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FOCUS ON HIGHER EDUCATION, JOB CREATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

It is now three years since the first Draft White Paper on Education and Training spelt out the vision, principles and strategic priorities for the reconstruction and development of learning systems in a democratic South Africa. Central to this new vision was provision for a new curriculum framework with which to secure the effective realignment of the programmes and institutions of learning, to redress inherited inequalities, to ensure meaningful ownership and participation in the economy, and to accelerate the transition towards a more united and democratic society.

Whereas the White Papers of 1995 to 1997 set the direction and priorities, the context within which change strategies have been implemented has remained extremely complex and volatile. Attempts to restructure national and provincial departments, to redeploy teachers, to introduce new curricula under the banners of 2005 and SAQA (the South African Qualifications Authority), have all come up against the frustrating internal constraints related to finance, regulatory procedure, and sheer capacity to plan and manage change on this scale.

From another perspective the external pressure to accelerate the pace of change in the education system continues to grow. On the one hand, South Africa's rapid entry into the swing of global economic realities exposes serious skills deficits when compared with other countries. At the same time it opens up exit opportunities to those who have these skills and choose to market

BREAKING NEW GROUND IN FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

By Alan Ralphs
Divisional Manager - JET

Successful modern economies and societies require the elimination of artificial hierarchies, in social organisation, in the organisation and management of work, and in the way in which learning is organised and certified. They require citizens with a strong foundation of general education, the desire and ability to continue to learn, to adapt to and develop new knowledge, skills and technologies, to move flexibly between occupations, to take responsibility for personal performance, to set and achieve high standards, and to work cooperatively.

(White Paper, Feb 1995)

them in more stable regions of the world economy. On the other, the escalating phenomena of diminishing returns and jobless growth in key mining and manufacturing sectors of the economy seriously threatens to exacerbate social inequalities and the risk of poverty and crime for millions of South Africans.

Whereas these macro level economic and social conditions set the scene for a turbulent and at times chaotic transformation of public sector education, they also provide the background against which to view the vast spectrum of change related activity and innovation that continues to grow at all levels and locations in the system.

Government policy, in the form of the Skills Development Bill, the Green Paper on Higher Education and Further Education and Training Act, has signalled the need to address these realities and to substantially improve access to good quality programmes for pre-employed and unemployed youth and adult learners. To some extent market forces have already accelerated the implementation of these priorities, for those who can pay the fees. This is evidenced in the rapid growth of private sector education providers, with one listed company serving in excess of 300 000 students on 50 campuses around the country. (Sunday Times, 24 May 1998)

A number of state funded institutions, particularly those operating in higher education under diminishing real subsidies from government, have also taken steps to develop their capacity to

reach students who are at work or unable to pay the costs of full-time tuition. Through the medium of distance learning, often enhanced with multimedia technologies, these institutions are rapidly increasing the provision of education and training opportunities to thousands of students over and above the estimated 250 000 (NADEOSA 1997) who are already registered with South Africa's established distance learning institutions.

Receiving less media coverage are a number of other significant interventions located amongst those who are most often at the cutting edge of disadvantage and poverty. This would include some 400 non government organisations (NGOs) supported by JET since 1992, delivering programmes of literacy, early childhood development, vocational and entrepreneurial skills, teacher INSET, and whole school development.

It would be inaccurate to suggest that these small interventions in education amongst the poor have spawned dramatic new lessons for the further development of the system as a whole. They haven't. Their contribution is for the most part a powerful lesson in how to spend limited resources in ways which will stimulate and support local commitment to the sustainable provision of sound education programmes where previously there was nothing. This is the sine qua non for the kind of research which will over time deliver very valuable lessons for transformation - for without the effective participation of people in shaping their own destiny there is little hope that all the best intentioned "technical assistance" available will have lasting or systemic effects at all.

In this edition of the JET Bulletin we highlight some more recent research and development initiatives which focus on key issues related to adult learning and workforce development,

"For the African renaissance to take root on the continent, we need excellence in higher education institutions, but we also need the broad mass of the population to be able to read and write."

(Mathews Phosa, *Sowetan* 26 June 1998.)

entrepreneurship, job creation and community service. These have begun to provide interesting lessons on what it will take to generate an environment more conducive to meeting South Africa's changing education and training requirements.

The Workers Higher Education Project

The Workers Higher Education Project (WHEP) is a new venture in project management at JET and is sponsored by the Ford and W.K. Kellogg Foundations. Its aims are to contribute to the development of new policy and practices within South Africa to expand access to higher education for working adults who have been disadvantaged by apartheid. The project was established at JET in 1996 by Ms Rahmat Omar who is also a member of the SAQA Board. More specifically the objectives of the WHEP are stated as follows:

- To support organisations and institutions which seek to pilot projects in the fields of engineering, management, rural development and agriculture, and teacher education, that will help to accelerate the development and implementation of adult learning programmes based on the principles established in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF);
- To support the development of assessment standards and the capacity to assess learning

acquired through work or life experience for academic credit;

- To support change in the higher education sector by promoting research and dialogue between various approaches to the provision of lifelong learning and the NQF;
- To develop the capacity of South African institutions, labour and corporate organisations to implement new projects and strategies for workforce development.

A number of pilot projects have been launched through WHEP since 1996.

- Research and development projects designed to inform new RPL programmes for underqualified but experienced teachers and school managers wanting to access further diploma and degree courses in Education Management.
- Three projects focussing on the assessment of workforce competencies and the development of RPL programmes for first-line managers in industry and agriculture. All these projects are grounded in partnerships between management, labour and the tertiary institutions. The participating institutions are PE Technikon, University of the Orange Free State, University of Venda, Technikon South Africa and University of the North.
- Curriculum design and materials development for the distance education Regional Access Programmes for unemployed youth and working adults. This project is located in the Eastern Seaboard Association of Tertiary Institutions.
- Negotiations with large corporations and parastatals for two workforce development projects through which the education and training needs of workers are investigated, advisory

programmes and services set up, and a corporate level strategy for engaging secondary and tertiary level institutions is established to secure provision of accredited courses.

- The formulation and advocacy of policy for adult learning and RPL in relation to the work of SAQA, the National Commission for Higher Education; the Further Education and Training Task Team and the Skills Development Bill.
- The planning and provision of training courses in RPL, curriculum development and workforce advising for academics, trade unions and industry based trainers, in association with the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL).

The articles in this Bulletin by Mitchell, Anderson, Musker, Buchler and Sigodi, provide a more detailed insight into the theory and practical implications of workforce development, RPL, curriculum development and workforce advising within different organisations and contexts.

Learning for a purpose: education for employment and job creation

There are approximately two million young South Africans, aged between 16 and 30, who are arguably the most at risk to forces of poverty, alienation and crime. This situation has its roots in an education system which continues to produce large cohorts of dropouts and failures, and a labour market which offers little more than a 30% unemployment rate and high levels of exploitation in the informal and crime related sectors.

JET's operations in youth development focus on grantmaking to a range of projects which are trying to carve out solutions at all levels of the problem: the training of educators

to work with out-of-school youth; the provision of vocational training courses relevant to the needs and opportunities in the formal and informal labour markets; the provision of an integrated programme of rehabilitation for young offenders serving sentences for crime; the provision of social awareness and life skills programmes critical to the survival of young adults in a hostile world. An audit of some of the projects funded by JET was conducted in 1996 and suggested a number of areas for improvement in course design, accreditation and delivery modalities. This gave rise to a more systematic study which is reported in the article by Vijay Valla in this Bulletin.

Many Higher Education institutions have also begun to look for ways to provide their graduate students with the knowledge and skills for enterprise creation. This was the subject of a consultative research project recently undertaken by JET in association with two other agencies representing UNESCO and the Department of Trade and Industry. This study, also reported on by Valla, provides some useful guidelines for the provision of supplementary training and business incubation services in association with NGOs and the private sector.

Tough choices for university and technikon students

There can be little doubt that talented young South Africans, as they move through their post-secondary education, face difficult choices. On the one hand the economy is desperately short of middle and higher level skills to improve our capacity to compete in global markets. On the other, the country has an enormous debt to the poor, one which cries out for effective investment in programmes for poverty alleviation and development. For some students their future in science, technology and financial management presents enormous career and material opportunities. For

others, such as those in teacher training colleges, the labour market looks increasingly bleak and uncertain. Tens of thousands already have big study loans to repay while at the same time there are increasing demands by the state and civil society for some pay-back in the form of community service.

This is the background to an important research project looking at the history, policy, current practices and possibilities for community service for students and graduates of tertiary institutions in South Africa. Penny Vinjevoold reports on progress in the Community Service in Higher Education Project.



RPL IN AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Workforce Development at Sapekoe Tea Estates

by Dr Gordon Mitchell
Director, Intercultural Resources cc

It was only in the 1960s that serious efforts were made to introduce the tea industry to South Africa. Most of the estates were established in the lush region between Tzaneen and Thohoyandou in the Northern Province. These are the Sapekoe Estates, with a workforce of almost 11 000 employees, of whom 6 000 are seasonal workers. Sapekoe has more recently moved into other 'strategic' industries such as coffee and macadamia nuts. Common to all these operations on the nine estates is the combination of sophisticated agricultural production with on-site plant processing.

