Monitoring and Evaluation of DANIDA Support to Education and Skills Development (SESD) Programme

FIRST FORMATIVE IMPACT STUDY

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Human Sciences Research Council

**Monitoring and Evaluation of
DANIDA Support to Education and Skills Development (SESD)
Programme**

FIRST FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Synthesis Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

0.1. The Scope and Design of the First Formative Assessment

This study builds on the Baseline Report and seeks to chart changes since that Report and provide explanations for such change, and for the lack of change in certain areas. In addition to the sites visited for the Baseline Report, the national Department of Labour (DoL) was also visited. The design of the DoL component was not finalised at the time of completion of this Report and a decision on an assessment strategy for this component will need to be taken at the appropriate moment.

The methodological approach used in constructing the Baseline Report was largely followed. However, interviews with learners and class observations were not conducted, whilst additional interviews were conducted where possible with more senior officials in the FET branches at the national and provincial levels, as well as with technical advisors. Whereas for the Baseline Report attention was directed at the campus and college levels as separate, though connected, units of analysis, in this Report only data pertaining to the college level was gathered.

0.2. Methodological Issues

The decision to focus on colleges as single units was necessary at this stage of the Programme. However, it is clear that many staff still find it easier to talk about their own campus rather than the college. Thus the evaluators faced a challenge of interpreting responses in the light of this. The timing of institutional visits in relation to other events also shaped this interpretation. CEOs had still not been appointed in one province at the time of the visits and this was a source of some frustration. The maternity leave of one PTA and the resignation of another assumed great significance given the early stage of the Programme's development at which they took place. Because of these reasons, the earliness of this Report in an on-going process and the different starting points of the different institutions being assessed, it is important to stress that this Report is not about measuring the relative success or failure of institutions as compared to each other. Rather, it is about measuring the extent of early progress in a variety of sites towards a set of Programme goals, and highlighting areas of concern where that progress has been particularly weak.

There is nothing from the previous paragraph that suggests a need for significant revision to the methodological approach for the next phase of evaluation. Nonetheless, it is proposed that the Chief Technical Advisor, the Review Mission Team and the proposed National Coordinating Forum be consulted about methodology. The fine-tuning of the approach to the next study will be done on the basis of these consultations.

0.3. The Structure of this Report

Due to the changes in focus noted above, some structural differences are evident in this Report as compared to the Baseline Report. The lengthy introductory and methodological sections of the first Report are not necessary in this Report and have been replaced by a shorter introduction. A section of new recommendations for future evaluations was not deemed necessary. The two college-focused chapters have been replaced by one. This is in part because of the absence of campus level data. However, it was also felt that it was not appropriate to focus so much on the provincial as an analytical unit. An additional section is presented on the DoL component. The seven college reports are available for the colleges to which they relate and for Programme staff but are not intended for wider circulation.

0.4. The Colleges

There has been considerable improvement since the Baseline Report. All dimensions rate in the *emerging* category and the average rating per dimension has increased from 4 to 4.7. It is particularly important to note that "Learner support" and "Responsiveness", the two weakest ratings in the Baseline Report, improved by 1 and 0.7 points respectively. However, at 4.2, "Learner support" is clearly the weakest dimension and is in need of considerable attention.

At the level of characteristics, none are now below 4 and seven are at 5 or greater. It is striking that the highest rating is for "Enhanced human resources capacity" as this has been a key area of intervention by the SESD Programme. Indeed, there was a clear connection in perceptions at the college level between SESD activities and the improved ratings. More negatively, five characteristics remain at only 4 or 4.1. These are "Vertical knowledge sharing", "Quality assurance systems", "responsiveness to SMEs", "Academic support" and "HIV/AIDS programmes". All of these areas require particular focus in the second year of the Programme.

Six out of the seven colleges now have average ratings greater than 4, as opposed to three in the Baseline Report. Indeed, two now have average ratings above 5. Particularly striking is the performance of Orbit, which was the weakest in the Baseline Report and also a very poor performer on a number of indicators in the last national quantitative overview, but which is now one of the two colleges with an average rating of greater than 5.

0.5. The Provincial FET Directorates

There has been some overall progress in the status of the provincial directorates. However, this is highly uneven, both across characteristics and across provinces. Positive points of particular note include the Western Cape's strategy with respect to learnerships and KwaZulu-Natal's continuing

efforts in knowledge sharing across Programme and non-Programme colleges. Across all provinces, however, there are few signs of progress regarding the final three categories in the table: staff development in Science, Mathematics and Technology, learner support and HIV/AIDS. The latter two are also areas of particular weakness at the college level. The restructuring of FET functions and the lack of a permanent PTA for most of the year have clearly impacted negatively on the delivery of the Programme in the North West.

It is apparent that all three provinces face very different situational challenges and have very different approaches to their work. All three have followed very different routes also in coming to terms with the challenge of greater college autonomy. There is limited interaction across the three provinces at present within the SESD Programme.

0.6. The National Directorate

The SESD Programme remains strongly aligned with vision of the national Department. Nonetheless, a challenge remains in strengthening mutual understandings between Danida and the DoE regarding the mechanisms by which the Programme can maximise its usefulness for policy development and system-wide improvement.

Knowledge sharing and the dissemination of best practices are clearly important to the policy impact of the Programme. Both the Programme and the DoE have emerging strategies for knowledge sharing but there is limited interaction between these at present.

The FET Branch of the Department of Education has shown itself capable of driving through a complex process of reform in the college sector in recent years. However, it remains understaffed, making it struggle to take the reform process forward as effectively as it would wish.

Although the failure to activate the National Manegement Unit points to continued uncertainties in the relationships between the national and provincial levels of the system, this needs to be balanced by a clear sense of strengthening relations between the two levels. It is apparent from the provincial level that there is considerable respect for the national Director and that provinces are broadly appraised and supportive of the national vision.

The SESD Programme has an ambition to contribute to better articulation between DoE, DoL and SAQA. This is clearly challenging. The results of the current consultation process regarding this relationship and its past weaknesses will inevitably be far more significant than the efforts of one Programme. However, at the level of practice, there is scope for the DoE and DoL components of the SESD Programme to work together in ways that could then translate to better national articulation over time.

0.7. The SAQA Southern Regional Office

The Regional Office does not appear to agree with several of the criteria on which it was to be judged. It also seems to have difficulties in seeing clearly the relationship between its SESD Programme commitments and its core functions as a SAQA Regional Office.

The work of the Regional Office, and hence the evaluation thereof, is seriously complicated by factors outside its control. First, its creation seven years after the establishment of SAQA and the NQF means that the more proactive amongst other stakeholders have already established ways of interacting with the NQF system and are unlikely to see the Regional Office as that important, at least until it can develop a reputation for itself. Second, its status as a "pilot" regional office appears rather questionable given the uncertainties about SAQA's future size and scope. Third, the speed at which the NQF is implemented in the College sector is determined in large part by the DoE and its decisions regarding its core programmes. The efficacy of workshops about the NQF is limited when college staff perceive that they will not be able to implement new ideas for the foreseeable future.

0.8. The Department of Labour

The exact nature of the DoL component has not yet been finalised. Three possible elements have been envisaged for it. First, and where activity has concentrated to date, is the proposed national roll out of the Venture Creation Learnership, which was piloted with support from Danida's Provincial Skills Development Programme (PSDP). Second, the National Implementation Plan also envisages support to the development of additional learnerships, including ones to be delivered by colleges within the DoE component. Third, the Plan also proposes the continuation of support to the capacity of the DoL's provincial structures in KwaZulu-Natal, where much of Denmark's previous support to skills development had been focused.

0.9. Key Areas of Progress since the Baseline Report

There has been overall improvement within all the sub-components of the Programme since the Baseline Report. At the college level, considerable training has taken place and this has been reflected in higher ratings for human resources capacity. The merger process has moved forward importantly with CEOs and councils in place in all colleges and new staff establishments in an advanced state of planning. These structures should contribute to the more rapid development of the Programme in Year Two.

At the provincial level, notable achievements include the powerful lead given by the Western Cape Education Department on learnerships and the attempts made by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of

Education and Culture to share knowledge between Programme and non-Programme colleges and with the broader community of stakeholders.

At the national level, there continues to be a strengthening of relations with the provinces. Possibly the most important new development at this level is the rapid progress towards an implementation plan for the DoL component.

0.10. Key Areas of Concern

Nonetheless, there remains too much unevenness in the progress. At the college level, no characteristic or dimension recorded a decline but a number continue to lag behind others. At the dimension level, both "Responsiveness" and "Learner support" are at the weaker end of *emerging*. At the level of characteristics, "Quality assurance systems", "HIV/AIDS programmes"; "Academic support"; "Guidance and counselling"; "Curriculum development"; responsiveness to "SMEs", "Communities" and "State bodies"; and "Vertical knowledge sharing" all remain at the very lowest part of the *emerging* category.

