Change Management in TVET Colleges

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chapter 6

WHAT WILL IT TAKE TO TURN TVET COLLEGES AROUND?

EVALUATION OF A LARGE-SCALE COLLEGE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

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Introduction

The Colleges Improvement Project (CIP) was implemented by JET Education Services (JET) in 15 TVET colleges in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo provinces between September 2011 and December 2014 on behalf of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). The project's overarching strategic objective was:

> *To improve the functionality and capacity of the eight Eastern Cape and seven Limpopo FET Colleges, in order to improve teaching and learning and provide the foundations for further learning and improved employability of graduates. (DHET, 2013)*

This objective was informed by an initial assessment of the colleges at the end of 2012 which revealed that the colleges were experiencing substantive weaknesses in several functional areas (JET, 2012a and 2012b), and that the colleges were at different levels of functionality. Of the 15 colleges, three were classified as good, five as moderate, one as weak and, importantly, six colleges – including four from the Eastern Cape, constituting half of the colleges in this province – were identified as dysfunctional and in need of a compliance-focused intervention plan (JET, 2012c).

This chapter describes the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the CIP using a theory of change approach that established which changes were required to improve the colleges' functionality and enable them to accomplish the tasks expected of them. The chapter also provides insights into what is entailed in measuring the achievements of a complex programme such as the CIP in order to document lessons learnt.

Prior to commencement of the CIP, a number of the dysfunctional colleges were placed under administration at some point during the lifespan of the project in an attempt to create a greater level of compliance. This measure was seen as the DHET's response to the imperative highlighted in the initial assessment, but had unintended outcomes.

In this context, the turnaround of the colleges was considered to require a 'comprehensive' strategy across a wide spectrum of functional domains, including: Strategic and Operational Planning; Management and Governance; Teaching and Learning; Human Resource Management and Development; Finance and Risk Management; the Education Management Information System (EMIS); Student Support Services (SSS); and Physical Infrastructure and Facilities. It was anticipated that the project would tackle four levels of functionality – policies, systems, processes, and capacity – in the aforementioned domains.

Strategic stakeholder relationships and partnerships were also seen as a key element of the successful turnaround of the colleges. Whilst the CIP focused on the different functional areas, the emphasis of the interventions was on the imperative of improving teaching and learning, consistent with the conceptual model developed by JET which sought to place student performance and success at the centre of the intervention and gear all the other interventions towards this (JET, 2013).

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26   Specialist Manager, JET Education Services at the time of the CIP.

There were smaller and larger changes in the project strategy over time. A key shift occurred when the DHET formed a partnership with the South African Institute for Chartered Accountants (SAICA) to support the colleges with respect to financial and human resources management (JET, 2013). The introduction of SAICA as a partner allowed JET to focus more on the other functional areas outlined above, although JET continued to engage with the aspects of financial and human resources management which are critical to achieving successful teaching and learning. The emphasis on teaching and learning as the focus of all interventions was further sharpened through the output-to-purpose review (OPR) that was conducted by external evaluators contracted by JET and the DHET.

It was also agreed that, to ensure the project's success, JET would work collaboratively with the provincial education departments (PEDs) as well as with the DHET. This collaborative approach was seen as critical to institutionalising and sustaining the interventions beyond the life of the project. The extent that this was found to be possible and the implications for the programme emerge as an area of learning from this intervention.

The following principles were established to guide the implementation of the CIP:

The programme should be a comprehensive college transformation programme; interventions should be coherent and integrated; a developmental approach, starting with the status quo of each individual college and then defining a pathway of development unique and appropriate to each college, should be adopted; building delivery capacity of college staff must be undertaken; the programme must support the colleges' core business of student learning; the programme must be sustainable in order to make a lasting contribution to colleges' performance; a sense of ownership must be built amongst college staff so that they take full responsibility for the colleges' success and welfare; compliance and responsiveness should be facilitated so that colleges are able to comply with the requirements of the regulatory frameworks that govern their operations; and finally, the project must be based on a common vision of and perspectives on delivery – the wide range of activities to be undertaken in the operation of a college must be embodied in a single vision and in a commonly held perspective on the future of the institution.

This chapter is structured in the following way:

Firstly, an introduction to how monitoring and evaluation activities were conceived is presented and reflected in the following sub-sections:

- Monitoring and evaluation;
- Measuring success; and
- Using the CIP's theory of change to assess the achievements.

