

**REPORT OF THE FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING
ROUND TABLE OF 9 APRIL 2010**

30 April 2010

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List of Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
ETDP SETA	Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority
FET	Further education and training
FETCEO	Further Education and Training Colleges Employers' Organisation
FETI	Further Education and Training Institute
HE	Higher education
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRDC	Human Resource Development Council
HSRC	Human and Social Sciences Research Council
MEC	Member of the Executive Council
MTEF	Medium-Term Expenditure Framework
NBFET	National Board for Further Education and Training
NBI	National Business Initiative
NCV	National Certificate (Vocational)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
QCTO	Qualifications Council for Trades and Occupations
SACE	South African Council of Educators
SACPO	South African Colleges Principals' Organisation
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority

Introduction

A Further Education and Training (FET) Round Table was convened by the Education and Training Practices Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP SETA) in partnership with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) on 9 April 2010 at the Midrand Conference Centre. The Round Table brought together all key roleplayers and stakeholders in the FET college subsector to engage in a rigorous debate informed by an analysis of the challenges in the sector. To support the debate, the DHET presented a *Document for Discussion: Challenges Facing the FET College Subsystem*. This analysis was developed prior to the Round Table in discussion with key stakeholders and was richly informed by their perspectives. This Round Table Report should be read in conjunction with the discussion document, and with the second document presented by the DHET – the *Document for Discussion: Proposed Way Forward*.

The Round Table had three specific purposes:

1. To identify challenges in the FET sector and to agree on what needs to be done in the immediate, medium and long term to support FET colleges to function as high quality institutions that can respond to national education and training challenges. The Round Table must identify what knowledge is needed in order to better understand the nature of these challenges, and agree on a process towards acquiring this knowledge and making sense of it.
2. To propose processes and work streams to address these challenges and similarly invite debate on these proposals, determining principles with maximum support of all stakeholders to guide this work.
3. To propose that the work needed to support these proposals will be taken forward by an inclusive high-level steering committee, supported by a technical working committee, which will report back to a summit of all FET stakeholders in August 2010.

Welcome

Ms N Nxesi, Chief Executive Officer of the Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP SETA), welcomed the delegates on behalf of the host organization.

Overview of the Challenges

Professor Mary Metcalfe, Director-General of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), thanked the ETDP SETA, the NBI and others who supported the process leading up to the Round Table, including the many stakeholders who contributed their perspectives to the Round Table Working Document and proposed Way Forward.

Professor Metcalfe outlined the country's expectations of FET colleges, as indicated in various high-level government speeches (summarized in the Round Table Working Document). However, the challenges

facing the colleges are such that they need a concerted and intensive effort from all stakeholders and a commitment to urgent progress. She stressed that the purpose of the Round Table was to seek agreement on the way forward for the sector with ownership by all stakeholders, represented on a high-level Steering Committee that will prepare for a broader FET Summit in August 2010.

Professor Metcalfe outlined a process to achieve this end:

- An honest and robust assessment of current challenges must be undertaken with all stakeholders, followed by
- A short-term investigation and planning process, in which all stakeholders participate, must address and resolve the challenges identified.

The actions and processes agreed to in this Round Table would result in a set of short- to medium- term proposals and costed action plans for longer-term work which would be presented to the August Summit. The expected outcomes of the process would be:

- a collective understanding of, and agreement on, what needs to be done in the short, medium and long term to address current challenges;
- ownership of the process to develop this by key stakeholders and role-players; and
- a FET Summit Steering Committee of key stakeholders to guide processes leading to the Summit.

Professor Metcalfe noted that the *Document for Discussion: Challenges Facing the FET College Subsystem* is not a formal policy statement by DHET, but rather a compilation of discussions with stakeholders as a basis for wider engagement and debate. The document must be revised on the basis of the day's deliberations. She expressed the hope that all stakeholders would see their opinions reflected in the document. She presented the caveat that the document is based on the best information available, but that the availability and quality of information in the sector is a challenge in itself.

The approach that would be proposed, Professor Metcalfe noted, is to build for change on the basis of continuity. She expressed appreciation for the work that had gone before, noting in particular the introduction of the new curriculum, the allocation of R1,9 billion for the recapitalization of the colleges, and also the best efforts of many Round Table delegates. She acknowledged the challenges that transformation had presented for college principals and college councils, and the important role played by provincial officials.