It is clear from the narrative elements of the college reports that there remains a very major challenge in building the new colleges. Perhaps inevitably, there remain serious problems around perceptions that some campuses are being advantaged over others. The understanding of this often takes on a racial dimension.

As it is only towards the end of the first year of the intervention, it is not surprising to note that colleges are still a long way from realising both the Development Objective of the SESD Programme and the two Intermediate Objectives.

At the provincial level, there has been some reduction of capacity as well as increases. All of the provinces are still struggling to develop new relationships with more autonomous colleges. Sharing of the lessons from the SESD Programme colleges is uneven across the provinces. In respect of the provincial level success indicators, there appears to be little progress regarding three characteristics: staff development in SMT, learner support and HIV/AIDS. There is also too little inter-provincial sharing in the Programme to date.

The last point links to one of the challenges at the national level. There appears to be a lack of clear agreement at the national level between the Programme and the DoE regarding the mechanisms by which the Programme should share knowledge across the whole of the system and influence policy change. The national Directorate remains understaffed and overstretched and this is probably a contributing factor to some of the confusion about policy experienced at college level.

The SAQA component of the Programme also does not appear to have sufficient shared clarity about its objectives and the Regional Office appears not to have worked out a clear relationship between its core functions as a SAQA office and its role in the SESD Programme.

Looking across the Programme, it is evident that there are a number of areas in which weaknesses at one level are a block on progress at other levels. Equally, there is a tendency within several sub-components for the alleged failures of other institutions to be used as an exclude for inaction. This is a broader problem in the South African FET system at present. At the Programme level, it is also important that learning between institutions and sub-components is better documented and disseminated.

0.11. Conclusions

The previous sub-section highlights some of the many challenges that remain for the SESD Programme and the need for clarification of some elements. Nonetheless, the overall picture at this stage is positive. There has been considerable progress already. Inevitably, much of the activity of the first year of the Programme has been in getting new systems in place. In an educational setting, many of these can only become fully operational in a new academic year. It appears that the Programme is well set for rapid developments in a number of areas come January.

SECTION ONE

Introduction

1.1   The Baseline Report

In May 2003, the HSRC published the Baseline Report for the Support to Education and Skills Development Programme. In this First Impact Assessment Report we seek to analyse the progress that has been made towards the Programme's objectives since that baseline evaluation.

1.2   The Differences in Scope and Approach between the Baseline Report and the First Impact Assessment Report

As the origins of the Programme and the approach to its evaluation were dealt with at length in the Baseline Report, there is no need to repeat those discussions in this report. Therefore, this introduction will address only those issues that are specifically relevant to the compilation and reading of this Report.

As in the Baseline Report, we look at the national, provincial and college levels in this Report. However, there is one significant change, as recommended in the Baseline Report. Although research took place at the campus level also, the focus in this phase was on campus level perceptions of college level changes. As the new colleges become more established, it will make decreasing sense to focus on the campus rather than college level.

Nonetheless, the specific historical and cultural experiences of campuses does mean that differences in campus level perceptions within colleges are likely to retain some analytical importance, for a while at least. Indeed, it appears that some of the responses that were given at campus level reflect a degree of tension between how staff perceive their campus (to which they still maintain a strong affiliation) and a college that is still partly alien.

There is also an inevitable difference in focus between a baseline exercise and an impact assessment analysis. The principal focus in this Report is on what has changed since the Baseline Report, and why. A crucial part of the "why" element is the specific role that the SESD Programme has played, as distinct from other interventions and changes in circumstances. As a formative analysis, this Report seeks to ensure that the SESD Programme adapts appropriately to the lessons of the evaluations and to any environmental changes since the Programme was designed.

Although the First Impact Assessment Report is intended to analyse the impact of the SESD intervention, it should not be read as providing an authoritative judgment of the performance of the

colleges, provincial and national departments involved or the Programme in its totality. It is crucial to remember that this is the first of a series of impact assessments, not a final, summative assessment. Different units of assessment (whether they be colleges or government departments) began from different starting points and are likely to have different trajectories for progress. Moreover, for various reasons, the provincial components of the Programme have progressed at different rates in their first six months. It is more valuable to read this Report for what it highlights as areas of general progress or remaining weaknesses than it is to seek to read in it a performance appraisal of individual sites.

1.3 Objectives of the SESD Programme

Although the objectives of the SESD Programme were clearly laid out in the Baseline Report, it is worthwhile restating these here:

Development Objective: The SESD Progamme will increase the employability of male and female youth and adults through supporting the delivery of practical and labour market oriented education and skills training provided mainly within the FET band.

Immediate Objective 1: The institutional and financial sustainability of the FET colleges in general and the targeted provincial clusters in particular will be enhanced through the establishment of a supportive and conducive enabling environment, which will also serve to advance the objectives of the NQF.

Immediate Objective 2: The FET colleges in general and the targeted clusters in particular are directly supported to deliver quality programmes responsive to the needs of the world of work including the SMME sector, in accordance with the needs of the society at large.

As we noted in the Baseline Report, the Danish intervention is one of several that seek to support policy processes and practices that are owned by the South African Government. It will thus be difficult to discern any specific Danish effect within a broader framework of partnership. The long-term nature of the objectives and the challenges of external factors, such as those in the economy and the labour market, will also work against impact being directly attributable to the SESD Programme.

1.4 Evaluation Sample

As noted above, the evaluation continues to look at the national, provincial and college levels. At the national level, both the Department of Education and the Department of Labour were visited (see 1.7 below). At the provincial level, the FET directorates (plus relevant Chief Directors and Provincial Technical Advisors – where available) were visited in the three Programme provinces, as well as the

Southern Regional Office of the South African Qualifications Authority. At the college level, the same colleges (and campuses) were visited as for the Baseline Report, namely:

PROVINCE	FET COLLEGE
KwaZulu-Natal	Mthashana
KwaZulu-Natal	Sivananda
North-West	Taletso
North-West	Vuselela
North-West	Orbit
Western Cape	College of Cape Town
Western Cape	South Cape

1.5 The Evaluation Matrix

The same matrix as employed in the Baseline Report is used here for comparability:

Dimensions	Outcomes	Characteristics
Values and Vision	A strong vision and a lived set of values drive colleges' transformation processes towards fulfilling their developmental mission.	• Practices guided by a clear institutional vision • Inculcation of a value system throughout the institution
Leadership and Management	Strategic leadership, supported by effective management and governance systems, operationalises the transformed vision of the FET college system.	• Well-functioning systems of governance, including college councils and academic boards • Effective institutional leadership • Effective management systems
Knowledge Sharing	College and system performance enhanced through better flows of knowledge horizontally and vertically within the system, as well as with external stakeholders.	• Effective vertical knowledge sharing and learning in the FET system • Effective horizontal knowledge sharing and learning in the FET system • Effective external knowledge sharing and learning in the FET system

Institutional Health	The financial health and physical infrastructure of colleges contribute to their proper functioning in supporting employability.	• The establishment and maintenance of financial health • Adequate infrastructure • Enhanced human resource capacity • Quality assurance system
Responsiveness	Employability enhanced through colleges' greater responsiveness to the needs of learners, their communities and the labour market.	• Good relationships with business • Good relationships with local communities • Good relationships with other state bodies • The development, provision and evaluation of learnership programmes • The development, provision and evaluation of SMME programmes • The development, provision and evaluation of short courses/ skills programmes
Teaching and Learning	A culture of learning promotes both employability and personal development. Strong systems of curriculum development, classroom pedagogy and staff development support quality learning.	• Functioning curriculum development processes • Quality curricular delivery • Well-functioning staff development processes
Learner Support	Learner support systems improve labour market and life outcomes through support to learners' health, learning and insertion into the labour market.	• The development, implementation and evaluation of academic support programmes • The development, implementation and evaluation of HIV/AIDS awareness interventions • The development, implementation and evaluation of guidance and counselling systems

The same scale as the Baseline Report was also employed:

A **weak** characteristic. Mostly not present, or very limited.	An **emerging** characteristic. It is present but not yet stable or consistent	A **strong** characteristic. A distinguishing feature.
1 – 3	4 – 6	7-10

1.6. Some Methodological Challenges that Affect how the Report Should be Read

The timing of the second round of fieldwork was clearly important in shaping, sometimes to a significant extent, what respondents reported. In some colleges CEOs had only just been appointed, whilst, in others, the CEO appointments were not confirmed until just after the visits. The visits also took place at a time when new staff establishments were being determined. In one case, the researcher arrived at a problematic point in this process when many staff were unhappy about the way that the relevant provincial department was handling the issue. Their unhappiness clearly impacted upon their rating decisions. Whilst the researcher in that college noted this in his report and made allowance for it in his final ratings, the problem clearly did impact on the content of the report. It is apparent that the ratings were also shaped to an extent by the point that the specific colleges were at in the intervention programmes.

It is important to reiterate that this is the First Impact Assessment Report for a Programme that is planned to run for up to five years. In the earlier Reports during the process, effects of specific positive or negative incidents are likely to loom larger in college level reports than will be the case later in the process.