Each stage of the production process, from leaf plucking through to tea tasting, is both labour intensive and very specialised. Traditionally, the Estates have depended on

workplace learning supplemented by short *ad hoc* training courses, usually offered by visiting Johannesburg-based consultants. When a team from WHEP visited the Estates in February this year it became clear that there was general dissatisfaction with the prevailing system of skills training which was inadequate to meet the new competitive challenges facing the organisation.

As a fledgling industry, tea operated in an environment of tariff protection. The Sapekoe Estates now have to equip themselves to compete with international growers. New and more effective ways of improving management and productivity through building human capacity have to be found. At the same time, the union movement has also begun to embrace a partnership model and a system

of education and training which will create opportunities for workers to advance themselves in properly accredited learning systems that are sufficiently flexible to recognise the prior learning of adult workers.

Right on the doorstep of the Sapekoe Estates are two major residential universities: the University of the North and the University of Venda. When the WHEP team visited them it was to find that they were engaged in serious strategic rethinking in order to meet the Government's challenge to universities to be providers of a service to the various sectors of society. Relevance, access and accreditation were all issues central to the debates about transformation. Contact was also established with Technikon SA which operates in the region. These players were able to bring considerable practical experience to the question of relevant training systems for adult learners.

In March a *bosberaad* of Sapekoe management and union shop stewards produced enthusiastic support for a proposal to engage the tertiary institutions in development of a learning system in Firstline Management. It was envisaged that such a programme would initially be made available to 200 employees. It would need to be structured in such a way that it would build on the considerable work experience of adult learners, grant recognition





for competencies gained and provide flexible possibilities to extend the process into accredited diploma and MBA-level courses. Courses would not only be in the field of management but would focus on the agricultural sector and tea production in particular. Fritz Khumalo, General Manager for Human Resources at Sapekoe, with the WHEP team from JET, then travelled to the campuses to discuss these expectations.

Initial discussions between the tertiary institutions and Sapekoe have been characterised by a willingness to adapt and to learn. When representatives from the various faculties of Business Management and Agriculture met in Tzaneen with the Sapekoe Human Resources staff, there was a certain amount of mutual surprise. The academics were far more committed to the practical needs of the workplace than had been anticipated, and the representatives from business and labour were, for their part, well equipped with the most recent thinking and research in the field!

A study tour of the Tea Estates was the next step in bringing the two worlds together and ensuring that the envisaged curriculum provides employees with what they need to succeed in their careers. Sapekoe has undertaken

to open its premises to the universities, allowing them the opportunity to become familiar with management profiles and workplace requirements. The mutual benefits of such arrangements are seen as fundamental to the project's having achieved stakeholder agreement and active participation within four short months.

The various stakeholders have constituted a Reference Group to oversee the process. A Task Team, with representatives from management, labour and the tertiary institutions, is currently engaged in an intensive standards writing exercise. This will provide a defensible basis for the development of a curriculum and for prior learning recognition systems. In addition to facilitating the process, the WHEP team has committed itself to assisting in the development of capacity, where required, within the tertiary institutions in specialist areas such as RPL and curriculum development.

Obtaining accreditation for the Firstline Management Certificate Course from the participating institutions, and within the National Qualifications Framework, is viewed as essential by both organised

labour and management. Once this has been achieved, the involved tertiary institutions can begin to develop and deliver the appropriate courses, within a contractual arrangement between Sapekoe and the universities.

The challenge of partnerships between institutions and local business in providing relevant education is an exciting one for all involved in this fast moving project. There is also satisfaction in breaking new ground, with all its surprises and frustrations. The relationship is one in which each partner has something to give and something to gain. The prospects for long-term sustainability are therefore positive.



A DEGREE PROGRAMME IN MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP STUDIES FOR WORKING ADULTS

by **Bennie Anderson**
University of the Orange Free State

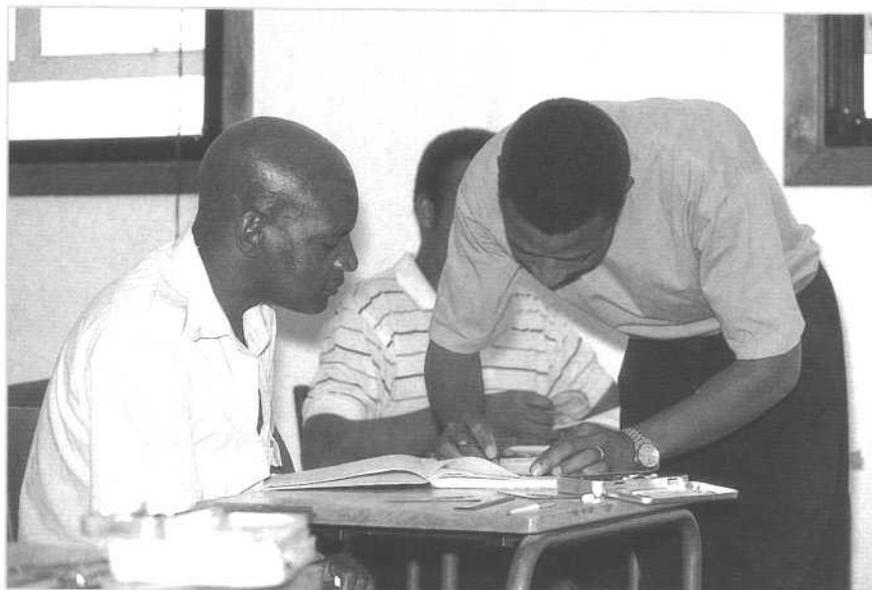
During 1996, a newly established *Assessment and Recognition of Prior Learning (ARPL)* Task Team at the University of the Orange Free State (UOFS) invited a group of working adults to discuss their educational needs regarding university learning. Most of the group were individuals who had been excluded from quality education during the apartheid years and who sought to obtain a degree qualification to broaden their knowledge base and to enhance their existing management and leadership capabilities in the community and at work.

This gave rise to a dynamic "learning partnership" between private sector organisations, organised labour, parastatal companies, and the Universities of the Orange Free State and De Paul (USA), to develop a new experientially-based Baccalaureate Degree Programme with accompanying ARPL programmes and opportunities.

Phase 1: New routes for entry to Higher Education

Discussions were held with executive members at the UOFS and a decision was taken at the beginning of 1996 to set up a series of seminars for individuals and organisations interested in experientially-based adult education. The idea was to inform educators, trainers and other interested individuals about the meaning of experiential learning and the assessment and recognition of prior learning.

Subsequently the Task Team was commissioned to investigate and



implement a systematic pilot programme of ARPL for candidates who would not have met the traditional admission requirements for degree programmes at the University. With support from WHEP and the Chicago-based Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), the ARPL programme was developed and offered to 21 individuals nominated by the participating organisations which included: Cosatu, Telkom, Eskom, the Free State Provincial Government, Anglo American Corporation, Interstate Buslines, the South African Breweries, Spoornet, Sun International and the Standard Bank of South Africa.

In contrast to the traditional use of M-scores and psychometric testing, the ARPL candidates were offered an intensive training programme that would help them to identify and document their knowledge and skills from prior work and life related experiences, and to formulate their aims and

expectations in respect of higher education. Each completed portfolio contained detailed information pertaining to the following:

- A self-introduction
- An education and career goal statement
- A curriculum vitae
- A written essay on skills and knowledge gained from prior learning experiences
- A degree plan
- Supporting documentation for the above.

At the end of November 1996 candidates submitted their portfolios for faculty assessment and senate approval. Fifteen candidates were successful and were advised that they would be admitted to degree level courses in 1997.

Phase 2: Admission and Support

In February 1997 fifteen working adult learners were admitted to Baccalaureate Degree Programmes in the following

faculties: Economics and Business Management (7); Natural Sciences (2); Social Sciences (3); and Arts (3).

During the year, the Task Team undertook a range of activities aimed at providing the necessary academic and personal support for learners and their lecturers, and at monitoring the progress of the learners. By October it was already apparent that the results of the first pilot group of learners compared favourably with those of other first year students at the University. This was the incentive required to offer a second ARPL opportunity to working adults for admission in 1998.

Phase 3: New Directions

The project took a new turn in 1997, largely as a result of the reflection and dialogue between the first pilot group of learners and the Task Team. It became clear that most of the learners needed a programme that would more directly support their responsibilities for leadership and management in their communities and at work.

By the end of the year a formal decision was taken by the group of existing role-players (including the Vice-chancellor at UOFS, the Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Business Management at UOFS, the

participating learners, the ARPL Task Team and the managers appointed to the project from the participating organisations) to develop an experience-based management and leadership degree programme for working adult learners.

The core of this curriculum will take the learners through a natural development process of learning: from discovery to integration, application, synthesis and sharing of knowledge. Learning activities will be designed to include those that are organised on campus, in the community and at affiliated workplaces. The outcomes of the learning will be documented, assessed and evaluated by the individual students and via review procedures to be developed in association with their supervisors and academic mentors.