Professor Metcalfe highlighted the following 'key lessons' from the *Document for Discussion: Challenges Facing the FET College Subsystem*:

- There are diverse and competing expectations of colleges, and consequent loss of clarity in terms of their mission and identity.
- Multiple and overlapping changes have been implemented simultaneously within the system, with mutually destabilising effects across the system of unanticipated difficulties related to:
 - The new status of colleges as the employer
 - College governance

- Curriculum
- College management
- Programme-driven funding and enrolment planning
- The regulatory environment
- Enrolment growth
- Multiple and overlapping changes have also been implemented simultaneously across the artisan training system, related to:
 - New pathways
 - State-owned enterprises responding to new market imperatives
 - Fragmentation
 - Complex social transitions: race, gender, inter-generational continuities
- Complex changes must be:
 - Deeply understood and accepted
 - Systematically supported
 - Rigorously monitored and evaluated
- Money alone is not a solution, and solutions must be flexible enough to accommodate the range of needs in the sector without compromising on developmental goals, and a variety of fit-for-purpose qualifications and programmes must cater for the diverse range of needs in the subsystem.
- We need a deeper understanding of the people we depend on to deliver quality in the system, and of the complexity of the population of young people we seek to educate and train. We need a deep understanding of what this all means for teaching and learning in the colleges. We also need to recognize that structural and systemic problems can be experienced as personal or organisational. Poor relationships within the sector need to be understood in these terms, and new approaches devised based on a common understanding of the challenges and where we are going.

Professor Metcalfe noted the following manifestations of the challenges:

- Loss of lecturers from the colleges, low morale and a high vacancy rate
- Poor learners performance, with low pass rates and high drop-out rates
- Increasing reliance on the private sector for skills training, coupled with growing loss of confidence in public sector provision
- Increasing institutional instability and labour instability

She argued that it is our collective responsibility to ensure that more young people are absorbed into social participation through learning and skills development opportunities. This is the central challenge, because:

- Many young people have not attained an adequate standard of basic education to enable them to proceed with post-school learning pathways
- No more than 10% of youth aged between 18 and 24 are in colleges or universities
- 42.5% of youth aged between 18 and 24 are not in education, employment or training
- Our plans for an inclusive growth path depend on an appropriately skilled work force

The implications of the above are that:

- While we anticipate an increase in the labour absorption capacity of the economy, many young people will remain unemployed, and post-school education and training systems must facilitate learning and experience that will equip young people for self-initiated productive activity.
- We must ask: Where will we see growth in labour absorption?

Comments and questions from the floor following Professor Metcalfe's presentation included the following:

- It is correct to question role of colleges, but we need to understand the wider 'ecological system' in which colleges operate. We must look beyond current challenges to develop a long-term vision related to future needs.
- Before we can look for remedies for loss of staff and poor student performance, we need a better understand of the factors at work.
- The success of the college sector is vital to the future of South Africa because of the millions of young unemployed. Colleges must be made attractive, given status and incentivized. Special attention is needed in terms of the professional development of lecturers.
- We need continuity between basic education and colleges. Longitudinal studies must unpack throughputs, drop-outs etc.

In response, Professor Metcalfe noted that there are certainly important long-term issues to be debated, and that it is essential to have improved research and data, but that there are also immediate issues that must be addressed by August 2010 for the 2011 academic year to stabilize the college subsystem. She explained how the breakaway groups (and the proposed work streams that will prepare for the August Summit) would address both immediate and long-term issues.

One delegate noted declining industry support over the last 20 years for the training of artisans, and asked how industry can be encouraged to make more apprenticeships and learnerships available. Professor Metcalfe noted that various related processes are under way currently, including business initiatives and SETA initiatives, with the HRD Council and the Minister giving close attention to them. There is a need to examine the role of colleges in relation to artisan training, and engage business on this. She welcomed the strong presence of delegates from business at the Round Table.

Professor Metcalfe presented two questions for discussion in breakaway groups related to the mission and purpose of FET colleges:

- What is the role of colleges in relation to the situational challenges we face today?
- How might this differ in 20 years time?

The next section presents the outcomes of the first breakaway session.

Report of Breakaway Session 1: the Mission and Purpose of Colleges

Introduction

The concerns and aspirations of the breakaway groups regarding the mission and purpose of FET colleges are presented below under the following thematic headings:

- Articulation
- Differentiation of mission and purpose across colleges
- Defining and supporting the target learner audience
- Debates about the importance of occupational training and self-employment
- Relevance of programmes
- Key relationships
- Adequate resources
- Quality of teaching and learning and quality assurance
- Imagining the future: the mission and purpose of the colleges in 20 years' time
- Prioritization of the issues

Articulation

Delegates argued that the colleges need to play a role in providing opportunities outside of higher education, including promoting self-employment. However, concerns regarding articulation with higher education were also commonly expressed. Many felt that colleges must not be restricted to NQF level 4 (they must not be 'glorified high schools') and should offer programmes at least up to NQF level 5. In this view, horizontal and vertical accessibility would mean bridging the gap from school to college to HE/workplace and providing an alternative to high school. It was generally acknowledged, however, that progression to higher education should not be the main focus of the colleges. It was felt that an improved relationship between Basic Education and FET would assist in addressing standards, and that there is a need to develop a more in-depth understanding of progression in the system.

