planning, monitoring & evaluation

Department:
Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

NDP 2030

POLICY BRIEF:

DESIGN EVALUATION OF THE DRAFT POLICY ON COMMUNITY COLLEGES

1. Background

The White Paper for Post School Education and Training (2013) acknowledged the lack of education and training opportunities for adults and post-school youth, and the failure to meet the needs of adults and youth, in gaining labour-market and livelihood skills. From the early nineties, the community college model has been proposed as appropriate to provide these skills.

The Council of Education Ministers took a decision in 2009, that the Adult Education and Training (AET) and Further Education and Training (FET) function at provincial level, must be shifted to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). The DHET amended the Further Education and Training Colleges Act of 2006 through an amendment in 2013 to provide for the creation of community colleges, and this was gazetted in November 2014. A Policy on Community Colleges (PCC) was urgently required for the function shift.

There were two purposes articulated in the draft PCC:

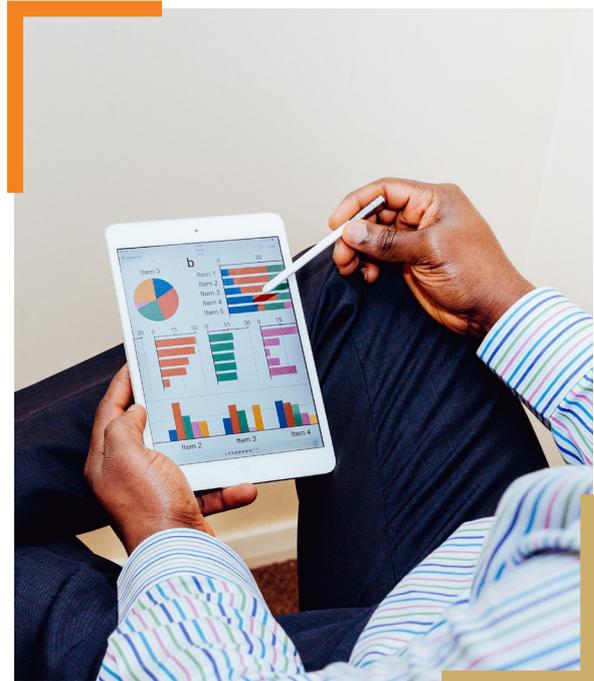| 1	2
To provide a framework for moving the control of Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs) from provinces to the DHET	To provide a framework for the establishment of a new institutional form, the Community College

The Design Evaluation of the draft Policy on Community Colleges was undertaken as part of the 2014/15 National Evaluation Plan. This was the first instance where a national department used the National Evaluation System (NES) to test a draft policy prior its implementation, potentially resulting in considerable savings by avoiding weaknesses in the policy's design.

The Policy on Community Colleges was directly linked to the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) Outcome 5: "A skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth path", and is therefore important for the implementation of the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030, and could be viewed as an important mechanism in providing South Africans with second-chance opportunities.

2. Approach and methodology

The evaluation used a qualitative approach, to draw out detailed insights into the underlying logic of what the draft policy intended to be. The evaluation used data and information from the following sources: Literature and document review of aligned policies; The development of a Theory of Change and Logical Framework matrix; and semi-structured interviews and focus-groups conducted with a range of senior DHET, provincial AET officials, National Treasury and the Auditor General's office. The findings and recommendations of the evaluation were further consulted on at a stakeholder validation workshop for confirmation of results.

3. Key Findings

Policy purpose

The purpose of the draft PCC was to lay the legal basis for the administrative function shift from provincial education departments (PEDs) to the national DHET, and to provide a concept for the "community college" as a new institutional form. The evaluation found a gap in the substantive explanation for how the draft PCC would achieve this and meet the educational needs of adults and youth.

Internal coherence and alignment

The evaluation looked at the needs identification process undertaken in preparation of the draft PCC, and alignment with relevant legislation and international agreements. There was evidence of prior consultation with key stakeholders, but further consultation and collaboration was required. Furthermore, the alignment with legislation was not made clear.

Elaboration of the purpose and form of Community Colleges beyond that which was mentioned in the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training 2013 was not made clear, nor on the unique character of Community Colleges, with a tendency to use the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College as a model. This had the potential to undermine the focus and potential efficacy of Community Colleges.

During the evaluation information was not available pertaining to the resourcing and the management of the function shift, and the establishment of the community colleges. This made it challenging to establish the viability of the model.

Appropriateness

The White Paper proposed a more diverse and contextually relevant system, with the establishment of community learning centres in a decentralised and network type system responsive to local needs. There was however a disjuncture with the implicit theory of change in the draft PCC.