Secondly, consideration is given as to how and why the objectives were met and the extent to which they were met under the headings:

- The six strategic objectives: achievements and limitations on what could be achieved; and
- The status of the strategic objective indicators.

Thirdly, a discussion of the outcomes of the CIP from the perspective of the M&E exercise is put forward in terms of:

- What worked and what did not; and
- Taking the lessons of the CIP forward.

Monitoring and evaluation

It was agreed between JET and the DHET that the strategic objective – and therefore the success of the project – would be measured by a set of core indicators linked to priorities for the TVET sector as outlined in the National Development Plan (NDP), the DHET's Annual Performance Plans and the Minister of Higher Education's performance agreement. An advantage of this approach was that data pertaining to these indicators was likely to be available as colleges and the DHET are required to report on these priorities. Alignment of the indicators also introduced a political imperative (i.e. urgency to achieve progress). The strategic objective indicators were:

- Enrolment growth (target of 15% per annum);
- Improved throughput (target of 5% over the national rate by the end of 2014);
- Improved certification rate (target of 5% over the national rate by the end of 2014); and
- Increased number of learners placed – this could include workplace exposure or structured workplace-based experience (WBE) during a programme, or a placement upon graduation into a learnership, apprenticeship, internship, or other work opportunity (target of 5% over the national rate by the end of 2014).

The status of these indicators was reviewed at the outset of the project and then at key points during implementation and provided a basis for understanding the extent to which change was realised over the project's lifespan.

Measuring success

As indicated, the project's overarching goal was 'to demonstrate an effective systemic model of FET college improvement that can be replicated throughout the college sector'. Given this, substantial effort was placed on monitoring and evaluation so that processes and learnings (i.e. what worked, what did not work and why) could be documented.

The project had several features of a 'complex' programme: it operated at multiple levels (e.g. individual, classroom, campus, college, and provincial); it involved multiple stakeholders with different perspectives; whilst it aimed to achieve long-term changes, there was also a need for short-term results (Barnes *et al*, 2003); cause and effect relationships were recursive – the implementation and attainment of 'high-level' objectives interacted with the implementation and attainment of 'lower-level' objectives through feedback loops and other recursive mechanisms; and the outcomes were not always known in advance – some were emergent, (i.e. the specific outcomes and the knowledge and means to achieve them emerged during implementation of the intervention) (Rogers,

2008). This created some challenges for documenting the theory of change, developing a logic model, and conducting monitoring and evaluation, which traditionally assesses progress and achievements in relation to what was planned and expected at the outset.

It was understood that as the project was implemented changes might be made with respect to activities, outputs, and outcomes. Importantly, however, the project's success indicators could not be amended. This was to ensure that while learning through implementation was taken into account and any implications for the design of the project could be accommodated, the focus and intention of the project remained consistent. That is, the target was clear from the outset and the evaluation would focus on understanding the extent to which this target was met and, critically, the factors that had contributed towards or hindered the target's achievement. The evaluation would consider the extent to which the activities were implemented as planned and, where there were changes made, why these changes were required and the effect of the changes on the achievement of the project's outcomes and, ultimately, its strategic objective. Documenting what was done and why and capturing and sharing learning was a priority of the monitoring and evaluation process.

The project implementation team was responsible for project monitoring, and internal evaluation of the project was led by JET's M&E Division which was separate from and had an independent reporting line to the project implementation team. Some aspects of the evaluation – such as an independent OPR – were conducted by external evaluators contracted by JET and the DHET.

The evaluation methodologies utilised during the CIP included a rapid assessment of the colleges, a baseline study, an OPR, a formative evaluation, and case studies.

At the outset of the project, the project team undertook a rapid assessment of each of the colleges. This rapid assessment was conducted in the functional areas that had been identified for the project and were to inform the activities that would be prioritised for the programme and for each college.

Baseline reports were developed for the colleges in both provinces. These reports drew on the initial rapid assessments and provided an overview of the status of the colleges in terms of the outcomes and objectives contained in the logic model which was developed to summarise the project's theory of change. However, since the logic model was developed after the rapid assessments had been completed, and was, in fact, informed by the rapid assessments, the rapid assessment reports are not comprehensive reports on the status of each of the activities, outputs, and outcomes outlined in the logic model. Nevertheless, the reports contain rich data relating to the core outcomes specified in the logic model and therefore provide a basis for understanding the changes that occurred during implementation of the CIP.