Differentiation of mission and purpose across colleges

A common doubt expressed in the groups related to the capacity of the colleges to 'do all things for all people'. It was argued that since 1994 we have significantly reduced post-school opportunities, e.g. by closing nursing and teaching colleges and phasing out N5-6 programmes, and that now we expect colleges to fill these gaps. In this view, it is not realistic to expect colleges to do everything. However, the sector as a whole must address a wide range of needs – 'productive citizenship means different things for different target audiences' – while not requiring all colleges to respond to all of these needs. The attainment of responsiveness and flexibility will be gradual – some colleges may initially have a very limited mandate which may grow depending on evolving material conditions and circumstances. Nevertheless, a range of options need to be considered:

- There must be a role for colleges to offer programmes for people who cannot access higher education and can only get a NQF level 5 qualification from a college.

- Colleges must also provide short courses for people with specific interests.
- Generally, there must be greater diversity in the programmes that colleges offer, but colleges should not offer every subject and should focus on sectors that develop relevant skills for their geographical area.

Defining and supporting the target learner audience

In the group discussions it was argued that ‘one cannot define the role of colleges without defining the clientele’. It was argued that youth who are not in employment, education or training are a diverse group and our response has been the NCV, which is not appropriate for all. Those who have completed Grade 12 should be able to access appropriate programmes, and we should note that those who drop out of school at Grade 9 have experienced difficulties with the NCV. The first two NCV cohorts have not been a success, and colleges have been expected to remedy shortfalls in quality in the schooling system. Once again it was argued that the colleges cannot be ‘everything to everyone’, and that perhaps there should be a defined age cohort, such as youth aged 18 to 24, which would facilitate a shift towards adult learning principles. However, before making such decisions, we need to understand the prior learning experience of learners who are currently entering the colleges.

Further comments related to the target learner audience are presented below:

- There is a need to look at the career choices made by learners, and a stronger relationship between Basic Education and FET will allow for improved counselling and career guidance at the Basic Education level.
- We cannot have fit-for-purpose curricula without looking at the aptitude of learners – and selection criteria should be enforceable to ensure greater likelihood of success.
- We must cater for the workplace needs of adults as well as youth.
- We must ensure access for learners into learnerships (particularly ABET learners).
- Colleges must play a vocational role as well as (in the short term) creating access for out-of-school youth who are not able to return to Basic Education – historical disparities must be addressed, including exclusion of rural learners.
- Colleges need to be aligned to a broader, integrated and responsive curriculum model that recognizes prior learning.

Debates about the importance of occupational training and self-employment

An important theme in the group discussions was the role of colleges in helping people to find jobs, delivering occupational rather than vocational training. The need for ‘serious vocational guidance’ was again emphasized, especially for learners for whom college is an alternative to Basic Education, but also for a second target group of learners for whom specialized occupational programmes are important.

It was also argued that we need to understand the links between training and the labour market with a long-term view that requires occupational training but also broader knowledge and skilling. In this view, the links between colleges and local communities are crucial, and these cannot be driven nationally.

It was generally acknowledged that colleges have a dual mandate – skills development for the labour market, and general vocational education. In terms of the former, however, there are problems in the links between training and the labour market (we are ‘stuck with the old out-of-date trade qualifications’), problems in the availability of jobs need to be considered, and we need to understand why industry is not creating workplace training opportunities. With respect to general vocational education, again it was emphasized that the current learner population is struggling with the NCV.

It was argued that we need to focus on occupations more than artisans, and colleges could play a major role in this regard, especially if stronger relationships are built with industry. We have developed the QCTO to occupationalise learning – so that people can get an occupation which has a career plan – and we need colleges to contribute to access to occupations and access to the workplace, especially by delivering the theoretical component of occupational programmes. The development of occupational qualifications will be a crucial step forward. In this view, the core mission of colleges is to make young people employable, and the major role of the colleges should be to bridge the national skills gap in the country. Learners must be able to do a specific job but must also have a foundation on which additional practical skills can be built, but addressing employability should not prevent the inclusion of key social issues. However, a major challenge is that colleges currently seem to fall outside of key skills development initiatives.

In some group discussions delegates emphasized the importance of colleges playing a role in providing opportunities for self-employment – these comments stressed the need to view entrepreneurship as a cross-cutting issue in all future planning.

Relevance of programmes

It was generally agreed that colleges need to be responsive to the needs of industry and develop relevant skills. Colleges need to be relevant in terms of provision, understanding business needs and identifying scarce and critical skills. This should be balanced with the country’s development needs in areas such as rural development, industrial policy and a ‘green’ economy. Colleges must be aligned to the developmental trajectory of the country and government priorities, taking specific provincial needs into account.

It is therefore important to understand the relationship between education, training and the labour market – these are complex issues which need empirical research on critical skills and changing labour market requirements in the light of the changing nature of work and technology, as well studies related to employment trends and the economic cycle. Colleges must be demand-led and sensitive to context.

Key relationships

The group discussions addressed the need to strengthen various key relationships:

- Industry must play a key role as this is where the best equipment and infrastructure is available. However, it was noted that in industry there is not enough time to ‘cover the basics’ and they do not have the ‘teachers’ – this is the gap that can be filled by the colleges, in terms of basic theory.
- Business and municipalities can play an important role in job placements.
- Closer relationships between the SETAs and the colleges must ensure better alignment between funds and functions.