The decision to focus on colleges as single units rather than as composites of college and campuses also will have its most dramatic effect on reporting on this occasion. This is not simply because this is the first time this shift in focus has taken place. It is also crucial that readers remember that colleges are still in the process of becoming meaningful concepts for their staff. For most colleges, the new unified staff establishments, college-level budgeting and common strategic and operational plans will really begin to make a difference in when colleges return for a new academic year in early 2004. This means that there were particular challenges in making sense of what "campus" staff said about "their college" in this phase of research.

In the light of these concerns, it was deemed important that this Report should seek to give more attention to the sense of an unfolding process than to a rating of performance in comparison to the Baseline Report. The focus is on lessons learned and challenges faced across the programme rather that on successes or failures of individual colleges or departments. For this reason, it was judged particularly important to downplay a reading of Section Two as a series of league tables of colleges' performance over the first six months of the SESD Programme. Whilst tables will show the relative

ratings of colleges on the various dimensions, they will not seek to display the degree of change per college against these dimensions.

1.7.   The Department of Labour Component

In the Baseline Report it was envisaged that the Department of Labour (DoL) component of the SESD Programme would be sufficiently developed for a baseline rating to be included in this Report. Whilst a brief account will be provided in this Report of the draft plan for this component, a baseline report will have to await the finalisation of that plan.

SECTION TWO

The FET Colleges

2.1. Introduction

The Baseline Report presented a composite picture of the average baseline status of seven dimensions and their related characteristics with regard to both FET campuses and colleges. As was noted in Section One, the goal of the First Impact Assessment Study is to understand changes in these ratings at the FET college level. The key challenge for this First Impact Assessment Report is to report on changes in the seven evaluative dimensions while also explaining the changes in individual college ratings in ways that capture the complex and dynamic interaction of the various campus participants in creating new institutional environments. In this regard, each dimension is first explored as an average rating across the Programme colleges, and then at the individual college level.

2.2. Average Ratings by Dimension

The following graph reflects the average rating for the seven dimensions across the Programme colleges.
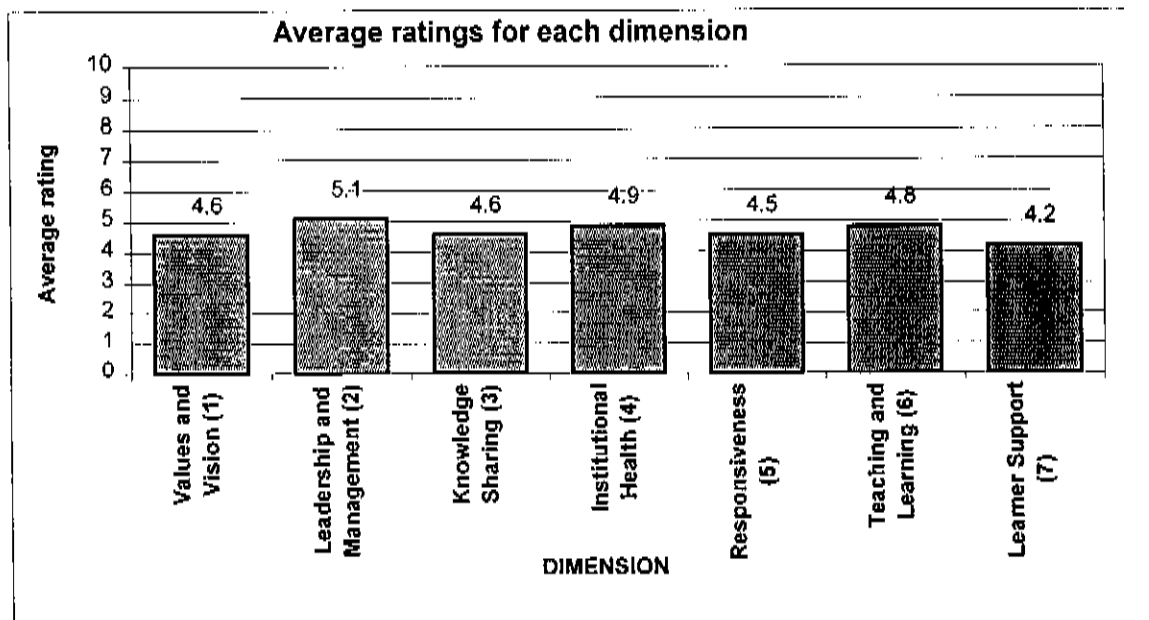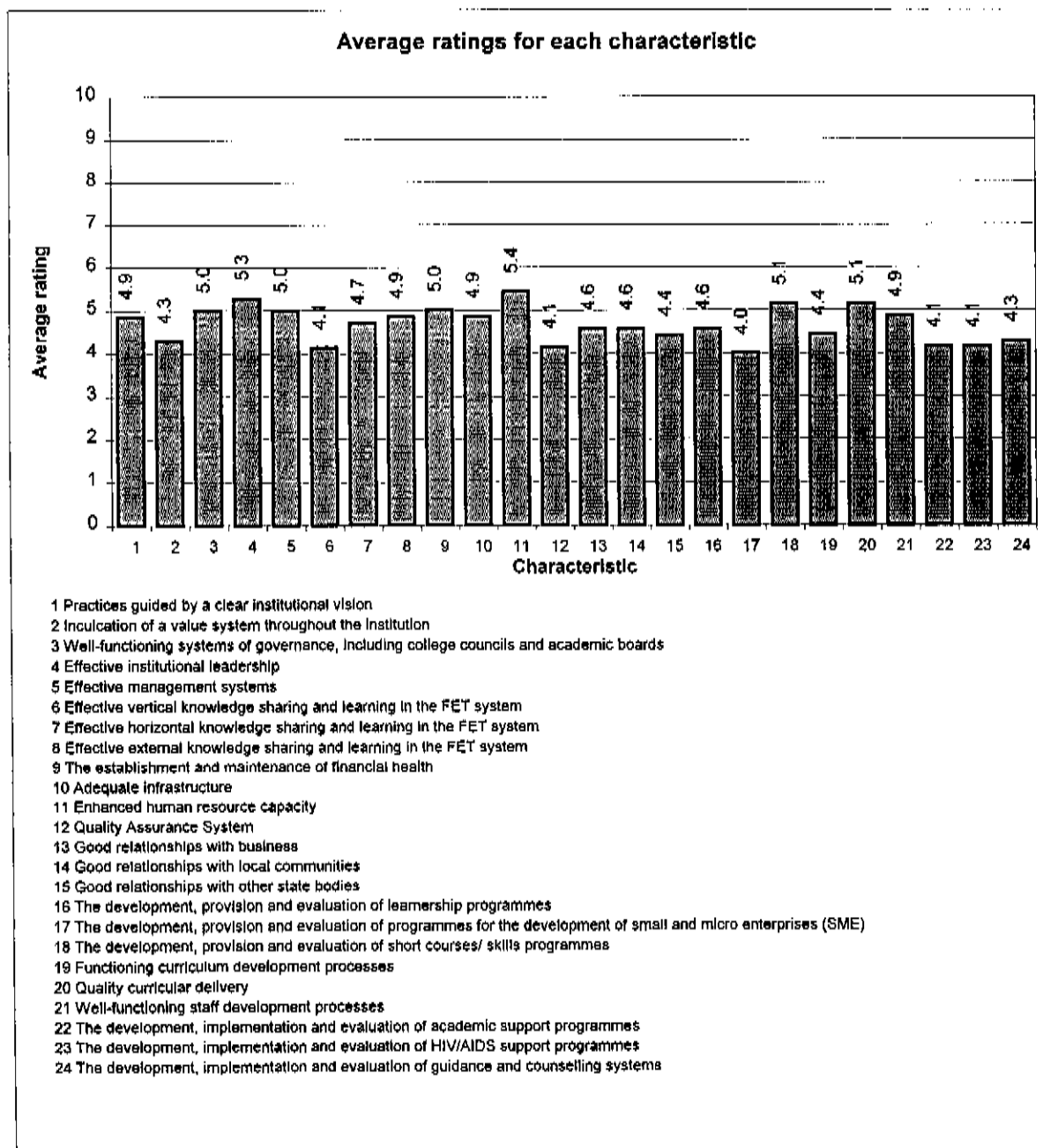

All seven dimensions were rated in the *emerging* category. Since the Baseline Report, all seven dimensions have improved by between 0.4 and 1 point. The most significant change occurred in the "Learner support" dimension (though it was still the weakest dimension), while "Leadership and management" remained the strongest of the emerging dimensions. It was notable that the dimensions

associated with the running and functions of colleges (such as budgeting, teaching and learning, responsiveness and development of linkages) all improved at a faster rate than "Leadership and management". This suggests a growing internalisation of the new vision and values of the FET college sector and a strengthening commitment to the new framework. It also reflects the positive effect of capacity building interventions at the ordinary/non-management staff level.