Measurability and capability of it being evaluated in the future?

The White Paper (2013) envisages around 1 million students enrolled by 2030, for Community College. The draft PCC lacked a planning document indicating baselines to measure from in the event of future evaluations being undertaken. Alternatively these baselines could be included in planning documents such as strategic plans and APPs.

A question arose as to whether the DHET would be able to offer the necessary support in terms of facilities, equipment, and other support available for the proposed policy. Would these elements be solely dependent on available funding?

To what extent is the draft PCC ready to be implemented?

There is a legal framework for managing the shift of the provincial AET centres to the control of the DHET. However there is a lack of planning information due to the rushed nature of the development of the draft Policy on Community Colleges. There was also a lack of appropriate funding norms for PALCs, as existing norms were inadequate and could not fund a new system of Community Colleges.

Given the missing elements above, the draft Policy would benefit from more detail on implementation, to assist in taking it forward in a realistic way.

4. Key Recommendations

Function shift

Ideally PALCs should remain under PEDs but the Further Education and Training (FET) Amendment Act (2013) and the Government Gazette 38158 of November 2014 preclude this. Accordingly, there should be a differentiated operating model for the merged PALCs for different provincial contexts and capacities.

New institutional form

The final Policy should be more clear on the new institutional form of provision of adult and youth education in decentralised community learning centres, supported by community colleges, with the requisite resources of programmes, curricula, materials, and educators and trainers. This policy process should commence with the development of a set of guidelines for the pilot Community Colleges, including the notion that they should incorporate a number of local community learning centres (PALCs, satellites or NGO centres). On the basis of the White Paper and the revised Policy on Community Colleges, the Further Education and Training Colleges Amendment Act of 2013 should be amended, to ensure that the unique character of Community Colleges drives the particular governance, management, staffing, and funding arrangements for the sector.

A new internal Director General (DG) Task Team which was established to develop a comprehensive Policy for Community Colleges, and was encouraged to embark upon a broad consultation process, especially with civil society.

DHET would need to establish a significant internal structure (such as a Branch) responsible for conceptualisation and building of this new sector. It must ensure that the crucial South African Institute for Vocational and Continuing Education and Training (SAIVCET) functions are included, especially in regard to programme and materials development.

A detailed project plan and Monitoring and Evaluation framework should be developed before implementation of pilots, to ensure lessons can be extracted and documented to inform rollout of the Community College system.

5. Policy implications and direction

The timing of the evaluation coincided with the release of the draft PCC for public comments, and as a result, the findings of the evaluation fed directly into the policy refinement process. A number of recommendations were made to strengthen the Policy prior to its implementation.

The core recommendation made by the Evaluation Panel was the establishment of a Director General Task Team that was to develop a Comprehensive Policy for Community Colleges. The Director General Task Team produced a document entitled *The Ideal Institutional Model for Community Colleges in South Africa, 2017.*

The implication and direction points to the fact that a Comprehensive Policy for Community Colleges still needs to be developed informed by various planning and pilot processes within the Department.

A Community Education and Training Branch has been established in the National department of Higher Education and Training and nine Community Colleges, one in each province. Fifty four (54) Community Learning Centres have been selected to be Pilot Centres and a detailed Pilot Centre Implementation Plan 2019 – 2023 has been drawn and is presently being implemented.

Different South Africa's provincial contexts are well documented in the ETDP SETA Report, Proposals for Community College Pilot Project Roll-Out in Each Province in South Africa, September 2019. The document addresses the need for new differentiated operating model. Formal, Non-Formal and Skills programmes (Food Processing, Mixed Framing, Aqua Farming, Upholstery. etc.) addresses differentiated provincial, districts and municipal contexts. This has resulted in increased opportunities and different educational and skills developmental pathways in the form of accredited certificates (Second Chance Senior Certificate, National Senior Certificate for Adults- NASCA, General Education and Training Certificates for Adults (GETCA).

The Department's system wide planning process has led to the development of the National Skills Development Plan (NSDP), The Community Education and Training (CET) Sector Plan (2019) and the finalisation of the White Paper for Post School Education and Training Implementation Plan. The CET Sector Plan also calls for the piloting of the community education and training concept within the next five years (2019 – 2024). The outcomes of the pilot process will inform the development of a Comprehensive Policy for Community Education and Training Sector and or legislative amendments.

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Disclaimer

This policy brief is drawn from the evaluation findings and recommendations. It does not necessarily represent the views of the departments concerned.