The need for adequate resources

Delegates in the group discussions cautioned that there is a need to be realistic about the situational challenges that colleges currently face – including vast numbers of learners seeking places, and a relatively small number of colleges. We must examine the capacity of the colleges to absorb the massive numbers of learners envisaged, and financial support for these learners is also important – the National Plan states the target numbers, but does not deal adequately with how these will be attained while achieving the quality we need. The resourcing of colleges is therefore crucial, in terms of both people and money. Programme-based funding needs to be linked to milestones (not the 80/20 principle currently applied), and the impact of the recapitalization of colleges should also be examined.

Quality of teaching and learning and quality assurance

Some delegates gave special emphasis to the importance of maximizing the quality of teaching and learning in the context of the rapid growth envisaged. Coherence and coordination is needed in monitoring and evaluation, and collaboration between the three quality councils will be crucial. Guaranteeing quality learning will help to improve the image of the colleges.

Imagining the future: the mission and purpose of the colleges in 20 years’ time

Aspirations expressed in the group discussions regarding the future mission and purpose of FET colleges repeatedly addressed the need for improved articulation:

- Perceptions of colleges will have changed to see them become a preferred route for post-school learning with full articulation with the rest of the education and training system. The FET sector must become more than a consolation prize for learners not admitted to universities.
- Articulation must be supported by strong partnerships with industry and higher education – FET programmes must be aligned with those of higher education institutions.
- The entire education and training system must offer a value chain that is sustainable.

The future, it was felt, must be characterized by more differentiated delivery:

- We must have specialised colleges and centres of excellence to respond to skills demands, emulating world-class institutions.
- The capacity of lecturers will be linked to standards of excellence within a framework of localized, differentiated delivery.

Delegates argued strongly for placing the needs of learners at the centre of the colleges' mission:

- The capacity of colleges must be extended beyond the normal 'school' day to cater for the needs of different groups of learners.
- The different categories of learners will increasingly require a flexible, differentiated approach to programme offerings.
- There must be an understanding of how the target market may change over 20 years.
- There must be a holistic approach to improve access for both rural and urban learners.

A focus on entrepreneurial and occupational skills was evident:

- The college subsystem must produce learners who are able to go into industry meeting minimum requirements.
- Colleges must also focus on developing entrepreneurial skills – 'developing job creators instead of job seekers' – as well as occupational and vocational skills.

It was argued that much stronger relationships with other key players must be developed:

- There must be much more active involvement from industry and more structured relationships between industry and colleges.
- Colleges must function as placement agencies into the world of work.
- Relationship between industry, SETAs and colleges must be built on trust in terms of the quality of colleges' outputs.
- Colleges must ensure collaboration with NGOs and civil society in order to expand access in rural areas.

The need for programme relevance was again thematic in the discussion of the future mission of colleges:

- Changes in skills levels in the country due to technological change will require colleges to constantly adapt their programmes and develop curricula that ensure continuing relevance, developing appropriate infrastructure and technology to keep up with changing needs.
- Colleges' planning must take into account the country's vision and align itself with the changing human resource development needs of industry and the state.
- Colleges must be the 'breeding ground' for an export-oriented economy (production equipment, raw material).
- Colleges must develop the capacity to participate in the development of industrial policy frameworks.

The importance of attracting and retaining high quality human resources in the colleges was evident in the group discussions:

- We must create a sector that presents an attractive career path for future cohorts of well qualified lecturers with industry experience.
- Capacity issues in terms of college management must be addressed to make colleges quality institutions.

Collectively, the breakaway groups presented a vision of the colleges in 20 years' time as vibrant institutions that are attractive for lecturers and learners alike and responsive to the needs of industry and the developmental needs of the country. One group appealed for continuity in the development of the mission and purpose of the colleges over this 20-year period, without significant deviation from the agreed vision. Another group suggested that more effective use of technology can help to create a 'globalised virtual college system' that can compete with the best in the world with the active involvement of industry.

Breakaway 1: The Mission and Purpose of Colleges (Prioritized Issues)

The five breakaway groups also developed a number of prioritized statements regarding the current and future mission and purpose of FET colleges. These statements are presented thematically in the following tables.

The mission and purpose of colleges now		
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Group	Strength of consensus 1 = weak 2 = medium 3 = strong	Statement
4	2	There must be articulation into occupational programmes, level 5 programmes (offered by FET) and HE programmes
2	3	Colleges should not be expected to do everything, but differentiation of roles is possible
5	3	Funding: the present model is inappropriate because it excludes many worthy candidates on financial grounds
3	3	Colleges need to produce people who are employable
1	3	College provision must focus equally on self-employment, employment and articulation to lifelong learning
3	3	Partnerships with industry and civil society need to be strengthened
2	2	Colleges should focus on job readiness and occupational training
2	2	Colleges should take a broad long-term view of training and the labour market, and not be narrowly occupational in focus
4	3	The key role of colleges is to support occupational learning
4	2	There should be short programmes that cater for young learners who may not

		have a Grade 12
1	3	The core business of colleges is quality post-school vocational education and training provision
3	3	The profile of colleges needs to be raised for them to be seen as institutions of choice
1	3	College provision must be aligned with national needs and strategies
5	3	FET colleges must be flexible and responsive to the needs of the state
5	3	In the process of transformation attention must be given to improvement of the image of the sector