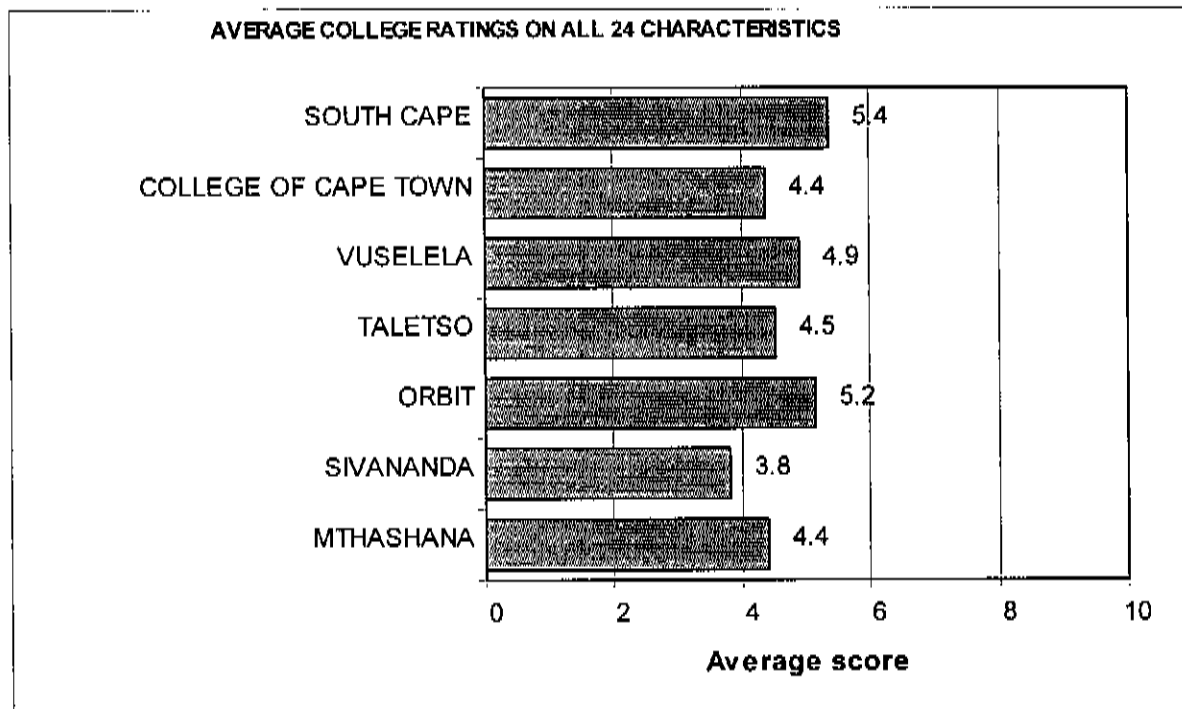## 2.3. Average Rating by Characteristic

The graph below presents the average rating for each of the 24 characteristics that make up the seven dimensions in the study:

Average ratings for each characteristic

1 Practices guided by a clear institutional vision
2 Inculcation of a value system throughout the institution
3 Well-functioning systems of governance, including college councils and academic boards
4 Effective institutional leadership
5 Effective management systems
6 Effective vertical knowledge sharing and learning in the FET system
7 Effective horizontal knowledge sharing and learning in the FET system
8 Effective external knowledge sharing and learning in the FET system
9 The establishment and maintenance of financial health
10 Adequate infrastructure
11 Enhanced human resource capacity
12 Quality Assurance System
13 Good relationships with business
14 Good relationships with local communities
15 Good relationships with other state bodies
16 The development, provision and evaluation of learnership programmes
17 The development, provision and evaluation of programmes for the development of small and micro enterprises (SME)
18 The development, provision and evaluation of short courses/ skills programmes
19 Functioning curriculum development processes
20 Quality curricular delivery
21 Well-functioning staff development processes
22 The development, implementation and evaluation of academic support programmes
23 The development, implementation and evaluation of HIV/AIDS support programmes
24 The development, implementation and evaluation of guidance and counselling systems

Breaking down the seven dimensions into their 24 characteristics, it was notable in this impact study that the ratings for all 24 characteristics were at least 4, with seven rating above 5. This compares favourably with the Baseline Report in which only four ratings were higher than 5, while another four ratings were below 3. This provides further evidence of modest but important progress in the colleges, and a sense that the key weaknesses are receiving some attention.

2.4. Average Rating by College

The next graph presents the average ratings by college:

AVERAGE COLLEGE RATINGS ON ALL 24 CHARACTERISTICS

College	Average score
SOUTH CAPE	5.4
COLLEGE OF CAPE TOWN	4.4
VUSELELA	4.9
TALETSO	4.5
ORBIT	5.2
SIVANANDA	3.8
MTHASHANA	4.4

Average score

The above figure must not be read as a simple league table of college performance according to the seven dimensions. The ratings reflect the professional judgments of the evaluators of each college based on the perceptions of college staff and other evidence gathered during visits, but they cannot represent the totality of the colleges' experiences in a single figure. Crucially, such ratings do not focus on what progress each college has made during the SESD Programme so far or the specific circumstances facing each college. Nonetheless, it is justified to make particular mention of Orbit, which went from the lowest average rating of 3.3 in the Baseline Report to 5.2 in this Report.

2.5. Average Ratings per Dimension by College

The table below describes the average scores per dimension for each college.

|	Values and Vision	Leadership an Management	Knowledge Sharing	Institutional Health	Responsive-ness	Teaching and Learning	Learner Support
MTHASHANA	3.5	4.7	4.7	4.3	4.3	5.0	4.3
SIVANANDA	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.3	4.0	4.0	3.0
ORBIT	5.5	5.3	4.7	5.3	5.0	4.7	6.0
TALETSO	5.0	5.7	4.7	4.8	4.3	4.3	3.3
VUSELELA	5.0	6.0	4.7	5.8	4.3	5.3	3.7
COLLEGE OF CAPE TOWN	4.5	4.0	3.7	4.8	4.7	5.0	3.7
SOUTH CAPE	5.5	6.0	5.7	5.0	5.2	5.3	5.3

Most of the colleges show a range of around 1.5 points between their highest and lowest ratings, although Vuselela and Taletso show ranges of greater than 2 points, and South Cape has a range of only 1 point. The table also illustrates a variation in rates across dimensions that is evened out more by the average ratings across the seven colleges per dimension. Thus, although four colleges do have "Leadership and management" as the highest rated dimension; the other three have highest ratings for "Teaching and learning", "Institutional health" and "Learner support".

2.6. Analysis by Dimension

The next set of figures provides a more detailed interpretation of ratings for each dimension across the colleges.

2.6.1. Values and Vision

Outcome	Characteristics
A strong vision and a lived set of values drive college transformation processes towards fulfilling their developmental mission.	• Practices guided by a clear institutional vision • Inculcation of a value system throughout the institution

