, ideas pooled, and constructive criticism given, are seen as inclusive. Lecturers are also exposed to positive motivating comments, appreciation of effort, commendation and recognition of accomplishments during these meetings.

Too little attention has been focused on the complex figurations that make up a TVET college and how the relations between colleagues can have a material effect on reform and development. Developing management strategies that actively encourage and support the building of collegial bonds between staff members and using more collegial managerial strategies may have positive outcomes, not just in terms of staff morale, but in terms of strengthening the TVET colleges, institutions that are critical to the realisation of so many policy imperatives.

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