The mission and purpose of colleges in 20 years' time

Group	Strength of consensus 1 = weak 2 = medium 3 = strong	Statement
3	3	The FET sector must bridge the gap between schooling, the world of work and HE
1	3	Perceptions of colleges must change, and they must become a preferred route of learning with full articulation with rest of the system
5	3	The education system must be aligned in such a way that a far higher percentage graduate from basic education into the FET sector, with large numbers going into the sector
4	3	Motivated and skilled lecturers are needed
3	3	Address the differentiated needs of learners
4	3	Quality of provision: There should be high levels of throughput and pass-rates
4	3	A diversity of programmes is needed catering for different cohorts
5	3	The FET sector must utilise technology in the training of the students
3	3	Ensure relevance of programmes to market needs
1	3	Skills levels will have changed and colleges will have adapted in terms of programmes, infrastructure and technology
1	2	Specialised colleges and centres of excellence are needed to respond to skills demands
5	3	Government policy must support the change to ensure that SA becomes a manufacturing country linked to a global village

Response of the Minister

The Minister for Higher Education and Training, Dr B. Nzimande, responding to the report of the group discussions on the mission and purpose of the colleges, reported that he was excited to see the number and range of participants present at the Round Table, and thanked the ETDP SETA for organizing the event. He noted that such a gathering is appropriate because government wants to be a 'listening

government and an engaging government' working closely with partners. He welcomed the broad knowledge base present in the room.

The Minister indicated that the FET sector would form a key performance area within his ministry, and that a key challenge is that the sector grow rapidly and be accessible to both young people and adults with learning needs. He noted the need to rethink adult learning as ABET does not address the full range of adult learning needs. He then outlined the contextual issues that guide the work of the DHET (including the FET portfolio):

- The DHET's work focuses on addressing five key challenges: class inequality, racial inequality, gender inequality, the needs of the disabled and the fight against HIV/AIDS.
- The broad goal of the department is to develop the economy in such a way that it is able to respond to the needs of all South Africans, especially the poor.
- The Minister noted that the structure of the South African economy has not significantly changed in the last 100 years. It remains a monopolistic, extractive economy with limited manufacturing capacity. It is a semi-colonial economy with an unsustainable base, particularly as the capacity to train has been scaled down.
- The Minister expressed the sentiment that South African employers in general are loathe to train, even though training and skills development are central to building a more inclusive economy.
- Skills development, particularly artisan training, remains largely a private effort and the SETAs have not lived up to their potential. They have had the effect of expanding the role of private providers instead of capacitating the public institutions. He argued that 'every cent meant for skills development must go to skills development' and that corruption must be eliminated. He noted the need to review the college funding formula in the same manner that higher education funding is being reviewed.
- In terms of class inequality, the minister reiterated that South Africa remains the most unequal society in the world and we need to see our work as playing a part in narrowing the inequalities. FET colleges remain central to this task.
- Racial inequalities were not unrelated to class. Over the last 16 years the class gap among blacks has widened while there has been a slight narrowing across racial groups as a whole. This pointed to increasing levels of poverty for those on the lower end of the scale. Part of the role of the FET colleges should be a focus on black economic empowerment through creating access to post-school qualifications that will make the difference between poverty and a better life. Addressing racial inequality must be an essential component of the way forward.
- Addressing gender inequality remains a key focus area for government. One of the biggest achievements to date is that there are more female learners currently in higher education. However, women remain under-represented in scarce and critical trades and professions. The question for FET colleges will be how to position themselves to address this imbalance.

- In order for FET colleges to become institutions of choice, they must make themselves accessible to people with disabilities. This must form part of the inclusive growth plan.
- The country must make sure that we train people for the workplace and not for the grave! Addressing HIV/AIDS must be critical to the vision, mission and goals of the college sector.

The Minister argued that FET colleges remain central to the skills development agenda, and SETAs must therefore be aligned to the colleges and universities of technology to support their mandate. It will be important, going forward, to create linkages across the post-school institutions and to ensure that all learners get appropriate work experience. The Minister referred to the German system for artisan development and suggested that while the system cannot be immediately replicated in SA, we can move towards such a system. The need to strengthen specialized occupational training as part of a flexible, differentiated system was emphasized, but FET colleges must consider combining technical and social life skills more effectively in order to develop well-rounded learners – we need social understanding and knowledge as well as technical skills. Colleges should also be centres for vocational guidance – ‘one-stop shops’ for careers and training opportunities.

Colleges must be able to respond to national, provincial and local needs and there must be the understanding that colleges are not ‘glorified high schools’ or ‘semi-universities’. We need to understand the unique role of colleges in the skills development landscape and also reposition colleges in terms of access, availability and time – for example, colleges should consider being operational seven days a week. The Minister acknowledged the potential for private providers to partner with public institutions to improve capacity. He also spoke of his dream for skills hubs in rural areas.