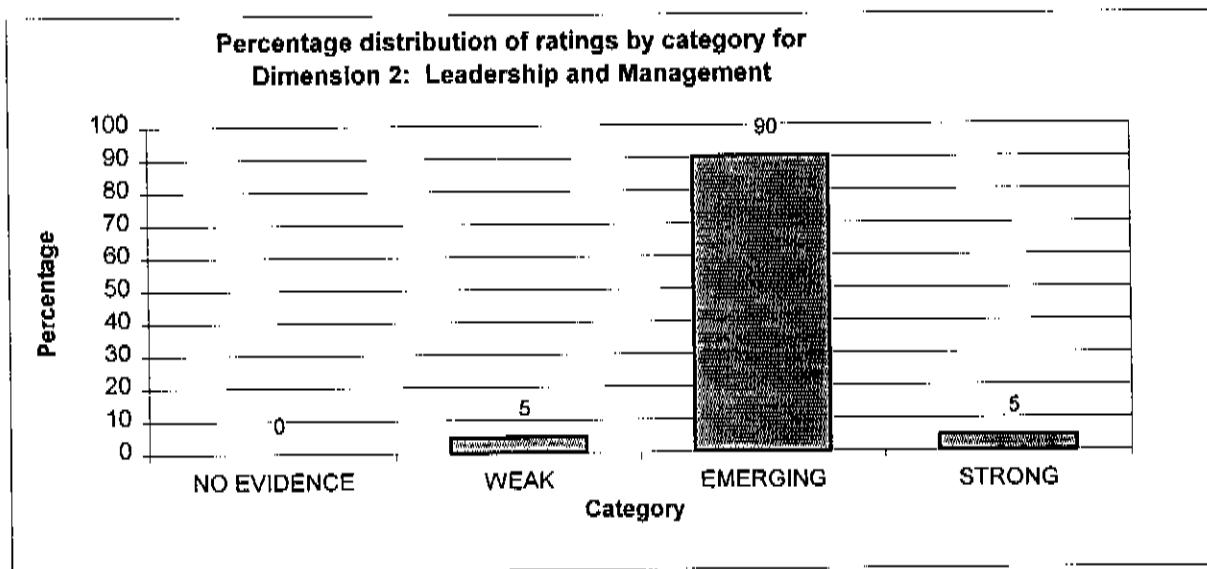**Percentage distribution of ratings by category for Dimension 1: Values and Vision**
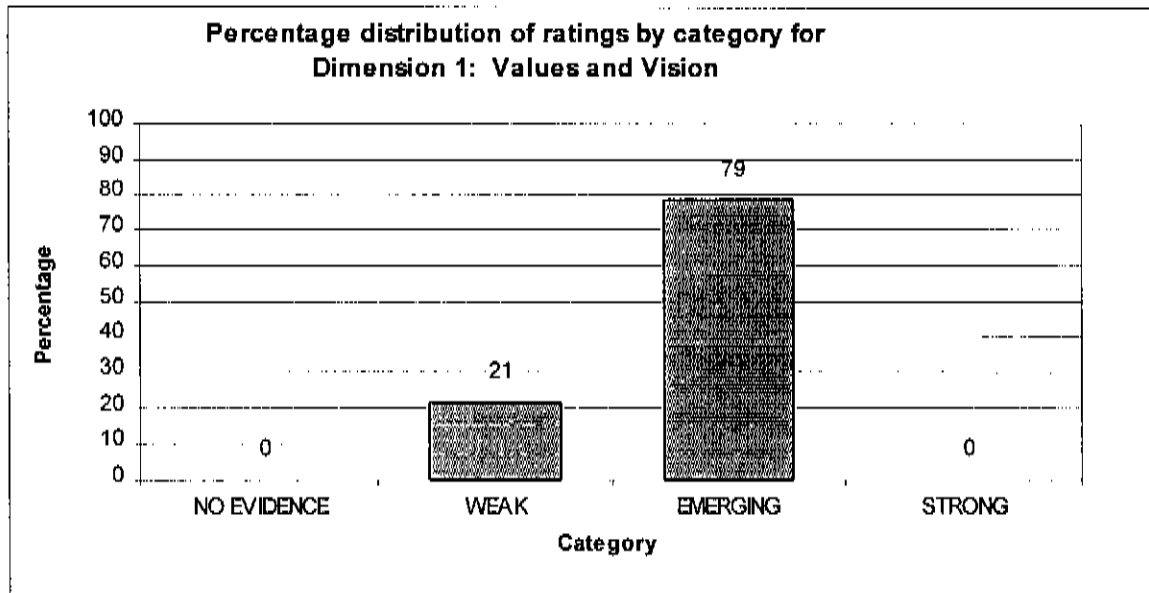
79% of the ratings placed the "Values and vision" dimension in the *emerging* category, and only 21% regarded it as a *weak* dimension. This compares with the Baseline Report, where the breakdown was 64:36. This indicates an increased identification with the stated vision and values of colleges from their staff.

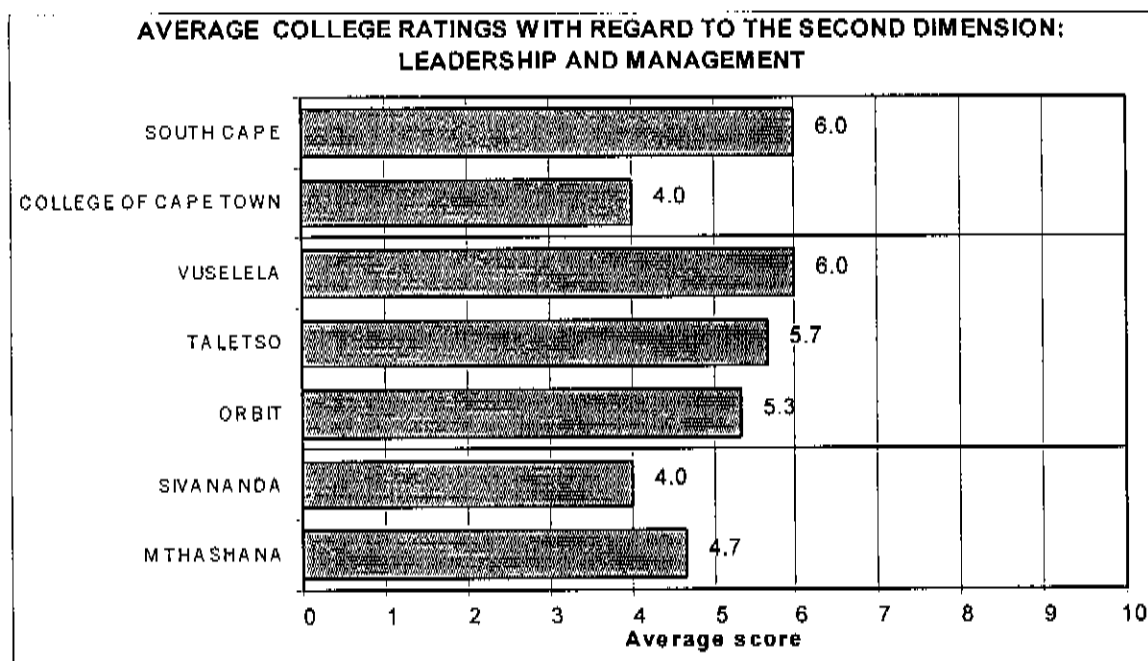**AVERAGE COLLEGE RATINGS WITH REGARD TO THE FIRST DIMENSION: VALUES AND VISION**
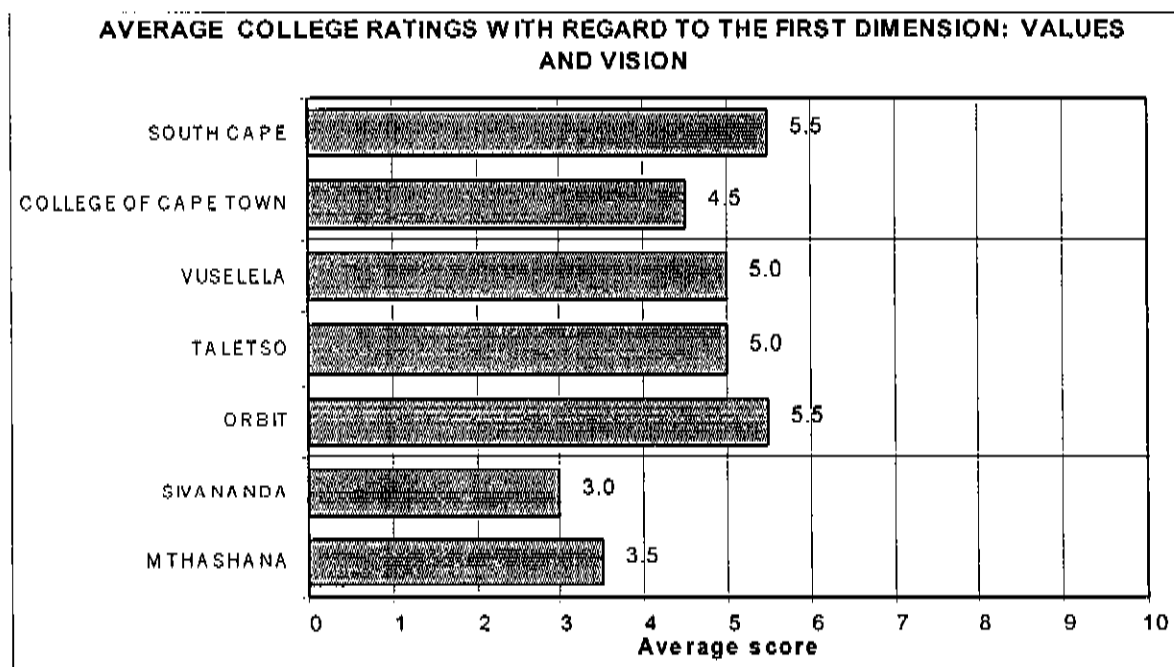
It was felt in the North West colleges in particular that the prominent advertisement of mission statements at the various sites alongside the de-jargonisation of such statements has facilitated buy-in from a large number of actors. Perceptions of progress on this dimension were undoubtedly constrained by the lateness of CEO appointments in several colleges, and by the limited involvement of more junior staff in the recent strategic planning round.

2.6.2. Leadership and Management

Outcome	Characteristics
Strategic leadership; supported by effective management and governance systems, operationalises the transformed vision of the FET College system	• Well-functioning systems of governance, including college councils and academic boards • Effective institutional leadership • Effective management systems

Percentage distribution of ratings by category for Dimension 2: Leadership and Management

90% of ratings saw "Leadership and management" as an *emerging* dimension. This reflects a very small (4% or one response) shift from the *weak* to the *emerging* category. However, this can also be interpreted as a consolidation of the basically solid starting position in respect of this dimension.