An OPR initiated by JET to establish whether the improvement model was working and the objectives of the project were being met took place in April 2012.

The OPR was followed by a formative evaluation, including a review of data relating to the strategic objective indicators, was completed in March 2014. The formative evaluation report incorporated the results of surveys that were completed by college management, lecturers, and students. The surveys were initially intended to establish a baseline regarding the perceptions of key stakeholders and included questions pertaining to the project's activities, outputs, outcomes, and their associated indicators contained

in the logic model. The baseline could then be used to ascertain whether there were any shifts in perceptions during the course of the project implementation. However, there was a need to link the survey instruments with the project logic model, and since the logic model could only be developed after the rapid assessments had taken place, the surveys could not be conducted at the outset of the evaluation. Further delays due to college holidays and various other factors meant that project activities had already taken place before and occurred during completion of the surveys. Consequently, the survey findings do not provide a true baseline. The results of the surveys were therefore integrated into the formative evaluation report, with the intention that they be used as a basis against which to benchmark further change. The views of stakeholders – specifically college principals, JET staff, and DHET and PED officials – on the changes that had taken place in colleges and the factors that they believed contributed to or hindered the changes were included in the formative evaluation report, and this information was used to support the ongoing development of the intervention.

Following the formative evaluation, six colleges were selected for case studies using the following criteria: including an equal number of Eastern Cape and Limpopo colleges; including colleges which were at different levels of performance (as measured via certification and throughput rates) and having received differing levels of support from the project; and including colleges which could showcase good practices and success in different areas in which the project worked. The purpose of the case studies was to document what was working well, identify good practices for the purpose of sharing, and investigate further the findings of the formative evaluation. The case studies also probed the perceptions of a range of project beneficiaries at various levels (including senior management, management, lecturers, and students) regarding the interventions and support they received from JET. Importantly, the case studies sought to understand what would be required to ensure that improvements and gains experienced by the colleges could be maintained, sustained, and replicated. The data for the case studies were collected through site visits, face-to-face interviews, and focus group discussions at colleges and campuses in May 2014.

The final step in the internal M&E process was the summative evaluation undertaken at the conclusion of the programme and which focused on understanding the progress that the project had made measured against its strategic objectives and indicators. This summative evaluation included an analysis of college enrolment and certification rates, the placement rates of learners, and throughput rates of programmes so that a comparison could be made between the status of the strategic objective indicators at the outset of the project and at the end.

The summative evaluation also reviewed the extent to which the final outcomes envisaged for the programme had been attained and the final report reflects on the extent to which the achievement (or failure to achieve) particular outcomes contributed towards the realisation of the CIP's objectives. Factors that enabled or hindered the process are considered and lessons for similar interventions in the future are indicated. Among the questions which the summative evaluation sought to answer were:

- What is the status of the strategic objective indicators at project close-out and what changes have occurred from 2011 to 2014?

- What has the project produced, delivered, and achieved?
- What changes (positive and negative) have occurred at the colleges in the functional areas on which the project focused, did the project contribute to these changes and, if so, how?
- What challenges and impediments to the project were identified and how did these affect project implementation and success?
- Is it likely that the changes which have occurred will be sustained post the project? What is required for sustainability?
- What is it possible and plausible for a college improvement project such as this to address and what needs to be in place for such a project to succeed?

In order to provide a balanced assessment of the programme's implementation and success, a range of data sources was used, including:

- The theory of change and logic model which was developed for the project and subsequently updated with the project team;
- A review of relevant literature;
- A review of project documents (business plan, quarterly reports, evaluation reports, etc.), and monitoring data;
- A review of secondary data pertaining to the strategic objective indicators provided by the DHET, colleges and, in some instances, JET;
- In-depth case studies of three Eastern Cape and three Limpopo colleges;
- Interviews with members of the JET management and implementing teams;
- Interviews with DHET and PED officials;
- Telephonic interviews with principals or nominated representatives from each of the colleges; and
- Perception surveys conducted with managers, lecturers and students at the colleges in 2013 and again in 2014.

After the closure of the project, an external evaluation of the CIP was commissioned by the DHET and completed in September 2015.