The Minister noted that he was pleased with the potential for collaboration that was offered through the different work streams that will be set up immediately after the Round Table. He noted the need to move with speed regarding the migration of colleges from provincial to national control, and concluded by highlighting the challenge for the HRDC of establishing effective information management systems across the skills sector.

Comments and questions included the following:

- Articulation
- Information on skills needs
- The role of NGOs
- How to link SETAs and the colleges – what will the practical processes be?
- Partnerships between public and private providers
- ‘Fly-by-night’ providers

The Minister then welcomed the Eastern Cape MEC for Education, noting that the DHET will still need to work with provinces and municipalities even when colleges become a national competence, as colleges must be able to meet local needs. He noted the urgent need to address articulation with other institutions, arguing that articulation should not be up to the universities and that we need a *system* of articulation. He agreed that we need accurate information on skills needs in the country and on the

stock of available skills – the HRD Council will be looking at these issues. He expressed his support for partnerships with NGOs, and stressed the need to eliminate illegitimate providers.

The Minister reiterated that the DHET will review the funding formula for colleges. The option of no-fee colleges is being looked at, but will require more funds money from the fiscus, as well as resourcing some programmes via the SETAs. In the relicensing of SETAs this will be stipulated as a requirement. We must also look at resources that can be made available through partnerships with private sector.

The Proposed Way Forward

The Director-General of the DHET, Professor Mary Metcalfe presented the *Document for Discussion: Proposed Way Forward*. She noted that the first priority in stabilizing the sector is to conclude labour negotiations re conditions of service. She argued that no other intervention will succeed unless this is resolved. She also noted the need to strengthen the capacity of the DHET in the transition and to support the work of the Steering Committee which would be proposed at the end of the day. She reported that a FET colleges audit will be undertaken by the HSRC, commissioned by the NBFET.

Professor Metcalfe then outlined the three major areas of action set out in the *Proposed Way Forward*:

1. Proposed steps to stabilise the sector immediately – by end April
2. Work streams to have recommendations ready for the August Summit
3. Interventions to support medium- to long-term improvement in the FET subsystem

These areas of action are described in detail in the discussion document, as are the following work streams:

- 1: Models Of Autonomy
- 2: Legal
- 3: Programmes
- 4: Immediate planning for the 2011 academic year
- 5: Funding
- 6: Examinations
- 7: Communications

Report of Breakaway Session 2: The Way Forward

Introduction

The comments and concerns of the breakaway groups regarding the proposed way forward are presented below, followed by the key issues prioritized by the groups.

College autonomy

There was a very strong emphasis in the group discussions on the need for standards and criteria to be used in the determination of levels of autonomy:

- Policy must allow for the state to intervene where colleges are not addressing national needs – there must be a balance between aspiring to ‘flexibility’ and ‘responsiveness’ and addressing national needs. The implications for college autonomy of the shift to national competence must be examined – in particular, how the transfer will affect the employer-employee relationship.
- ‘Autonomy’ must be carefully defined – we must look at international best practice and set minimum standards for autonomy.
- There should be criteria for defining levels of autonomy and these must be based on an understanding of what capacity exists in the system – where there is limited capacity there should be limited autonomy. Such decisions should be based on a needs analysis.
- We need to understand what the expected outcomes are in a differentiated approach to college autonomy and how autonomy assists in alignment with national needs.
- There must be adequate consultation on the criteria used to determine levels of autonomy.
- Autonomy is crucial for responsiveness and colleges should be able to manage their own staff but with strong measures to ensure accountability.
- Councils must be empowered to ensure equity across the system.

Policy and law

A wide range of recommendations were presented by the groups related to changes in policy and law:

- The ‘migration’ of the colleges from provinces to national must be concluded.
- The power to appoint college councils must be clarified as it is currently a power of the provincial MEC. Possible changes in the role of councils must be considered.
- National norms must be developed for the filling of vacant posts – this is a challenge in the short term as the college is still legally the employer.
- Terms and conditions for support staff must be developed.
- A non-consensual view was that college councils should not be the employer – employment should be state-led given the profile of FET colleges in the skills development agenda.
- National norms and standards and ratios for recruitment of lecturers are needed.
- NCV policy must be reviewed to address a range of issues, such as carrying of subjects and certification.
- The legal liability that companies incur when learners go for workplace exposure (COIDA) must be examined and addressed.
- BEE scorecards (a key driver for what companies do) do not give credits for internships.
- All policy statements and growth plans must be costed.

Programmes

A similarly wide range of recommendations was presented by the groups in relation to programme offerings at colleges:

- There is a need for a directive on NQF level 5 provision in colleges.
- Entry requirements into the NCV need to be addressed, and introductory/bridging programmes need to be developed.
- Career paths must be considered when programmes are developed.
- We must ascertain the reasons for the low NCV pass rates.
- We need an 'accelerated' NCV (and clarity on what this means), but other programmes (especially occupational programmes) are also urgently needed – programme planning should not be narrowly focused on the NCV. The key challenge is determining what will be funded.
- The review of the NCV should be planned in the context of the work to be undertaken by the QCTO.
- Different groups may need an 'accelerated' NCV – some learners have reached NQF level 4 and are still doing subjects at NCV2.
- The possibility of targeted programmes for rural colleges should be considered.
- Reflection on the roles of quality assurance bodies is essential.
- The academic boards can become hubs of knowledge for programme development.