AVERAGE COLLEGE RATINGS WITH REGARD TO THE SECOND DIMENSION: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

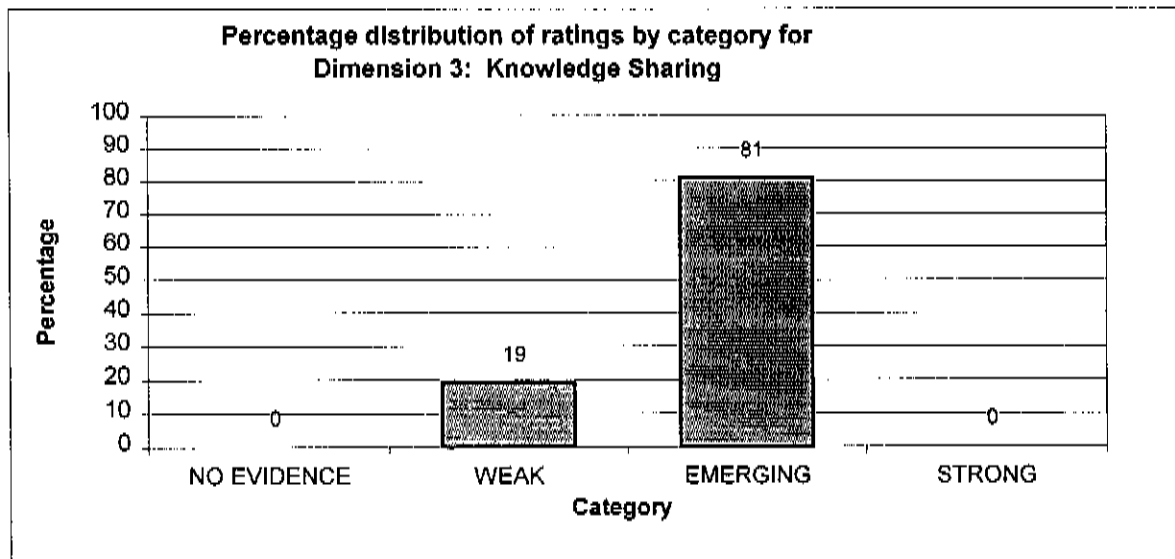| College	Average score
SOUTH CAPE	6.0
COLLEGE OF CAPE TOWN	4.0
VUSELELA	6.0
TALETSO	5.7
ORBIT	5.3
SIVANANDA	4.0
MTHASHANA	4.7

With greater clarification of the relationship between governance and management at college level, staff seemed more confident about this dimension. The difference in ratings across colleges can be attributed to the extent to which college councils and academic boards have become operational, and the length of time that CEOs have had to effect strong leadership. The decline in ratings at Sivananda and Vuselela seems to relate to over-optimism earlier in the year about the extent of progress, and the new ratings appear to relate a more realistic view of the quality of structures.

Ratings were constrained by the lack of appointment of middle management in all colleges, although it is ironic that in the Western Cape, where CEOs were appointed very recently, strong middle management structures are already in place (although with acting staff), councils have been elected and academic boards are functioning.

2.6.3. Knowledge Sharing

Outcome	Characteristics
College and system performance enhanced through better flows of knowledge horizontally and vertically within the system, as well as with external stakeholders	• Effective vertical knowledge sharing and learning in the FET system • Effective horizontal knowledge sharing and learning in the FET system • Effective external knowledge sharing and learning in the FET system

Percentage distribution of ratings by category for Dimension 3: Knowledge Sharing

81% of ratings regarded "Knowledge sharing" as an *emerging* dimension, while 19% regarded it as a *weak* dimension. This represents a healthy improvement from the Baseline Report, with 10% of ratings moving up a category. While there remains particular concern about vertical communication in the FET system, the ratings indicate that a culture of knowledge sharing has been fostered and is growing in the colleges.

AVERAGE COLLEGE RATINGS WITH REGARD TO THE THIRD DIMENSION: KNOWLEDGE SHARING
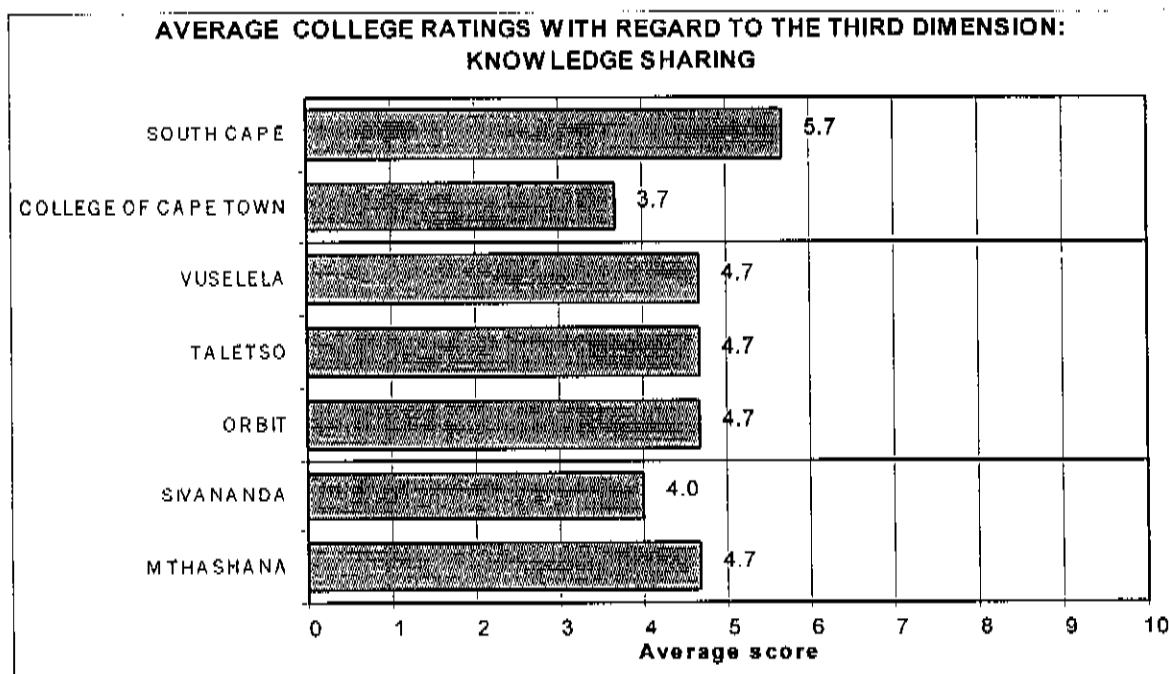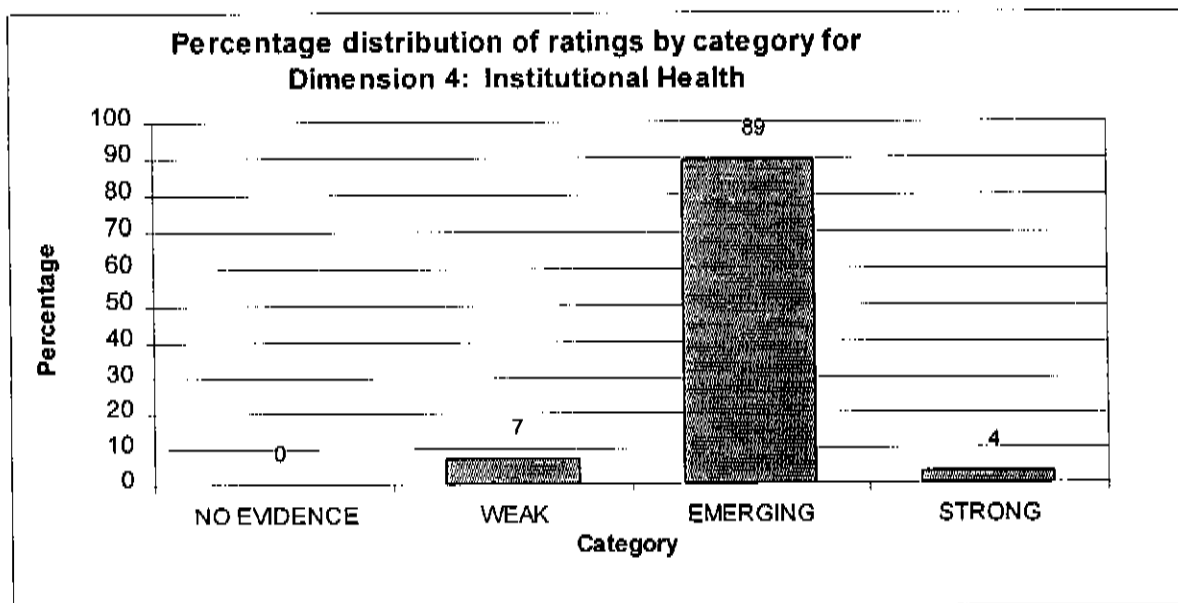

While the decline in capacity in the North West Directorate prevents adequate vertical knowledge sharing in the province, there is reportedly significant horizontal knowledge sharing in the province as well as a greater stress on interaction with external partners. This would explain the increase in rating in all three colleges in the North West.