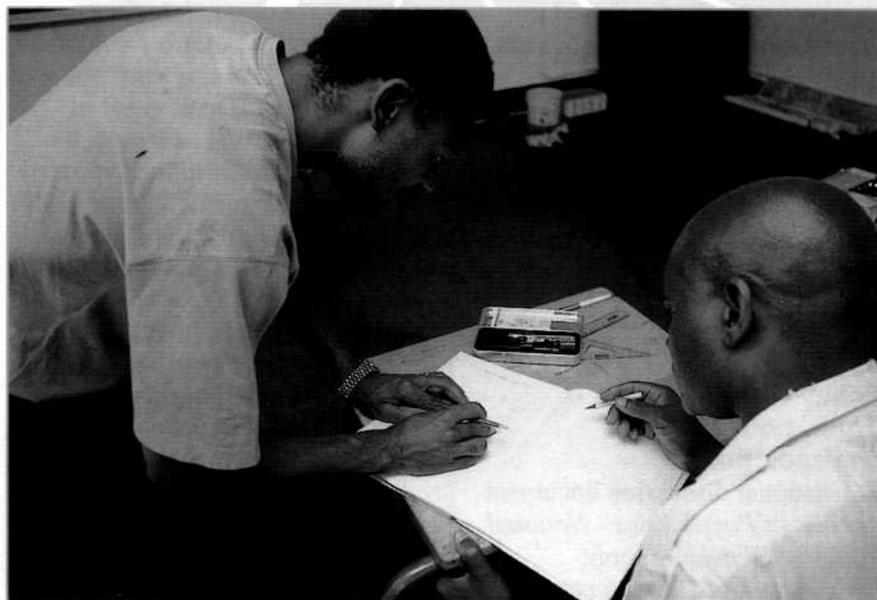
Phase 4: New qualifications in Management and Leadership

The design of the new programme was formulated during April 1998 when Professor Deborah Holton and Dorise Tolliver from De Paul University and Professor Elana Michelson from CAEL steered a four-day workshop on experiential learning, adult education, competence-based degree programmes and curriculum

design. The workshop was attended by all the role-players.

A modular **experiential learning degree programme in management and leadership studies** designed for working adult learners is being prepared for implementation in 1999. The programme will incorporate RPL and educational planning components and learners will have the opportunity to enter/exit at certificate, diploma or degree levels. A foundation course will form an integral part of the programme and learners will receive 24 credits at the certificate level after completion of this foundation course.

This article was prepared by Mr Bennie Anderson who is currently involved in doctoral research at the UOFS. His research focus since 1991 has been on the learning needs of working adults who wish to study at Higher Education level to improve their career opportunities.



WHO'S AFRAID OF RPL?

Recognition of Prior Learning in Teacher Education

by Paul Musker

Paul Musker & Associates - Education Consultants

The struggle to upgrade

The recognition of prior learning (RPL) for educators is both an official policy imperative and an administrative dilemma. At the level of policy, RPL is a key principle of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) to be pursued across sectors. At the management level, in education and training, it presents complex challenges. The inherited qualifications framework for teachers presented the current government with a nightmarish maze of discriminatory practice. Although from 1 July 1996 the inherited categorisation of qualifications was replaced with 'relevant education qualification values' (REQVs), the reality remains that for many technically underqualified educators (at less than REQV 13) the path to enhanced career benefits lies in the struggle to upgrade.

What does 'underqualified' mean?

Currently, the only way to upgrade is through formal courses of study. It should be noted that there is little evidence that 'underqualified' teachers are less competent than qualified teachers, or that the courses of study they are obliged to undertake have any impact on developing the competence required in their roles.

As the *Policy Research Report of the Gauteng Teacher Supply, Utilisation and Development Project* (Gauteng TSUD Steering Committee, 1997) observed:

"Is it logically possible to be underqualified in a discredited qualification framework?"

Maybe not, but the current workings of the REQV framework leave so-called underqualified teachers in little doubt as to where they are located in the system, regardless of how competent they might be to do the job. Hence an educator without matric but with a two-year teacher's qualification will be placed at REQV 11. Such an educator may be appointed into a CS Educator post, but only as a relaxation of the general rule - in exceptional circumstances - that only persons with an REQV of 13 will be appointed. In any event, a person with an REQV of 11 may only occupy posts up to post level 4.

However, a post level 1 educator with these qualifications will be placed at salary range 3 - 5, as opposed to the maximum of 8 for this post level. The same educator at post level 4 would be at salary range 8 as opposed to the maximum of 11. To advance to REQV 13, and thereby in theory become eligible for the maximum salary range in each of post levels 1 to 6, the educator in our example would have to 'upgrade' to matric plus a three-year qualification.

Policy developments - ironing out the contradictions

The national discussion document *Agenda of Possibilities - National Policy on Teacher Supply, Utilisation and Development: A*

Stakeholder Response

(Department of Education, 1997) addresses the issue of RPL in a contradictory fashion.

"While many newly qualified teachers cannot get jobs, a number of departments continue to employ un/underqualified teachers, especially in rural areas."

Since this is presented as an example of mismatch between posts and their incumbents, it is tantamount to a proposal that the un- and underqualified teachers in question should at some stage be removed - even though it is admitted earlier in the document that qualifications (or lack thereof) are not indicative of competence. While section 4.4.4 (op. cit.:47) refers to the need for recognition of prior learning, section 7.2.2 again refers to the presence of un- and underqualified teachers in the system as a "problem" (op. cit.:77-78).

The recent discussion document, *Norms and Standards for Teacher Education, Training and Development* (Department of Education, 1997) addresses the inherited qualification framework head-on and in detail. One of the 'key guiding principles' of the document is recognition of prior learning (1997:5), which it defines as 'credit [given] to learning which has already been acquired in different ways, e.g. through life experience'. However, the emphasis in the document is on the paths that lead, through 120-hour modules of work, to whole qualifications (1997:128-129). RPL is not

featured in the document in any concrete proposal.

What can be achieved through research?

Clearly there is a need for research and development projects that give substance to the principle of RPL. Two JET funded projects, managed respectively by the Management of Schools Training Programme (MSTP) and the John Bell Trust Language Project, are beginning to address RPL from different perspectives.

MSTP has designed an innovative research project - known as the Access Project - to ascertain whether further diplomas in education management can be accessed by M+2 and M+3 school managers alike. Currently, a three-year relevant post-school qualification (M+3) is the minimum entry requirement for a further diploma. Many school managers (heads of department and principals), especially in rural areas, hold an M+2 qualification and are therefore not admitted to such courses.

The goal of the Access Project is to investigate whether there is a real, measurable difference in competence between M+2 and M+3 school managers. The project, which is located in rural schools in the vicinity of Giyani

Teacher Training College, will critically assess the current exclusion of the former from further diplomas which are clearly relevant to their work. Work is still in progress and the research report will be available in July 1998.

The **John Bell Trust Language Project** at the Johannesburg College of Education has undertaken the Recognition of Prior Learning Research Project, which is investigating RPL practice at colleges of education and teacher INSET NGOs in Gauteng. The latest work-in-progress report notes, among other issues, a reliance within colleges of education on 'paper proof' of qualifications from prospective adult learners with work experience.

The progress report also notes that there is no standardised training of assessors at the admission stage and that there is a strong bias towards English in all procedures relating to assessment of candidates for admission. Assessment for diagnostic purposes is also largely determined by paper qualifications, leading to a situation in one college where English language support courses are not needed by some who are obliged to follow them, while others need more support than the courses offer.

Conclusion

Although the development of the NQF rests crucially on the application of this key principle, the concept of RPL is as yet untested among educators. If developed into practice, RPL will have crucial implications for educators, given the current status of many who continue to be classified as 'underqualified'.

It is important to recognise that these educators are underqualified in terms of a qualification framework which is not yet located within the NQF, in part because RPL has not yet been investigated, let alone developed into practical instruments. It is also important to recognise that existing practices in the admission and certification of students, reliant as they are on paper qualifications rather than assessment of competence, suggest that institutional capacity to develop and implement RPL is currently weak.

Finally we must ask why, in major discussion documents issued by the Department of Education, RPL is either not prominent or is dealt with in contradictory ways. It may require an analysis of the direct financial implications of RPL to understand who is afraid of it, and why.



THE NQF AND THE RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

by Alan Ralphs, Divisional Manager - JET and
Michelle Buchler, Project Officer - JET

The move to establish a National Qualifications Framework is for many a very welcome move away from a fragmented and unequal system of education that was inextricably bound up with a political economy which left millions of South Africans undereducated, unskilled and very often unemployed. But it would be wrong to portray the NQF as the quick fix for all the shortcomings of apartheid education, for it is premised on principles and practices that have a long and contested history in the evolution of modern education systems throughout the world. None less so than the notion of the recognition of prior learning (RPL), which is as capable of raising the hopes and expectations of prospective adult learners as it is of raising the hackles of many prospective teachers, lecturers and those more concerned with the priorities of educational preservation than transformation.

The principle of RPL simply says that "education and training should, through assessment, give credit to learning which has already been acquired in different ways, e.g., through life experience" (HSRC, 1995). It is important to read this in the context of other hallmark principles of the NQF, such as access, flexibility, progression, portability and guidance of learners (HSRC, 1995).