Funding

The following concerns were presented by the groups in relation to the funding of colleges:

- Are funding norms adequately addressing the needs of rural colleges?
- There is a need to review the funding norms to ensure broader access beyond the NCV.
- The funding norms must cater for infrastructure development, which is not addressed in the current programme-based approach. We also need to assess whether there is a need for another recapitalisation programme.
- Funding must cater for learner support and staff development – the funding norms must adopt a more holistic approach.
- Complementary funding must be applied in a sustainable manner.

Examinations

The following concerns were presented by the groups in relation to examinations:

- There is a misalignment between the phasing out of the N programmes and the examinations.
- There is an urgent need to strengthen the capacity of the DHET to manage examinations.
- There needs to be a national agreement on the payment of markers (internal and external) to address inequitable payment levels across the system.
- Outstanding certificates must be released immediately.
- We must address intake and examinations related to N2.

- Results need to be released earlier and we need to ensure that results are communicated so that learners know what gaps they have and what they must do to address them. (This was linked to a discussion about when results are available – some delegates reported that the results only being made available in February, which means that students are greatly disadvantaged compared to school-based learners, who receive their results in December.
- The dates of supplementary examinations must be reviewed as March is too late.
- There must be a policy decision on rules related to learners who are denied access to examinations if fees are not paid.

Communication

The following concerns were presented by the groups in relation to the proposed communication work stream:

- Communication must facilitate debate as well as providing information.
- Colleges and staff need to know the outcomes of negotiations on the employment issue by the end of April 2010 (once agreement is reached in the ELRC). This communication must be consistent across provinces, and centrally coordinated.
- There must be effective communication on timeframes and plans for the FET colleges audit.
- The role of the NBFET must be strengthened and the Board should be restructured to make it more inclusive.
- The communication strategy must address the need for greater collaboration among structures and organisations operating in the sector. Forums should be created for enhanced collaboration, and the idea of a national forum should be explored.
- Management information systems must be strengthened – the non-availability of data needs to be addressed.
- Perceptions about FET colleges (e.g. colleges viewed as ‘dumping places’) must be managed as part of the communications strategy.

Organisation of the work streams

It was additionally proposed that:

- there must be collaboration between work stream 1 (Autonomy) and 2 (Policy and Legal Issues);
- work streams 3 (Programmes) and 4 (Planning and Funding for 2011) should be combined since both deal with funding;
- a separate work stream should be dedicated to staffing issues, including staffing norms, staff training and development, career pathing linked to conditions of service, et cetera;
- all work streams need to consider a new vision for colleges; and
- all work streams should consider issues related to private FET providers.

Breakaway 2: The Proposed Way Forward (Prioritized Issues)

The five breakaway groups also developed a number of prioritized key statements regarding the proposed way forward. These are presented thematically in the following tables.

Steps towards stabilization

Group	Strength of consensus 1 = weak 2 = medium 3 = strong	Statement
4	3	Steps to stabilize: Note that this is linked to current debate about who the employer is
3	3	Steps to stabilize: Stabilize human resource and collective bargaining issues
1	3	Steps to stabilize: Endorse the urgent completion of the collective agreement and must ensure equitable outcomes for all categories of staff
5	3	Steps to stabilize: Full support
4	3	Steps to stabilize: Support steps proposed
3	3	Steps to stabilize: Addressing issue relating to company needs with regards to COIDA and delivery of N2
1	3	Steps to stabilize: Need a uniform communication strategy on progress that is centrally co-ordinated and consistent across provinces
2	3	Steps to stabilize: agree with areas identified
2	3	Steps to stabilize: agreement needed with provinces for managing the transition

Work Stream 1: Models of autonomy

Group	Strength of consensus 1 = weak 2 = medium 3 = strong	Statement
5	3	The principles are accepted but the application of the principles is crucial and the integrity of the process must be accepted
3	3	Review employer issues
2	2	Employment and accountability of principals need to be addressed
4	3	Models of autonomy: agreement with the principles
4	3	There is a need for these principles to take into account concerns re the capacity of councils
3	3	There is a need for differentiated autonomy- some issues to be driven by national
1	3	The PSC must consider models of autonomy and agree on criteria for defining different levels
1	3	The differentiated approach must be guided by different capacity within the colleges and must ensure that appropriate accountability measures are in place
2	3	Models of autonomy do need to be addressed