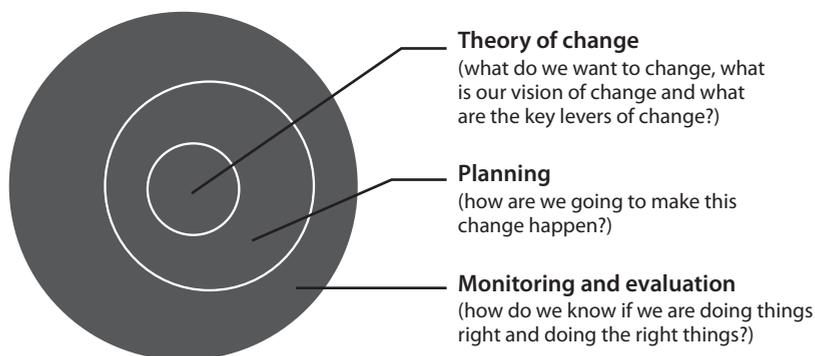## Assessing achievements with the CIP's theory of change

Developing the theory of change for the CIP and reviewing progress was undertaken using a participatory approach. At project inception, a process was followed to document the theory of change. The activities, outputs (deliverables) and outcomes (expected changes) for which the project would be accountable were discussed, and indicators which would demonstrate programme success were developed during a workshop held with the JET project team. These were then shared with and agreed to by the DHET. At key points during the project, the theory of change was reviewed and updated, and what was done and the reasons for amendments were documented.

At the outset of the summative evaluation, the evaluation team conducted theory of change workshops with the JET project team during which the teams considered the theory of change that had been adopted at the outset, reflected on the extent to which the

outcomes that had been agreed upon were achieved, and looked at the influencing factors. The evaluation team also assessed whether the projected outcomes were appropriate; in some cases it was felt that the CIP (and JET) should have not been accountable for particular outcomes, since accomplishing them depended on decisions and actions that only the DHET could take, for example, outcomes relating to contracting and procurement.

The relationship between the theory of change, the planning process, and monitoring and evaluation is highlighted in the diagram below:

FIGURE 7   Relationship between theory of change, planning, monitoring and evaluation

Theory of change
(what do we want to change, what is our vision of change and what are the key levers of change?)

Planning
(how are we going to make this change happen?)

Monitoring and evaluation
(how do we know if we are doing things right and doing the right things?)

The starting point of developing the theory of change was to understand the key challenges: that is, what needed to be changed. This was achieved by means of a rapid assessment of each of the participating colleges in the two provinces. The rapid assessment findings informed the consideration of what could be changed in this environment and the development of a vision of change (the anticipated impact of the change) for the programme. Further, the way in which this change could be measured was specified. The following four high-level indicators of change (referred to as strategic objective indicators) which coincided with the core indicators linked to the national priorities for the TVET sector, as previously mentioned, were agreed upon. These were the areas the project sought to influence and improve:

- Enrolment;
- Certification rate;
- Throughput rate; and
- Number of learners placed in work/industry.

The JET team then considered how the CIP could contribute to realising changes in these indicators and explored the key levers of change. Based on this analysis, JET determined the key activities to be undertaken and the anticipated outcomes of these activities. The assumptions and risks underpinning the project were also outlined in the theory of change.

As outlined previously, because of the nature of this project, it was recognised that

during implementation, the monitoring and evaluation processes would provide insights and learning regarding whether the agreed upon activities were being implemented as planned, whether the activities were resulting in the intended outcomes, and the extent to which the assumptions and risks were proving to be appropriate. These insights resulted in the theory of change being reviewed, and changes in the activities that would be prioritised and the outcomes for which the programme could be held accountable.

The essence of the initial theory of change agreed upon is reflected in the CIP's six strategic objectives and their outcomes which evolved based on learning acquired during the implementation of the project.

Six strategic objectives: Achievements and limitations

Over the three years of implementation, the CIP worked towards six objectives, each of which was broken down into at least six outcomes, with the total number of outcomes approaching 50 in number. The intention here is to summarise progress per strategic objective and to draw attention to constraints on what the CIP could influence.