"In short there is a clear need for an approach that makes education and training more flexible, efficient and accessible.... In future learners must readily be able to move between various areas and levels of learning, taking with them

recognised credits for the learning that has already taken place. Such an integrated approach to learning, it is argued, will benefit the individual learner, the education and training system and the economy." (ibid)

The landscape of RPL or PLA, prior learning assessment, as it is often referred to (Simosko, 1988), includes a range of interrelated concepts and practices associated with the nature and assessment of adult learning. This includes provision for the assessment of non-collegiate programmes, such as work based training courses, for the purposes of granting college or university level credits.

Prior learning assessment is a process of identifying, articulating, measuring and accrediting learning that is acquired outside the traditional classroom and frequently prior to enrolment in college. (Hamilton, 1997)

More difficult to assess is the component of **experiential learning** which elevates the significance of the context within which meaning is made and reproduced in adult lives. This includes reference to work experience, volunteering, community involvement, independent reading, parenting etc. What is important is that it is not "life experience" *per se* which is to be awarded credit, but the actual learning which has taken place. Furthermore, in the context of tertiary education, that learning must be at tertiary level.

Using the basic principles established by the architects of adult learning theory (Dewey

1938; Knowles 1980; Kolb 1984; Schon 1983) Kasworm and Marienau have established five principles of adult orientated assessment practice:

- recognises multiple sources of knowing;
- recognises and reinforces the cognitive, conative and affective domains of learning;
- focuses on adults' active involvement in learning and assessment processes, including self-assessment;
- embraces adult learners' involvement in and impact on the broader world of work, family and community;
- accommodates adults learners' increasing differentiation from one another, given varied life experiences and education.

Based on these principles, the procedures and methods used to assess experiential learning are designed with reference to a wide variety of possible instruments, including portfolio assessments, challenge tests, oral interviews, performance assessments, examination of products and so on - an interesting range which increasingly moves away from the limitations associated with traditional written examinations and psychometric testing.

RPL and Workforce Development in the USA

Many of the most recent advances in the practice of RPL for adult learners in higher education have been researched and developed by the Chicago based organisation CAEL, the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning. CAEL's work began under the auspices of the Educational Testing Services in 1974 in Princeton, New Jersey, where it took the lead in

articulating the philosophical basis for PLA and developing a set of policies and procedures for carrying it out in an academically sound manner. Over the last decade CAEL has developed extensive experience in the design and implementation of a number of large workforce development projects, many of which were born out of collective bargaining agreements struck between management and labour in different industries. (Pamela Tate, JET Seminar 1997)

Within the framework of these agreements CAEL was commissioned to work with management, labour and the higher education institutions to ensure the effective access and delivery of education and training programmes for employees. In practice, successful workforce development programmes provide a complex and holistic set of services of which RPL is only one important ingredient. Services include:

- Educational advising programmes for adult learners
- The design and development of flexible curricula for working adults.
- Systems to access accurate and reliable information concerning educational options and learner progress.
- Appropriate models of RPL for prior and experiential learning.
- The provision of effective support systems for working adults.
- Training programmes for faculty assessors, curriculum developers and workforce advisors to implement the above programmes and services.
- The development of information systems for effective project management and evaluation.

Workforce development projects are marketed in the US as partnerships with an emphasis on the mutual benefits for all stakeholders.

- *Employees* gain an up-to-date cumulative record of skills achieved, increased flexibility in utilizing these skills and self-esteem from having a tangible record of achievement.
- *Employers* gain verification of employee skills, increased flexibility in utilizing these skills, and better information on which to base short- and long-term personnel decisions.
- *Industries* gain the definition of skills to match current needs, skill resource data to identify potential locations for new industries, and rapid response to the skills demands of new occupational categories.
- *Unions* gain protection of occupational status, equal opportunity for equal skills and assistance in linking salary levels to skills levels. (Sheckley, Lamdin & Keeton, quoted in Michelson 1998)
- *Tertiary education institutions* are able to maintain/increase learner numbers by targeting adult learners and remain relevant in a changing socio-economic and educational context.

It was in this context that new models of curriculum design and assessment consistent with adult learning principles and RPL began to feature increasingly on the map of further and higher education in the US. This was and still is driven by a powerful advocacy movement organised by CAEL and many of its associates - which now include over 700 colleges, universities, corporations, labour unions, associations and individuals.

Despite this progress it would be inaccurate to portray the field of workforce development and RPL as unproblematic in the US. There are still a number of hurdles to be overcome in providing effective programmes for learners from very disadvantaged communities.

To this end, and beyond the tangible growth of "mainstream" experiential learning programmes in the US, there is evidence in a number of other projects that RPL programmes are part of a more systematic attempt to create higher education institutions which are more responsive to the education and training needs and struggles of disadvantaged groups and communities. (Michelson 1997)

The First Nations Training Institute (FNTI) is located on the Tyendinaga Mohawk territory and offers programmes ranging from welfare administration to small business management and aerospace technology. FNTI has created an approach to portfolio development which takes into account the chronic levels of ethnostress linked to years of economic and cultural dislocation suffered by the first peoples of North America, "a context in which both healing and cultural renewal are educational goals" (*ibid*).

In reviewing this and other projects which profile the importance of "other experiences" in adult lives, Michelson points out that RPL only begins to deliver mutual benefits for all stakeholders when institutions are willing to move beyond a tradition "that sees knowledge as detached from the collective human memories and purposes" (*ibid*).

Some preliminary lessons from South Africa's initial experience of RPL

The introduction of RPL in South Africa can be attributed to the initiatives of COSATU in the 1980s in negotiating agreements with business around the provision of adult basic education. In the context of the 1990s - political transformation; entry to the global economy and the associated trade and market liberalisation - COSATU fought for the rights of workers to have increased access to higher

education opportunities (and hence improved employment and promotional opportunities) in the face of increasing retrenchments and capital intensive investment.

In addition to these economic imperatives, the socio-political task of RPL has been seen by COSATU as reconstructive and developmental, thus bridging the gap between those groups which traditionally had access to institutions of higher education (in particular middle class whites) and working class Africans who had been systematically denied access. Part of the appeal of RPL for COSATU, was also that it would allow for the recognition of the knowledge which workers had acquired through experience at work and in organised union activity and could thus be linked to the improvement of workers' wages, grading and working conditions. (Lugg et al 1997)

The experience of piloting RPL practices in South Africa has already indicated that its implementation is likely to be a lot more complex and contested than the processes leading to its inclusion in a number of new policy documents such as the First White Paper on Education and Training in 1995, the SAQA Act of 1996, the Higher Education Act of 1997 and the Skills Development Bill of 1997.

What has become clear is that RPL cannot be separated from broader epistemological, political and ethical issues (*ibid*). Questions such as: "Whose knowledge is important? Who benefits from RPL, and who is disadvantaged and how? Who act as gatekeepers and on whose authority? Whose standards and outcomes are used, and how are these arrived at? How are assessment methods arrived at, and what kinds of inputs do adult learners have into the use of those methods and the assessment process itself?" point to the fact that constructions of knowledge, what is worth knowing, and (then) how knowledge is

assessed, reflect particular power relations in society.

NUM and NUMSA

One of the most cogent demonstrations of the argument that RPL is part of contested terrain is highlighted by a research project undertaken by the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) during 1997 (*ibid*). The research itself was a retrospective study of two RPL processes in which these unions participated. In the case of NUMSA, the automotive industry assessed workers against Australian unit standards which bore little resemblance to South African realities. In the case of the mining industry, the RPL process advantaged those workers who had more advanced levels of numeracy and literacy. Also, the assessment process itself was problematic, in that many workers had no advance warning about either the timing or the method, and were thus completely unprepared for what it was that they were supposed to be doing.

The research has identified the most problematic aspect of these two RPL processes as tied to the fact that management and unions entered into the process with different agendas. In the case of the automotive industry, management wanted a skills audit, whereas the union saw the exercise as part of a move toward improved job grading and wages for workers. In the mining industry, management saw RPL as facilitating career pathing and work reorganisation, while the union saw it as part of a strategy to increase access to further training. In both cases, once the process was completed, no reconciliation of the opposing views was possible. Workers saw few benefits in either improved wages or a significant increase in access to further training. In fact, workers believed that the process as they experienced it was

deliberately designed to act (yet again) as an exclusionary mechanism. (*ibid*)

Department of Adult Education, UCT

This project was set up as a joint venture with the HSRC to pilot the development of RPL models for the inclusion of learners - without the traditional Matric plus 3-year qualification - in the advanced diploma for adult educators at UCT. The departmental staff involved came to realise that they were trying to 'fit' learners into the academic modes of knowing which were prevalent in the department and its curriculum. In retrospect, the question of whether the staff were in fact attempting to 'unlock' prior learning, or attempting to test 'academic readiness' within the department's pre-determined curriculum became an important issue. For those involved, this dilemma pointed to the need for conceptual clarity, particularly regarding the social purposes of RPL which are not always what they seem to be. (Harris et al 1998)

RPL and professional development of community health nurses at Peninsula Technikon

In the field of healthcare, South Africa currently has a complex regulatory framework which acts as an obstacle to many nurses wishing to improve their professional status and qualifications. This particular project uses as its starting point a 'bridging diploma' for nurses who either do not have community nursing as a discipline, or do not have Matric. Successful completion of this diploma would enable access to opportunities in post-basic training which otherwise would have been denied to these nurses.