There has also been improved vertical knowledge sharing in the Western Cape since the Baseline Report, as well as a greater emphasis on developing better relations with external stakeholders. With respect to horizontal knowledge sharing, however, it seems that the culture of isolation between state and state-aided colleges serving previously segregated communities continues to exist in the province. The lack of progress on this dimension is particularly disappointing given the added presence in the Western Cape of the SAQA Southern Regional Office as a Programme element.

Although KZNDEC has been prioritising knowledge sharing, the provincial ratings at the college level are relatively poor. However, it should be noted that the provincial "Best Practices Forum" took place after the college visits. It could be expected that this would have boosted ratings.
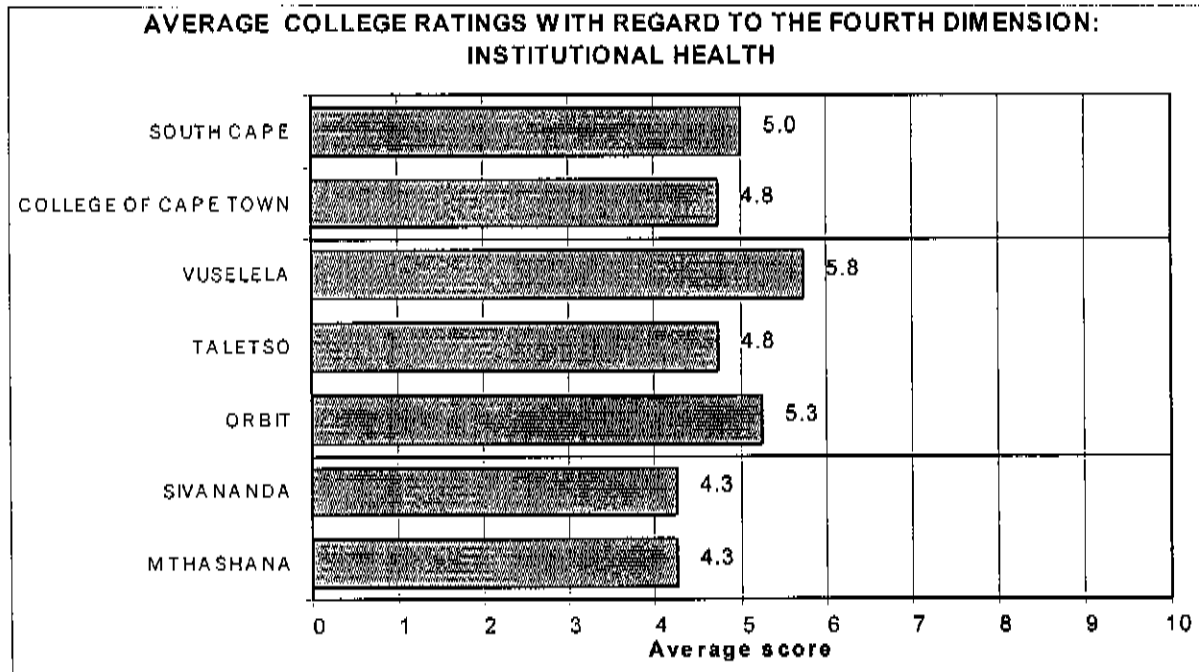
2.6.4. Institutional Health

Outcome	Characteristics
The financial health and physical infrastructure of colleges contribute to their proper functioning in supporting employability	• The establishment and maintenance of financial health • Adequate infrastructure • Enhanced human resource capacity • Quality assurance system

Percentage distribution of ratings by category for Dimension 4: Institutional Health

89% of ratings regarded "Institutional health" as an *emerging* dimension. This is a substantial increase from the 75% *emerging* rating in the baseline study. Clearly, the ratings suggest a greater confidence in the efficacy of various elements of college infrastructure, though not to the extent where

institutional health is regarded as a *strong* dimension. In both the Baseline and the current report, there was a 4% rating at *strong*.

AVERAGE COLLEGE RATINGS WITH REGARD TO THE FOURTH DIMENSION: INSTITUTIONAL HEALTH

| College	Average score
SOUTH CAPE	5.0
COLLEGE OF CAPE TOWN	4.8
VUSELELA	5.8
TALETSO	4.8
ORBIT	5.3
SIVANANDA	4.3
MTHASHANA	4.3

Ratings for this dimension increased for all colleges, particularly in the North West. This demonstrates increased awareness within colleges about key responsibilities, capacities and human resources. Quality assurance remains the weakest characteristic in this dimension. Although ratings are relatively strong on financial health, the move towards single financial systems for merged colleges continues to be a contentious issue and the real test will come in several colleges in the new academic year. There is a particular worry on some campuses that served predominantly previously-disadvantaged communities that their previous financial inferiority is counting heavily against them in the new structures.

2.6.5. Responsiveness

Outcome	Characteristics
Employability enhanced through greater responsiveness of colleges to the needs of learners, their communities and the labour market	• Good relationships with business • Good relationships with local communities • Good relationships with other state bodies • The development, provision and evaluation of learnership programmes • The development, provision and evaluation of SMME programmes • The development, provision and evaluation of short courses/ skills programmes

Percentage distribution of ratings by category for Dimension 5: Responsiveness
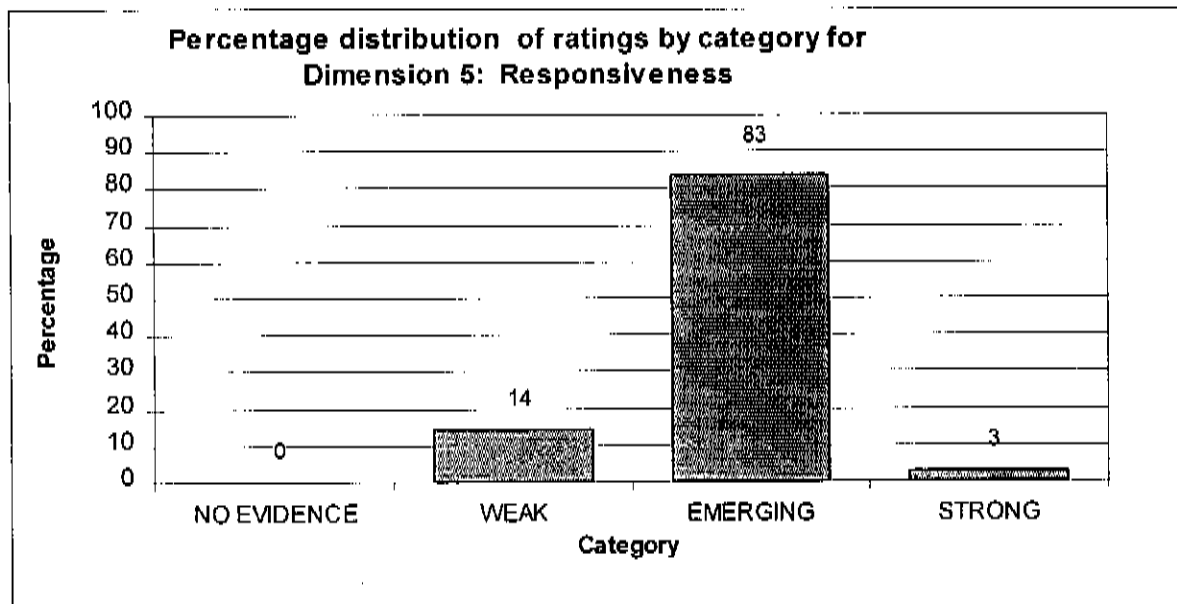
83% percent of ratings indicate "Responsiveness" as an *emerging* dimension, 14% as *weak* and 3% as *strong*. This is a big shift from the 40% of ratings that regarded responsiveness as a *weak* dimension in the previous round. Although there is still much to do here, colleges clearly are taking this dimension very seriously.