Work Stream 2: Policy and legal issues

Group	Strength of consensus 1 = weak 2 = medium 3 = strong	Statement
3	3	To be linked/collaboration with work stream 1
2	3	The section deals with implementation and the heading should reflect this
4	3	Policy: agreement with the main steps included in the document
5	3	We support the legal steps proposed
4	3	Emphasize the link between capacity and autonomy and therefore employer relationships
3	3	Appointment and role of Council to be confirmed once migration from province to national has taken place
2		A separate work stream on staffing issues is needed

Work Stream 3: Programmes

Group	Strength of consensus 1 = weak 2 = medium 3 = strong	Statement
4	3	The debate about the relationship between the NCV and the occupational qualifications (when they are developed) and the way in which diversity of programmes will be given expression is needed before the proposal contained in 3.2 and 3.3 of the document can be finalized
5	3	We support the programmes, but there has to be an addition of learnerships and occupationally directed qualifications
3	3	There is a need for differentiated curricula
1	3	The PSC must develop recommendations on additional programmes outside of NCV that colleges should offer, e.g. occupational programmes and which programmes should be funded (within a differentiated framework)
1	3	We need a directive on level 5 provision
3	3	Clarification of the role of the quality assurance bodies is essential
2	3	Partnerships are needed with SETAs for structured workplace learning
5	3	We accept the programme proposals but we wish to emphasise too that the three-year review that starts in 2010 must emphasise the developmental priorities of the state
2	3	The nature of assessment in colleges needs to be looked into under the work stream on programmes
4	3	Programmes: We agree with steps included in the document (though note that instruction needs to be expedited if examinations are to be prepared in time)

Work Stream 4: Urgent planning for 2011

Group	Strength of consensus 1 = weak 2 = medium 3 = strong	Statement
4	3	Immediate planning: We agree with the steps contained in the document
2	3	A new model of complementary funding must urgently be developed, to balance private funds, SETA funds and DHET funding
5	3	Legislation must be put in place to ensure that SETA finances can be accessed
2	3	Financial support for students, including from NSFAS, must meet the needs of all students (not just NCV students) and must be monitored
5	3	Learner recruitment and selection must be seen as a very sensitive issue and must take into account realities of the communities, and must be underpinned by access, equity and redress
3	3	Norms, standards and ratios are required to support learner recruitment
3	3	A review of NCV policy is needed to make it work administratively and serve its intended purpose
2	3	Administration of examinations in colleges needs immediate intervention

Work Stream 5: Funding

Group	Strength of consensus 1 = weak 2 = medium 3 = strong	Statement
4	3	Funding: We are comfortable with the steps proposed
5	3	We must ensure that the total equitable share is returned
5	3	A task team must be established immediately to investigate the percentage of the education budget for the FET college sector, in line with the investigation of other funding
3	3	Closer links between SETAs and colleges are needed
3	3	The review of the funding formula should not be limited to NCV
1	3	We must look at funding allocations holistically so that they can cover different elements (student support, infrastructure, staff development etc.)
1	3	Ensure that complementary funding addresses differentiated needs and is sustainable
2		Sections 2.4 and 2.5 should be combined – planning for 2011 must tie in with funding provision

Work Stream 6: Examinations

Group	Strength of consensus 1 = weak 2 = medium 3 = strong	Statement
4	3	The assessment system and continuous assessment should be reviewed and capacity needs to be built
5	3	The availability of resources (both human and technological) is of paramount importance
1	3	Strengthen the capacity of DHET to deal with examinations and meet compliance
3	3	Address issues relating to NATED programmes
4	3	The computer programme used to run examinations must be ready and officials must be trained
3	3	Review dates of supplementary exams
1	3	Address misalignment of phasing out of N Examinations

Work Stream 7: Communication

Group	Strength of consensus 1 = weak 2 = medium 3 = strong	Statement
1	3	Endorsed
1	3	Endorsed
5	3	Supported
4		We agree with the steps proposed and emphasise that communication is about engagement as well as information
3	3	Data quality at college level must be strengthened
3	3	NBFET to be restructured to be more inclusive
4		We should market the sector to build awareness of the contribution of the sector (change perceptions)

The FET Summit Steering Committee

Professor Metcalfe proposed that the FET Summit Steering Committee, to oversee the work leading up to the August Summit, must have senior stakeholder representation, with organizations nominating a senior office bearer and an alternate. She proposed that the Steering Committee be chaired by the DG or DDG (when appointed). The proposed composition of the Steering Committee follows:

- DG DHET
- NBFET
- ETPD SETA
- SACE
- ELRC
- FETCEO
- SADTU
- ITU
- SACPO
- Business

Professor Metcalfe presented the following principles for the composition and work of the Steering Committee:

- Senior level representation (office bearer with alternate office bearer)
- Chaired by DHET (DG or DDG)
- A Working Committee reports to Steering Committee
- The Working Committee will enlist additional expertise as and when necessary by setting up technical task teams

The proposals for the establishment of the Steering Committee were accepted.

Closure

The Minister closed the Round Table, thanking the ETPD SETA and participants alike. He expressed his hope that we will be able to maintain this collaboration as we prepare for the August Summit and beyond.

The vote of thanks was presented by Dennis George, Chairperson of the National Board for Further Education and Training.