The research focus of this project, jointly undertaken by the HSRC, UCT and Pentech, was on the process of drafting criteria

(meshing expectations of what community health nurses should be able to do/know, etc, with the realities of what community health nurses bring into the diploma) and designing context-appropriate evaluation methods with the participation of a wide range of stakeholders. Issues which emerged included: the tension around drafting criteria which reflect "the changing nature of professional and clinical practice" (Harris et al 1998); who participates in such a process and how wide-ranging the level of representation of stakeholders is; and the fact that a clear methodology is required so that "implicit and varied understandings" of issues such as competencies can be made explicit and shared understandings can develop.

Conclusion

In this article we have sought to highlight some of the complex possibilities and constraints associated with the recognition of prior learning in the context of higher education and workforce development. There seems little doubt as to the explicit attraction of RPL for adult learners as well as for those who are grappling with new ways in which to make higher education more accessible and effective for working adults. The more difficult and often implicit challenges of framing and implementing RPL are demonstrated in the research described above. Unless RPL is conceptualised in such a way that all parties reach a common understanding of the purpose, nature and structure of the process to be used, it is likely that the experiences of those who undergo RPL will fall short of its potential.

South Africa has a long way to go in developing new ways to ensure that those whose knowledge and experience were discounted and dishonoured in the past, never again suffer the same indignity. A commitment to the development of learning

opportunities for working and unemployed adults in South Africa cannot be sustained without the vision, leadership and resources of organised business, labour and the higher education institutions. The Workers Higher Education project at JET, with its funding partners and its associates from CAEL, will continue to support research and development projects to guide the successful introduction of RPL programmes and services for working people in South Africa.

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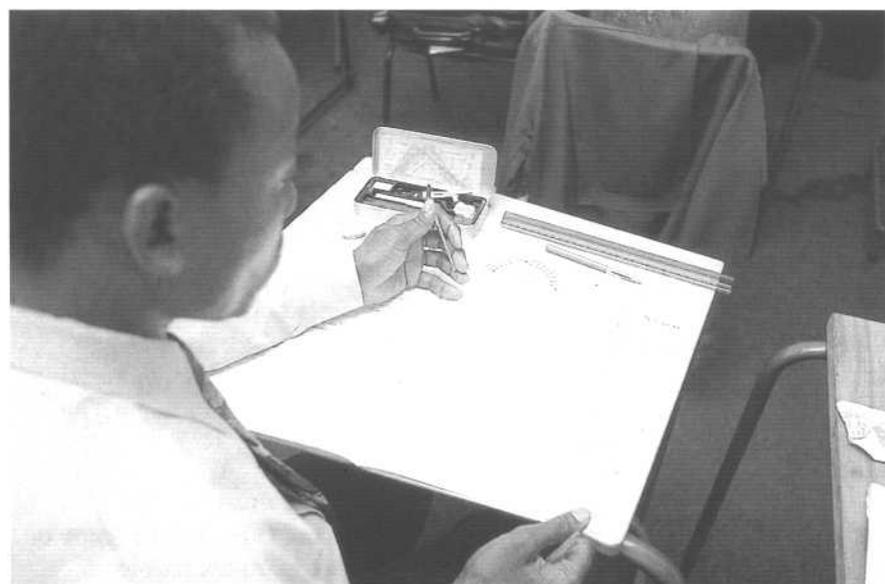
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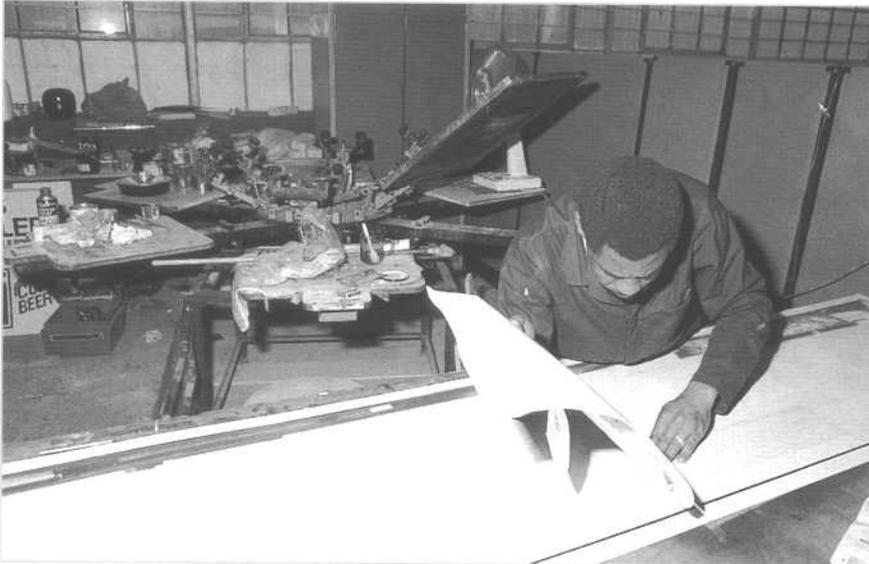
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GUIDELINES FOR ADVISORS

Learning Pathways for Adult Workers

by **Phindi Sigodi**
Project Officer - JET



The advent of democracy in South Africa has established a much more favourable policy environment for adult learning and workforce development. The Workers Higher Education Project (WHEP) has as one of its strategic objectives the task of pioneering innovative programmes which will assist our higher education institutions to accelerate the opportunities for adult workers to access higher learning. This requires, amongst other things, the development of new worker-centred advising systems, staffed by those whose training has adequately prepared them for the services and support required by South African workers.

Gearing up for adult learners

While RPL may open access to educational programmes and enable its beneficiaries to gain credits for knowledge they have acquired from experience, it has emerged that returning to formal

learning for adults is a different ball game. The higher education system in SA is largely geared for young people straight from school and not for adult learners, particularly those for whom the childhood experience of apartheid education was largely negative and restricting.

Currently student advice is located, in small pockets, either at career advice or student council offices in some tertiary institutions. In workplaces, this service is usually linked with performance appraisal, where the employees' training and education needs are discussed. On the surface, educational advising will include a range of individual counselling, assessment tests, networking and information searches, and assistance in securing admission to the selected programmes of learning.

But behind this menu of professional services lie some of the more complex problems

facing working class adults who seek advice and support for their efforts to gain access to the institutions of higher learning in South Africa. The values-laden nature of knowledge assets in our society raises a number of serious questions about the kind and location of advisory services sought by workers; and the knowledge, skills and attitudes required by advisors to offer effective services to adult workers in different contexts, such as workforce development, retrenchment and job creation projects.

Preparation for the return to learning

The WHEP recently hosted a workshop entitled *Helping Workers Return To Formal Learning: Workshop In Educational Advising And Adult Learning Services*. This was facilitated by Dr Elana Michelson who has many years of experience in advising and educational planning at Empire State College in New York and as a consultant trainer for the Chicago-based Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). Dr Michelson has published extensively on the subject of prior learning assessment and the significance of the social, cultural and historical contexts within which this occurs. Participants in the workshop came from adult education backgrounds, the trade union movement and organisations which facilitate education and training for adults.

The goals of the workshop were set as follows:

- to understand the context within which educational advising has become imperative;
- to conceptualise what educational advising means in the contemporary South African context;
- to identify components of a holistic, worker-centred system for educational advising;
- to design approaches and activities for helping workers understand the broader social, economic, industrial and institutional trends within which to make educational decisions;
- to design approaches and activities for helping workers achieve their educational goals;
- to explore changing approaches to adult learning including RPL and flexible curricula;
- to examine the role of the education advisor and identify needed values and skills to practise educational advising activities;
- to identify the core elements necessary for the training of education advisors in SA.

The workshop, which focused on the principles and practices of advising systems, also gave the South Africans a chance to review programmes and materials developed by CAEL within the context of large workforce development projects in the US. Workshop participants identified four key areas which will need to be addressed in the further development and implementation of an adult-worker-centred advising system in SA:

- the services to be provided within an advising system;
- the values and characteristics which advisors should have;
- the kind of training required for successful implementation of a new advising system;
- a strategy to change the existing systems of advising in our higher education systems.

The first three of these are described in more detail in this article.

Services provided by an advising system

Participants agreed on the following key activities as typical services an education advising system would ideally provide:

- information about policies and opportunities available in the company and the broad labour market;
- information on education and training programmes, resources available and requirements thereof;
- programmes which help workers examine their skills, interests, values and choices to find appropriate learning pathways;
- programmes which assist workers in setting goals and making informed decisions for their education plans;
- proactive advocacy for the provision of opportunities and resources to ensure effective access to educational opportunities and the recognition of prior learning.

Values and characteristics of advisors to adult learners

◆ *Commitment to lifelong learning for adult workers*

To be a diligent advocate of adult learning one needs to be

convinced that adult learning is a human resource strategy aimed at opening up opportunities for individuals and contributing to the broader social and economic development. An advisor should solicit support, interest and resources for adult learning.