Objective 1: To improve the quality of teaching and learning in the colleges

It was found during the course of implementation that the extent of the challenge faced in achieving this objective had not been understood, and the intervention could not reach all lecturers. Instead it focused on the subject areas in which the biggest challenges had been identified, and it was agreed that whilst there would be certain interventions that were generic and intended for all lecturers – such as induction and assessment – other interventions would focus primarily on developing the skills of Mathematics lecturers. It was also found that whilst academic heads, in the effort to improve the quality of teaching and learning, could be supported to observe and monitor classes, many did not have time to conduct observations as they were themselves lecturing. This situation raised a question about the assumptions of the programme and led to the conclusion that the job requirements of academic heads needed to be amended and their lecturing time reduced. It was also found that whilst JET could assist lecturers to identify the resources needed to improve the quality of teaching and learning, a number of obstacles involving procurement arose which the programme could not resolve.

Objective 2: To ensure that there are integrated student support services available in the colleges

Establishing integrated student support services which meet the needs of students requires the colleges to have efficient recruitment, selection, and registration processes and information gleaned from entry assessments as to what type of support students require. Other aspects of student support included in this objective were access to financial aid and work-based learning experience. JET initially supported the development of recruitment strategies, guidelines and systems, the streamlining of admission processes and the capturing of registration data. However, as the programme proceeded

it was found that the extent of this initiative was too wide and the focus had to be narrowed. Thus JET could only play a nominal role in the support of the pre-counselling process. In addition it was found that, whilst JET could provide support for the registration of students who required financial aid, JET could not influence whether the students actually received financial aid. It was found that in order to achieve the objective of integrated student support services, JET had to focus on piloting innovative ways in which academic support could be provided. JET was able to provide support to the colleges to enable them to monitor assessment results and guide students into support programmes. However, because of the pressure (or in some cases perceived pressure) on colleges to create a space for all students and to expand enrolment numbers, the understanding of many colleges was that they could not deny a student entrance into a particular programme, even if the student did not meet the admission requirements. For this reason, JET could not consistently influence whether the results of the assessments were used to guide students. In addition, JET prioritised supporting a work experience programme for students and also provided some support for a work experience programme for lecturers.

Objective 3: To improve management systems and capacity in the colleges

As indicated, SAICA was allocated responsibility for supporting financial management, changing JET's role with respect to providing support to the financial management functional area. In the course of implementation, JET encountered considerable instability at the level of management. Many of the colleges were placed under administration and in a number of cases the administrator changed during the lifespan of the programme. This meant that the risks associated with management, although recognised at the outset, were considerably higher than anticipated.

Objective 4: To improve governance in the colleges

The objective in this functional area changed substantially during the course of implementation as councils were only put in place in the final year of the strategy. Thus the outcomes associated with governance could not be achieved as it was only possible to begin interventions to train and work with councils in the final phase of the programme. Thus while JET was able, with the support of the DHET, to develop a manual to support council training that focused on enabling councils to understand their roles and functions, it was not possible within the time available to achieve all of the outcomes listed above. While this risk had been considered, the extent of the delay had not been taken into account and this had a negative effect on the effectiveness of the intervention in the functional area of governance.

Objective 5: To ensure effective EMIS are in place

This is an area in which little was amended with respect to the theory of change; supporting EMIS remained a priority for the JET intervention. However, in the course of implementation it was recognised that many of the challenges related to the IT systems

that the colleges had in place. Decisions about IT systems were outside of JET's scope and, whilst JET could provide advice with respect to systems, this was an area that ultimately had to be addressed by the colleges and the DHET since it involved issues of procurement and contracts that were in place. It was also found that there were significant challenges with respect to connectivity and this limited the extent to which systems could be integrated across the colleges. Again, while JET was able to provide advice in this regard and support submissions to the DHET, it could not resolve these issues. These risks posed significant challenges with respect to what could be achieved and again pointed to the reality of what a support programme could and could not do.

Objective 6: To improve financial and risk management in the colleges

As indicated previously, this function became the responsibility of SAICA and for this reason was no longer part of the JET programme. JET raised a concern that the relationship with SAICA was not clear and that this undermined JET's ability to ensure that financial planning and management effectively took the needs of teaching and learning into account. However, the relationship had not been effectively forged at a national level. Thus, while there was an indication from JET that engagement with SAICA was possible at some of the colleges, it was not consistently achieved. This tension was also highlighted by some lecturers who raised concerns about the extent to which procurement systems supported the teaching and learning processes. It is therefore suggested that this disjunction, whilst allowing JET to focus on other aspects of the theory of change, may have adversely impacted on the overall intentions of the programme.