◆ *Significant experience in working with adults*

The experience of working with adults helps advisors to understand how adults learn and the problems and barriers they encounter when returning to learning. With that experience, one will be able to exercise a high degree of patience and empathy when providing advisory service. An advisor has to be sensitive to the difficulty of combining education and training with the roles and responsibilities adults have at home and at work.

◆ *Firm belief in the knowledge, skills and experiential learning of all workers*

For most adults the journey back into formal learning provokes a whole range of memories and feelings associated with their prior learning experiences; for many it resurfaces the self-confidence factor that has been so badly undermined by previous social, political and employment experiences. An advisor needs to focus upon the individual, build his or her confidence and self-esteem and provide practical



means to heal the past and to use learning to pursue future objectives.

◆ *Sensitivity to diversity (e.g. culture, gender)*

Adult workers seeking educational advice bring with them a diversity of personal and collective value systems, histories and issues. An advisor has to be conscious not to project his/her own values onto the learners, to develop the skills to listen and respect who they are, where they come from, what they bring with them and where they aim to go.

◆ *Conscious of the boundaries of the advisor's role*

One of the participants correctly noted that an education advisor must not play 'god' and try to 'fix' everything. Adults returning to formal learning may seek advice on issues not necessarily falling within the field of educational planning, in which case the advisor should refer the individual to the appropriate structure or person.

◆ *Change agent*

Advisors need to be vigilant in identifying who sets the education agenda for workers. The apartheid era used education to exclude some and include others, to create opportunities for some and to freeze them for others. Educational programmes may be narrowly designed or selected not to meet the needs of the workers but rather to assimilate them into existing unequal and divisive structures.

Advisors need to develop a critical understanding of the principles and values which inform different programmes and advise workers accordingly. An education advisor also has to advocate change in higher education, call for workers' prior learning and experience to be assessed and recognised for access and credit, and encourage new curriculum designs flexible enough to support adult learning

across all levels in the education system.

◆ *Be politically situated*

An advisor needs to understand and embrace the social justice agenda underpinning human resource development generally and workforce development in particular. This suggests an active engagement with the political issues and programmes through which the transformation of education and training provision is contested.

Training programmes for education advisors

The training of education advisors in the USA often occurs within the framework of collectively bargained agreements between management and the trade unions. This sets the scene



- politics of knowledge construction within the context of unequal power relations;
- confidence building and self-assessment;
- goal setting and decision making;
- understanding how adults learn;
- the design and implementation of worker centred advisory systems;
- curriculum development and the recognition of prior learning.

Whereas these lay the foundation for a very different approach to the provision of advising systems in SA they do not deal with the strategic questions associated with how to change the existing systems in our workplaces and higher education institutions.

These will have to be hammered out in the context of the major social and economic challenges facing the South African workforce and higher education institutions. One of the aims of WHEP is to support initiatives which have the explicit intention of piloting the delivery of advising systems and training programmes for advisors in SA.



and focus of advising systems which are set up and implemented by specially trained advisors. In many cases the focus of the advising systems is on workforce development linked to new business objectives and strategies; in others it might be on the retraining of workers who have lost their jobs through retrenchment. In trying to formulate some core/generic components which should be included in advisor training programmes developed for the South African context, participants suggested the following:

- gender and cultural sensitivity;
- the history and politics of how workers have not been educated in South Africa;

ENTREPRENEURIAL TRAINING FOR YOUTH: A Vehicle for Creating Employment?

by Vijay Valla
Project Manager - JET

In 1995, Central Statistical Services (CSS) estimated that the economically active population of South Africa constituted 14,4 million people.¹ Of those, 71% were employed in the formal or informal sector and 29% were unemployed. According to the SA Institute of Race Relations, those unemployed were people fifteen years and older who were available for employment and had the desire to work.²

The SAIRR Survey³ further states that only one out of every thirty new entrants to the labour market had found a job in the formal sector of the economy between 1981 and 1994. The average level of employment in the formal sector was 6.4% lower in 1995 than at its peak in 1989, that is, 330 187 fewer people were employed in the formal sector in 1995 when compared to 1989⁴.

The Further Education and Training Green Paper of April 1998 refers to the collapse of the youth labour market in that half the estimated 4 million unemployed are under the age of 30, with at least nine years of schooling.

Between 1985 and 1996 enrolments at universities increased by some 80% from 211 756 to 381 498.⁵ During the same period technikon enrolment increased by some 210% from 59 118 in 1985 to 183 310 in 1996.

One of the implications of these statistics is that an annual economic growth rate of between

6% and 7% is needed to create jobs for new entrants to the labour market. A much higher growth rate is needed to actually reduce the unemployment rate. In 1996, the Minister of Finance predicted that unless a higher growth rate could be achieved, the unemployment rate would reach 37% in South Africa by the year 2020.⁶

An increasing unemployment rate, the shrinking of key



industries in the formal sector, greater enrolments at primary, secondary and tertiary education institutions and poor economic growth prospects, make a strong case for interventions to accelerate economic empowerment, job creation and employment within disadvantaged communities.

NGOs pioneer new education programmes for employment and job creation

From its inception in 1992 to date, JET has encouraged the development of innovative partnerships between non-governmental organisations, educators and the private sector to design and implement

entrepreneurship programmes for youth, as a means to generate new employment opportunities.

An initial analysis of these programmes is captured in the Youth Audit conducted by JET in 1996⁷. 73% of the programmes surveyed in the Audit focused on job creation, offering training which ranged from skills to assist young adults in gaining access to employment in the formal sector, to small business and entrepreneurial training. The Audit found that even though they covered a wide base of skills training, many of these programmes were not yet able to demonstrate their impact on employment and job creation. This raises a number of questions as to whether young people are appropriate candidates for entrepreneurial and small business training.

Research conducted by the World Bank⁸ suggests that the most successful entrepreneurs are people in their middle and later years. The research suggests that young people tend to prefer work experience before launching small business activities of their own. Whether this is the case in South Africa remains to be answered.

Other key questions raised by the JET Audit were:

- Are international models of youth job creation applicable to and relevant for South Africa?
- What are the structures needed at macro- and micro-economic levels to implement successful youth job creation programmes?

- Are job creation models based on stimulating small business activities appropriate for youth? or do youth need exposure to formal sector opportunities prior to their initiation into new job creation models?
- What are some of the essential features of setting-up, running and sustaining successful youth job creation programmes?

Evaluation of the School Leavers Opportunity Training (SLOT) programme

Subsequent to the Audit, JET has sought to focus its research on answering some of the key questions raised and establishing best practices in the area of youth entrepreneurship programmes. Towards this end, 21 projects which focused on education for job creation were subjected to a screening procedure and rated on five dimensions: their capacity; structure of programmes; quality of programmatic input; evaluation culture; and database and tracking systems. Information on which these ratings were based was provided by the projects themselves. One project was then selected for a more intensive evaluation, supported by the Ntsika Enterprise Promotion Agency.

The SLOT programme, based in Pietermaritzburg and now offered

through its branches in four provinces across the country, consists of four phases of training designed to enhance students' motivation and skills, with an emphasis on practical training in those areas which improve the self-employment prospects of the students. The chart below provides a basic outline of the structure and content of the programme.

The SLOT programme has been in operation since 1990 and has an outstanding track record of job placement for its young graduates. SLOT has also forged partnerships with two Trust Funds which provide "kick-start" loans to qualified students at market related rates.

The current research on the SLOT programme focuses on three critical areas:

- The effectiveness of programmed educational interventions in developing generic competencies (attitudes, skills and behaviours) for successful entrepreneurship;
- A comparison of the SLOT programme with other national and international programmes aimed at entrepreneurship and job creation;
- The potential for replicating the SLOT model in the broader socio-economic and

policy environment in a changing South Africa.

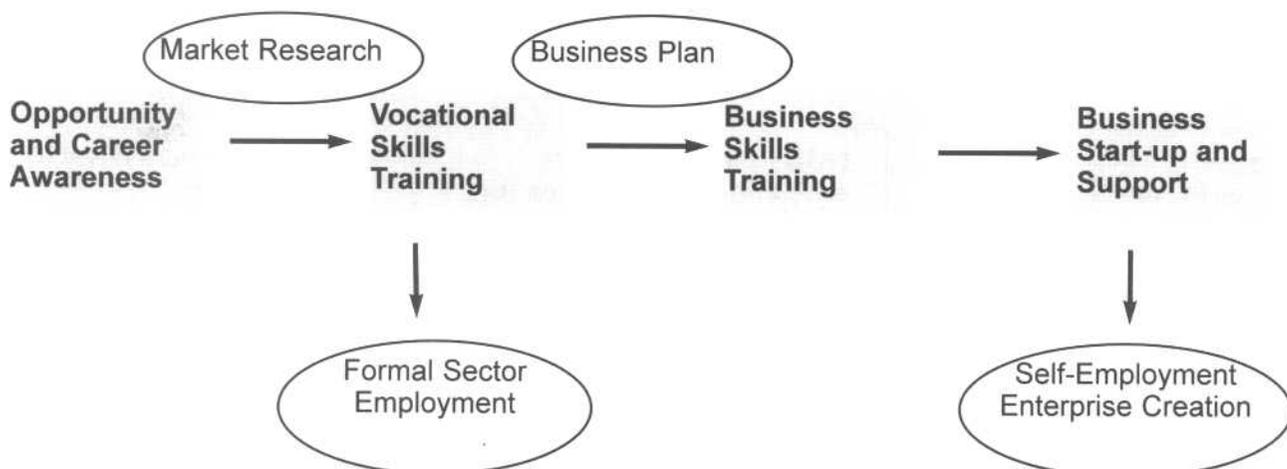
In examining the SLOT programme and other projects involved in youth entrepreneurship and job creation, it is hoped that a national framework of entrepreneurship programmes suitable to South African conditions can be explored. This framework would provide basic categories within which existing programmes can be located and future programmes designed and financed. The SLOT Evaluation report will be complete by the end of 1998.