Status of strategic objective indicators

Having outlined what the theories of impact and implementation were at the outset of the project and how the implementation theory changed in response to a better understanding of the context, a reduction in the project's scope and a greater focus on areas in which it was felt the project could achieve the best results (bearing in mind time and resource constraints), the chapter turns to a discussion of the strategic objective indicators identified for the programme and their status at the programme's conclusion.

A general finding of the summative evaluation was a massive growth in enrolment numbers, 58.3% across the 15 colleges in just one year. The strain on the system due to this increase is seen in the comparison between certification results in 2011 and 2012. Better run colleges immediately saw the consequence of increasing access in the absence of improvements in infrastructure, lecturer capacity, etc., and decided to play it safe in the following year by not increasing the enrolments so drastically. The result of this decision can be seen in the reasonable increase of 14 270 enrolments recorded between 2012 and 2013 across the 15 colleges, equating to an increase of 13.9%, although between 2013 and 2014 enrolments increased more, by 26 948, equating to an increase of 23.0%.

In relation to the CIP, while enrolment at each college increased over the period 2010 to 2014, the colleges that experienced significant increases in enrolments in the face of limited institutional change and stagnant budgets saw a decline in their results. This highlights the challenges confronted by colleges when they expand dramatically and the

negative impact rapid expansion has on teaching quality and ultimately on results.

Certification rates of TVET colleges, the subject of the CIP's second strategic objective, have been historically poor. In 2010 and 2011, the actual national certification rates were below 25% for all programmes and levels, further evidence that expanding enrolment in the absence of quality improvement can have an adverse effect on certification rates. The stagnation and decrease in certification rates also clearly demonstrate the results of the mandate from the DHET to increase student access to colleges in the face of the annual budget remaining unchanged.

The evaluation found that certification rates of the colleges varied over the years during which the CIP was implemented, with certification rates of some colleges improving steadily, some fluctuating, and still others decreasing. Colleges that performed well had well-coordinated year plans in place, ensured conflicts were mediated timeously, and examined learner performance for the previous year, which enabled the colleges to identify subjects in which the learners performed poorly and to plan and implement activities to mitigate the poor performance. As part of this process, these colleges monitored the progress of learner performance on a quarterly basis and provided support to students at risk. While it is reasonable to expect that the JET intervention may have influenced certification rates from 2012, various college-level, provincial, and system-wide factors may have impacted positively or negatively on students' academic performance. For example, limited academic achievement may be attributed to: absence of college councils, colleges being placed under administration, poor leadership and management, high turnover of staff, lecturer disaffection, student unrest, expansion in enrolments, and stagnant budgets.

It is reasonable to expect that the JET intervention may have influenced throughput rates in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo colleges from 2012 onwards, although as with the enrolment and certification data, throughput rate is likely to be affected by a range of other factors.

While throughput data was difficult to ascertain and sometimes incomplete, the evaluation found, encouragingly, that in the Eastern Cape the throughput rates increased between 2012 and 2013 in three out of the four colleges. All colleges for which 2010–2012 data was available had throughput rates above the provincial and national averages and three out of four colleges had throughput rates which were more than 5% above the national average (the target).

The Limpopo colleges' throughput rates for 2010–2012 and 2011–2013 were calculated for five colleges, and for two colleges they were calculated for 2011–2013 only. The throughput rates improved between 2012 and 2013 in three colleges and declined in two, in one dramatically. The 2010–2012 cohort in all five colleges for which data was available performed above the provincial and national averages, with two colleges performing at more than 5% above the national average.

The throughput rate of National Certificate Vocational (NCV) programmes is, overall, poor. While the certification rate at each level may be reasonable, progression to the next level is a challenge. Factors that seem to have contributed to this problem are students changing from NCV to Report 191 programmes (e.g. students who complete NCV2 and then move to a Report 191 programme the following year) and students dropping out altogether.

For students doing the Report 191 programmes, lack of opportunity to gain practical workplace experience impedes their graduation, as work experience is a requirement for completing these courses. Not having work experience also hinders students seeking employment, as they may be unprepared and companies are often unwilling to hire people with no work experience. Expanding young people's access to work experience is thus a key national priority and the fourth strategic objective of the CIP. Government Outcome 5 and the DHET's strategic plan (DHET 2012 and 2013) set the following targets for the increased placement of learners in learnerships, apprenticeships, and workplace experience:

- 20 000 graduates receiving work-integrated learning (WIL) by 2014/2015; and
- 70% of NCV learners receiving workplace experience by 2014.

The CIP increased the number of learners placed in work/industry as its fourth strategic objective. In 2013, the CIP supported colleges with placing NCV4 students in the work-place for a minimum of five days during the college holidays. In the Eastern Cape, in comparison with 380 in 2011, the number of NCV students placed almost doubled to reach 724 NCV4 students in 2013 and increased around fourfold to 1 631 NCV4 students in 2014. This is a remarkable improvement and illustrates what can be done by the college staff to find workplaces to accept students. In 2013, of the 3 202 students enrolled in NCV4 in Eastern Cape colleges, 23% (724) students were placed. In 2014, this doubled to 47%, with 1 631 of the 3 465 students enrolled being assigned to workplaces.

The overall NCV4 placement rate for Limpopo was 55% in 2013 and 78% in 2014. The success of work placement for students in Limpopo culminated in a provincial workplace-based experience (WBE) forum, which will support the colleges in planning, implementing and monitoring WBE after this project comes to an end.

National data is not available from the DHET regarding the numbers and proportions of students placed in WBE, so it is not possible to report in relation to the target set for this strategic objective indicator of 5% above the national rate by 2014.

The placement of students in the workplace was an area that showed great improvement; this is evidenced by the dramatic increase in the numbers of students assigned to workplaces from 2011 to 2013 and again in 2014. The project also played a key role in establishing/strengthening provincial structures where WBE and related issues are discussed. In Limpopo, the province established a WBE forum to continue providing support to the colleges in placing students after the project ends. In the Eastern Cape, the DHET coordinates a forum which brings together the PED, colleges, SETAs, and the Office of the Premier to discuss WBE and other college issues.

What worked and what didn't

One of the important issues raised during the evaluation of the CIP pertains to expectations of what the project should have and could have achieved. The data gathered from the range of interviews conducted for the evaluation provide further insight into where the programme succeeded and where it did not.

An interviewee from JET suggested that the DHET held the view that JET would play

the role of department in the two provinces. Yet, as JET interviewees suggested, this was an unrealistic expectation and JET was not in a position to address the challenges in the provinces relating to problems with college CEOs, the absence of college councils, administration difficulties and issues concerning the allocation of the NSFAS bursaries. JET interviewees suggested that JET's ability to work successfully in this environment was dependent on the DHET directly resolving certain issues; JET could then have provided effective support to teaching and learning. Departmental interviewees agreed that the allocation of roles and responsibilities were not clear and commented that the DHET should have had individuals that were responsible for the programme within the department. An interviewee from the DHET observed that the absence of a consistent management structure within the department meant that challenges could not be jointly resolved and that the department struggled to get a clear sense of what the project was achieving. The interviewee observed that the absence of clear reports from JET that succinctly captured what had been done made this an even greater challenge. The evaluation team also confronted the difficulty of obtaining succinct data reflecting the numbers of college staff and students reached by the different training initiatives and, whilst there was a strong sense of the results achieved by the programme, the need for regular reports on results in relation to intended outputs should have been addressed.

Another difficulty that emerged was that although the programme tried to be more focused and concentrate resources on teaching and learning, this still proved to be too wide-ranging a challenge to tackle. As a result, the emphasis of the programme shifted, although not exclusively, to Mathematics teaching and learning (although there was also induction training as well as training in methodologies and assessment). Interviewees all agreed that the focus on teaching and learning and, in particular, on improved lecturer capacity in Mathematics was relevant. They suggested that locating the development interventions for Mathematics within the campus improvement programme was very important as this enabled the colleges to work out what other lecturer support needed to be implemented. Interviewees emphasised, however, that even with the interventions implemented by the colleges and JET, the process of ensuring that lecturers had the relevant competence was a long journey and these interventions only represented a few steps in this journey. Some of the colleges indicated that there was now a greater commitment to continuous development of lecturers, but challenges relating to finance for training and ensuring that lecturers were willing to participate still existed. Further, as indicated previously, there were a number of factors outside of JET's ambit of control, such as the high turnover of lecturers and the low number of lecturers versus the increasing number of students that affected the project's success.