Entrepreneurship for tertiary education graduates

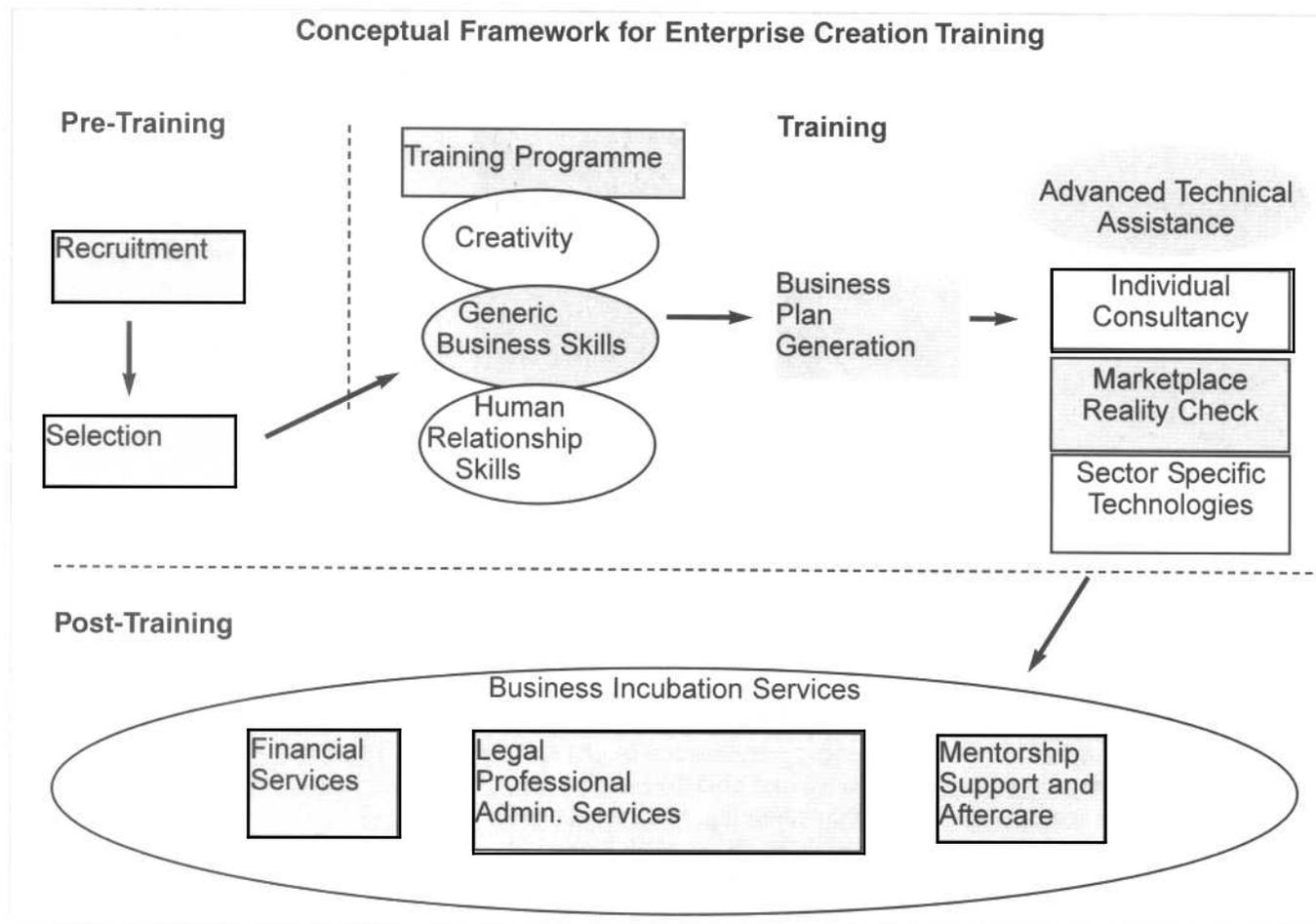
The concurrent phenomena of jobless growth and rapid increases in secondary and tertiary enrolments has placed a whole new set of employment obstacles in front of many young graduates from schools, teacher education colleges, technikons and universities.

It was in response to this problem that the United Nations Educational and Training Programme for Southern Africa (UNETPSA) constituted a project team - including JET, the Centre for Small Business Promotion at the Department of Trade and Industry and the Project Management Unit at the United

Structure of the SLOT Programme



Conceptual Framework for Enterprise Creation Training



Nations Office for Project Services - to prepare a conceptual framework for a programme that would enhance the skills of tertiary education candidates to become self-employed through the development of new enterprises.

JET was contracted to manage the project and was responsible for organising and documenting a series of consultations with primary stakeholders: technikon students, technikon management and the private sector. The input from these consultations provided the basis for the development of a conceptual framework, for an integrated programme that would assist technikon graduates in starting their own enterprises. The conceptual framework is represented graphically above.

During **Pre-training**, candidates most likely to benefit from the training are identified through the **Recruitment** and **Selection** phases. This is done in order to maximise the developmental

impacts as well as ensure programme viability and sustainability from a funding perspective (the need for success stories).

During **Training**, candidates are taken through a **Training Programme** focused in three areas that were identified as key during the consultations: creativity, business skills and human relationship skills. These areas are by and large supported by the literature and research into enterprise creation internationally⁹ and locally¹⁰.

Candidates then proceed to the **Business Plan Generation** phase, where they are involved in a short training programme on the elements necessary in a business plan and are assisted in the generation of their own business plans.

The **Advanced Technical Assistance** phase is closely related to business planning with a strong focus on one-to-one

consultancy services in the marketplace and sector specific technologies.

The last phase in the framework is **Post-training**. Many locally based entrepreneurial training programmes¹¹ offer no post-training assistance. Once a course is finished the trainers have nothing further to do with the trainees. Trainees often have to approach banks on their own to obtain funding, they have no guidance with regard to the legal, professional or administrative expertise they require in their enterprises. Furthermore, they lack opportunity guidance and have no access to human resource development opportunities which could enhance their enterprises.

The proposed framework addresses these post-training needs through the **Business Incubation Services** phase. The range of services includes: Financial Services, Legal, Professional and Administrative Services, and Mentorship,



After being accredited as a registered tour guide, a budding entrepreneur stands outside his newly acquired business premises.

Support and Aftercare Services. The choice of these three categories is supported by the literature on support services to SMMEs (small and medium enterprises).¹²

While the costs associated with this integrated approach may be high on programme design, they would be recovered by employing a menu-driven, case management approach in programme implementation. The level of implementing the programme would be selective in response to individual needs and should be flexible enough to meet the needs of the candidates it aims to serve and not impose its structure on the budding entrepreneur.

Conclusion

The virtue of enterprise education lies in the fact that it is designed to stimulate high levels of motivation and provide the skills necessary for successful job creation. In so doing it has the added advantage of mobilising individuals to contribute to their communities' growth and well-being, especially given the lack of a sound macro-economic infrastructure in South Africa.

The major challenge that researchers need to address

relates to establishing what types of programmes are in place, their goals and objectives, who are they targeting, what works and what the longer term impact of these new businesses will be in helping to rebuild and sustain the foundations of economic growth and prosperity in South Africa.

Notes

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COMMUNITY SERVICE IN HIGHER EDUCATION PROJECT: AN UPDATE

by Penny Vinjevold
Consultant

Community service has generated heated and contentious debate in recent months. This is in large measure due to the Ministry of Health's decision to introduce compulsory service for medical graduates. However, this is not the only government department considering the possibilities of using higher education students to address South Africa's social needs.

At the same time higher education institutions have begun to respond to calls to be more responsive to the needs of society. A wide variety of voluntary and curriculum-related programmes and projects which provide services to disadvantaged groups can be found at South Africa's higher education institutions.

In 1997 JET received a grant from the Ford Foundation to establish the Community Service in Higher Education Project. The aims of the project are three-fold:

- to promote public debate on community service
- to assist different stakeholders to develop policy positions with regard to community service
- to strengthen existing community service projects and stimulate the development of new ones.

The Steering Committee for the Project includes:

- *Naledi Pandor*,
Deputy Chairman of JET Board and member of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education
- *Margie Keeton*,
Executive Director of the Anglo

American and De Beers Chairman's Fund
■ *Mahlengi Bengu*,
Chairman of the National Youth Commission

■ *Nick Taylor*,
Executive Director of JET
■ *Nasima Badsha*,
Deputy Director General,
Department of Education
■ *Teboho Moja*,
Adviser to the Minister of Education
■ *Aubrey Matlole*,
South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) and a JET Trustee.

The project was designed to run in two phases. The first phase involved an audit of South African community service projects in higher education and an overview of community service programmes in nine countries - Nigeria, Ghana, Botswana, Israel, Indonesia, the USA, Costa Rica, Nepal and Mexico. This phase culminated in a concept paper titled *Community Service in Higher Education: A Concept Paper*, authored by Helene Perold and Rahmat Omar and published by JET in September 1997.

Currently the project is in its second phase of implementation. This phase is concerned with consultative workshops, tracking government initiatives in community service in higher education and further research. Nomsa Motaung has been appointed by JET to manage the second phase of the project.

Consultative workshops

The consultative workshops aim to facilitate sectoral discussions on community service.

Workshops were planned for the business sector; organised labour and the higher education community.

Three specific issues were identified for discussion at the business workshop:

- the implications of community service for organisations which award bursaries to higher education students;
- the implications of community service for corporate donors and foundations which invest in higher education and community development and
- the impact of community service on the higher education curriculum.

At this workshop Margie Keeton and Monique Adams, Manager of the Anglo American Graduate Recruitment, Scholarship and Bursaries division, made presentations on the above issues. This was followed by discussion on the role of community service in preparing graduates for the world of work, the role of higher education institutions in serving communities and society and the opportunities and challenges of placing higher education students into appropriate work and service programmes.

The workshop held with members from higher education institutions intended to provide a forum at which experiences of different types of community service programmes could be discussed. Three case studies were presented: the Work Study Project at the University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg); the Community Internship Project at

the University of Natal (Durban) - Faculty of Medicine; and the Work Study Programme at the University of Western Cape. These were followed by a student perspective on community service from candidate attorney at the University of Venda's Legal Aid Clinic. Finally, Professor Eleanor Preston-Whyte, Deputy Vice Chancellor of the University of Natal (Durban) presented a management perspective on the institutional challenges posed by community service in higher education.

Tracking of government initiatives in community service

Various government departments have expressed interest in community service. The Department of Health's compulsory service for medical school graduates comes into effect in July 1998. The Department of Justice is investigating the possibility of community service for law students while the Departments of Education and Social Welfare state a commitment to community service in their respective White Papers. JET is also working closely with the National Youth Commission which has assumed a key role in the debate surrounding community service.

Further research

Examples of community service programmes at higher education institutions have been traced and interviews conducted with personnel who run the programmes. In addition, three impact studies or benefit analyses have been commissioned. These studies are intended to provide a quantitative and qualitative overview of the impact of the community service programmes on student learning, student earning, the relevant higher education curricula and community benefit. It was suggested that because community service proposals

involving law and medical students were, and remain, matters of public debate, programmes involving these students should be chosen for further research.

The following programmes are participating in benefit analysis studies:

- the Community Dental Programme at the University of Western Cape
- the Street Law Programmes at the Universities of Venda and Port Elizabeth
- the Legal Aid Clinics based at the Universities of Venda and Port Elizabeth.

The studies aim to assess the impact of the programmes on:

- student learning (knowledge, skills, social awareness and understanding)
- communities (benefits for individuals and the community at large)
- relevant higher education curricula or courses.

The studies will also consider the costs and cost effectiveness of the programmes.

Finally, all universities and technikons have been sent a questionnaire to ascertain existing policies on community service as well as current opportunities for students to participate in community service programmes. The questionnaire also canvasses the views of higher education

personnel on the advantages of community service for students and institutions and the challenges and problems posed by introducing such programmes.

Much of the above consultation and research has been hampered by the lack of a common understanding of community service and by the absence of a theoretical framework or body of literature which frames the debates around This concept. Dr Nick Taylor has recently visited the USA where work undertaken by higher education students which has a civic intention or thrust - service learning - is widespread. This experience and exposure to that country's highly contested debates on service learning has allowed JET to begin to develop a conceptual framework for examining the many various programmes which go under the name of community service at higher education institutions in South Africa. This framework, the research conducted and the deliberations of the stakeholder workshops will all inform a final report which will be available at the end of July 1998.



THE FUTURE OF JET

This year JET's Annual Review Meetings took on a new format - encompassing performances from just a few of the projects with which the Trust has been involved. The participating projects offered guests a view of where and how funding managed by JET connects with on-the-ground delivery, creating learning opportunities amongst disadvantaged communities.



At the Market Theatre in Johannesburg Moving into Dance held the audience spellbound with extracts from two award-winning performances: Tlotlo and Speaking with Tongues.

On this same platform the Trust's chairman, Mr Mike Rosholt, made a significant announcement regarding the future of JET, stating that 15 of the original 18 companies contributing to JET had recommitted themselves to the Trust with funding of R90 million over the next three years. Thus JET will continue its grant-making activities to a limited number of beneficiaries and, over the same period, will aim to earn sufficient fees and revenue to become self-sustaining by the end of 2001.

"This confirms continuing private sector confidence in JET and represents a further valuable contribution from business to educational development in South Africa," said Rosholt. "With renewed commitment from its corporate as well as its community partners, growing co-operation with government and new funding from foreign donors, JET will be able to continue playing a powerful role in contributing to the improvement of the quality, reach and

relevance of education in South Africa."

Naledi Pandor MP, vice-chair of the JET Board of Trustees, said in reviewing the past year that JET had prospered in a difficult development environment. She attributed this to "the credibility that the Trust holds both at home and internationally ... and to the practical expertise it brings to the new ventures in which it is involved.

"The Board of Trustees continues to offer a broadly based perspective on the diverse concerns of different stakeholders in education and training. The JET secretariat remains a small and highly efficient team dedicated to improving the quality of education for all South Africans. JET supported initiatives continue to be projects that have successfully impacted upon the massive education needs in South Africa and stand as excellent examples of the links between policy and practice that can emerge from successful mobilisation of public and private sector partnerships."

Mary Metcalfe, who was introduced by JET's Deputy Director Mashwahle Diphofa as the "headmistress of 702-land", made space within a hectic schedule to address the guests at the Johannesburg Annual Review Meeting - reminding us of the

progress that has been made in schools and in education in Gauteng despite the pressing problems that win the bulk of media attention.

Hosting an Annual Review Meeting in Cape Town for the first time, JET welcomed its guests at the BMW Pavilion with its unique view across Table Bay to Robben Island. Brian O'Connell, Director-General of Education in the Western Cape, was so moved by



the performances from Bergzicht Training Centre, Grassroots Educare Trust and the Early Learning Resource Unit that he changed his keynote address from one angry at the lack of vision, change and individual champions in the education arena, to one acknowledging the difference that is being made by organisations like JET and its grantees.



JET ATTRACTS INTERNATIONAL INTEREST

Nick Taylor, Director of JET, was invited to present the JET partnership as a development model at two recent education conferences in Africa.

The UK government's Department for International Development (DFID) convened its annual regional education conference in Nairobi from 27 to 30 April 1998. The theme of the conference was **Development Partnerships in Education**. One case study from each of DFID's African regions was presented. From Southern Africa the Imbewu Project was presented: a R60 million partnership between the Eastern Cape Department of Education, DFID and a Managing Agent led by JET.

Sharing the presentation with Chris Mangcu of the DoE and DFID's Kevin Lillis, Nick Taylor said that Imbewu held the



promise of piloting a model for the systemic improvement of schooling in South Africa. The project aims to improve teaching and learning in 500 of the poorest schools in the province, through training in school governance, management and the new curriculum, and the delivery of materials.

In parallel, the project recognises that school change is neither sustainable nor replicable without development of the planning, financial management, monitoring and human resource systems at provincial, regional and district levels. Thus, training and systems development in these aspects of the Eastern Cape's education administration will accompany and support the work in the schools.

The annual conference of the Association for Development of

Education in Africa (ADEA) was held in Dakar, Senegal in October last year and attended by over 40 African Ministers of Education and representatives of all major international multi- and bilateral donor agencies. In an invited plenary presentation entitled **Social Partnerships in South Africa: the Case of Education**, Nick Taylor described the principal features of JET. He said that the strength of the Trust lay in its representation of civil society: the development work of JET was informed and supported by all major components of the non-government sector - business, organised labour, political parties and teacher unions.

JET's participation in these conferences positions the Trust well to attract continuing international support for education development in South Africa and, further, to extend its expertise into other African countries.



COMMUNITY SERVICE CONFERENCE Wisconsin, USA

Nick Taylor attended a conference entitled **International Service Learning: Constructing the World Anew** from 11 to 13 May in Racine, Wisconsin. The conference was attended by 41 delegates from 16 countries and its main purpose was to share experiences about service-learning and to launch an International Partnership for Service-Learning. The other South African delegate - Professor Colin Bundy, Vice-chancellor of Wits - was elected to the seven-member Task Force assigned with setting up the partnership.

After the conference Nick Taylor visited a number of service-learning projects in Washington and New York City. This

experience provided invaluable insights for constructing a conceptual framework for JET's work in this field and allowed for the investigation of some of the strengths and weaknesses of different service-learning models.



<http://www.jet.org.za>

The JET website at the above address has recently been updated and presents a fund of information on the Trust and its work. Books, Bulletins and Research and evaluation Reports published by JET can be ordered via the site. Take a look.

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