There are some interventions that colleges seemed to be confident about sustaining: a number of colleges felt they could sustain interventions such as the improved enrolment and registration process as this has been institutionalised. Some principals believe WIL will be sustainable as they have established relationships with industry and processes for managing WIL. It was also suggested that the recognition of the importance of campus improvement programmes and the more coordinated approach to management that has been adopted will be sustained.

However, interviewees from across the colleges, JET, and the DHET pointed to a

number of important areas which could affect the sustainability of the JET interventions, including loss of institutional memory and the extent to which there had been a sharing of experiences. Interviewees indicated that the challenge of sustainability was exacerbated by the significant amount of institutional instability in the colleges. Some of the college leaders that JET had worked with had left the colleges, 'and it is questionable to what extent the JET experience has been passed onto new incumbents'. A key issue affecting sustainability of the project in the Eastern Cape is that during the JET intervention the majority of Eastern Cape colleges were placed under administration, leading to a high turnover of senior managers. For example, in some colleges an administrator fulfilled the role of 'acting' principal and a number of the acting principals and/or administrators were not fully familiar with the JET intervention. Some acting principals left the colleges in 2014, making it questionable whether the newly appointed principals or acting principals were fully briefed about the JET intervention. This raised the question of whether champions remained in the organisations to spearhead and keep the project learnings alive. This concern is intensified by a number of principals who stated in interviews that they did not feel confident to talk about the JET intervention as they were too new. One interviewee commented on the problem of sustainability and leadership instability, stating, 'one person comes in and we do it this way and then another comes in and we do it another way'.

Some interviewees indicated that they had put managers in charge of interventions that had been introduced by the project and therefore felt that the interventions would persist. However, other interviewees expressed concern that in the absence of champions to drive the processes, some of the interventions would likely not survive; a few interviewees suggested that in the final year of the programme, JET should have focused on putting arrangements in place to ensure the interventions continued. Interviewees were particularly concerned that with the JET programme coming to an end, the support that had been provided to them would be discontinued and the colleges would struggle to pay for the interventions, making it more difficult to sustain them. Some of the principals urged, as a solution, that the 'provincial offices be tasked with the responsibility of taking up where JET has left off'.

A number of principals commented that critical to sustaining the interventions was the continuation of the forums established for colleges to share experiences. One principal pointed out that colleges historically have tended to work in silos and the JET support facilitated a sharing of information and best practices, which helped the college management keep up to date. It was indicated that where forums existed to facilitate sharing and learning, such as in relation to WBE in Limpopo and EMIS in the Eastern Cape, interventions would stand a greater chance of being sustained. Another interviewee commented that the value of the forums was that they created awareness that 'we are not alone and can learn from others on how to deal with the problems we face'. One JET interviewee observed that JET also anticipated that the existence of manuals, guidelines and tools which were developed by the programme, for example on lesson planning and lesson observation, should assist in ensuring the programme's sustainability. However, in certain areas where opportunities to share were not created, sustainability was at risk.

Taking the CIP lessons forward

It is the view of the evaluation team that in order for the colleges to continue to benefit from the changes brought about by the CIP, the DHET needs to institutionalise those innovations that it wishes to sustain: for example, if the campus improvement plans are to be sustained, the DHET must inform colleges that they are expected to develop and implement these plans and that reports on the interventions that emanate from the plans will be required. Similarly, the DHET must give colleges a deadline for putting in place their peer tutoring programmes.

If the CIP support project is to be replicated as originally intended, there is a need to consider what can be achieved and by when: in an intervention as wide-ranging as this one, there should be a joint structure to manage the project, solve problems collectively, and determine what actions need to be taken and who is responsible. Importantly, there is a need to agree on the minimum conditions that must be in place to enable such an intervention to work. The CIP experience illustrates that it was not possible to intervene in the way that was planned without stable management and leadership in place, willing to support and enable change in the colleges. The successful interventions undertaken during the CIP should be noted and considered: the registration process; campus improvement plans and the link with lecturer development (including shadowing other lecturers who have shown success); peer tutoring; and support for WBE. It is recommended that these initiatives be rolled out across all colleges in a way that ensures that the learning that was acquired by the colleges that participated in the CIP is shared with colleges across the country.

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