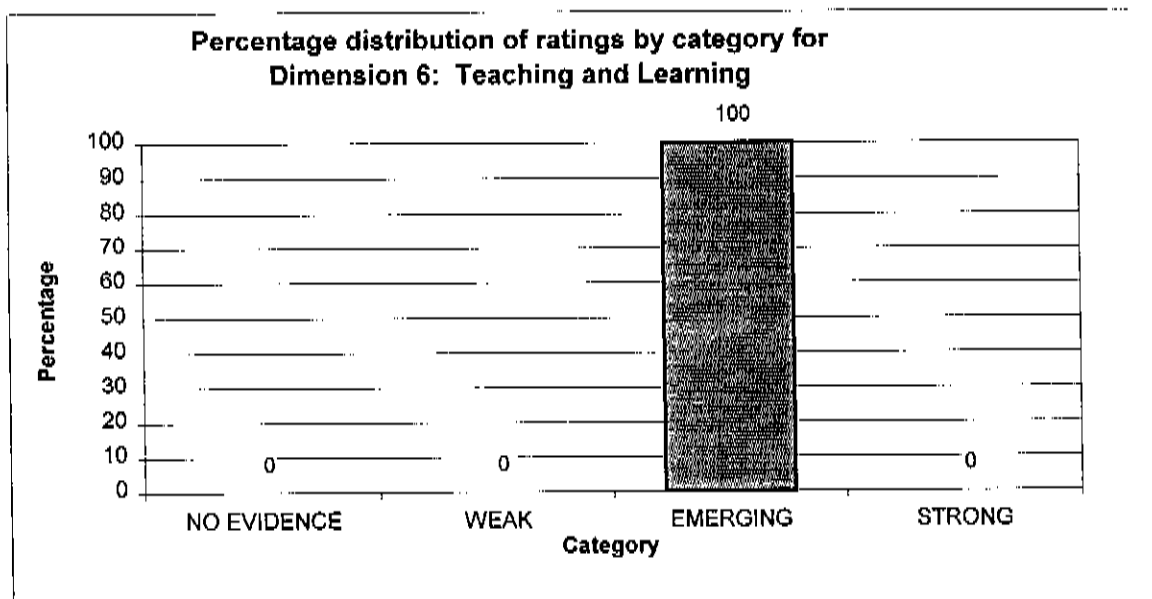**AVERAGE COLLEGE RATINGS WITH REGARD TO THE FIFTH DIMENSION: RESPONSIVENESS**
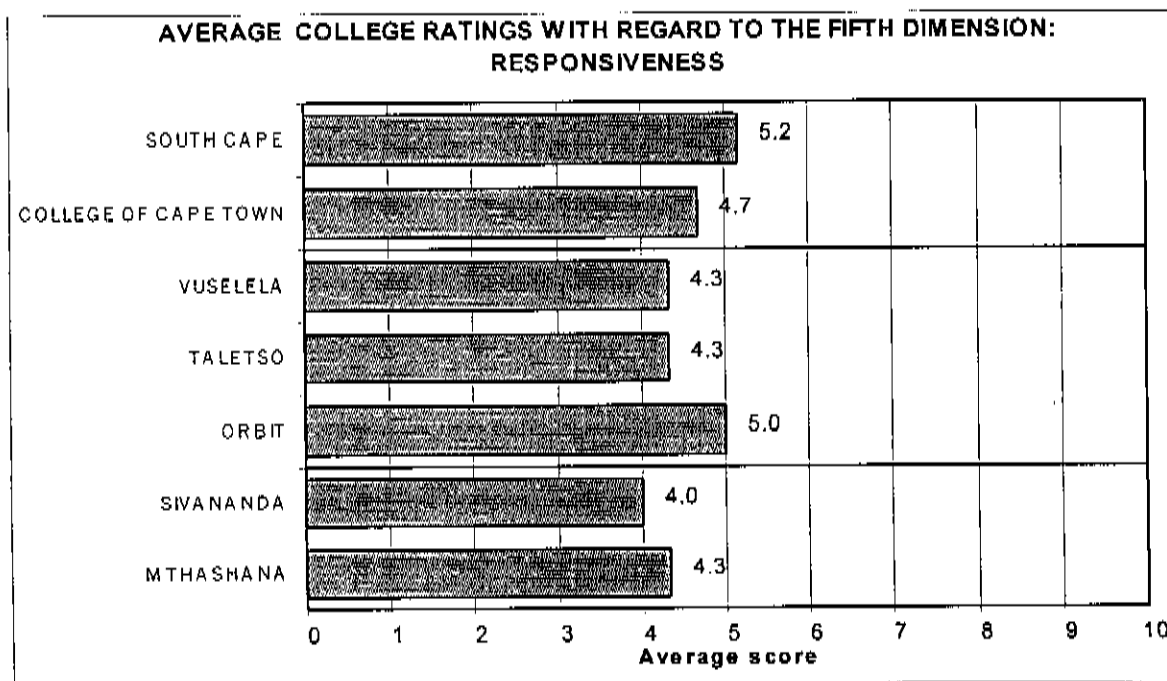
There has been improvement in the development of learnerships, skills programmes and SMME contact in virtually all the colleges, and better relations with business, other state bodies and local communities. With the better roll out of these programmes at colleges, participants have begun to develop capacity and awareness of the needs of relevant stakeholders. In the College of Cape Town, for instance, a Business Relations Unit has been established within the college. This Unit oversees

the development of contacts and interaction with business. It also centrally manages the formulation of skills programmes for the college, with an eye to preventing unnecessary duplication across the campuses. Nonetheless, key concerns remain around NQF-aligned programmes and how to resolve the non-alignment of NATED courses. The WCED Directorate has played a prominent part in easing confusion about DoE and SETA-related programmes in that province, but similar interventions have not occurred in the other provinces.

There also remains much ambiguity in the system. Many respondents spoke about strong contacts with local communities by referring to the links at one campus out of the several, in most cases one located in an impoverished environment. In other cases, colleges spoke of strong links with business by referring to the contacts of campuses located in urban or industrial environments. Given the impact of Apartheid legislation like the Group Areas Act and the Apprenticeship Act, and past employment policies, increases in ratings may disguise the complexity at campus level.

2.6.6. Teaching and Learning

Outcome	Characteristics
A culture of learning promotes both employability and personal development. Strong systems of curriculum development, classroom pedagogy and staff development support quality learning.	• Functioning curriculum development processes • Quality curricular delivery • Well-functioning staff development processes

Percentage distribution of ratings by category for Dimension 6: Teaching and Learning

100% of the ratings found "Teaching and learning" to be an *emerging* dimension, as opposed to 76% in the Baseline Report. While it is generally acknowledged that staff development is insufficient, that curriculum development is difficult in the new environment and that curricular delivery is not yet of the highest quality; all participants noted that colleges were actively engaged in improving these concerns. SESD interventions with regard to staff development were seen as having made a significant impact.

AVERAGE COLLEGE RATINGS WITH REGARD TO THE SIXTH DIMENSION: TEACHING AND LEARNING
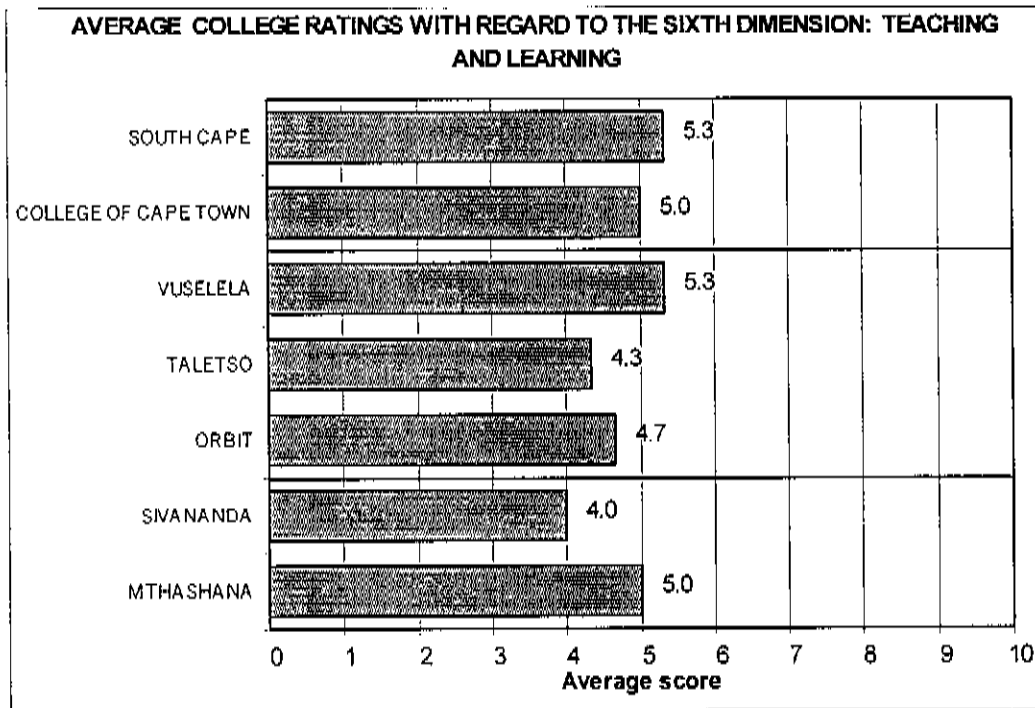
These ratings illustrate the way that improvements on this dimension are evident across the Programme colleges, with the exception of a slight fall at Sivananda, which again appears to reflect a degree of over-optimism about curricular change in the Baseline Report.

2.6.7. Learner Support

Outcome	Characteristics
Learner support systems improve labour market and life outcomes through support to learner's health, learning and insertion into the labour market	• The development, implementation and evaluation of academic support programmes • The development, implementation and evaluation of HIV/AIDS awareness intervention • The development, implementation and evaluation of guidance and counselling systems

Percentage distribution of ratings by category for Dimension 7: Learner Support
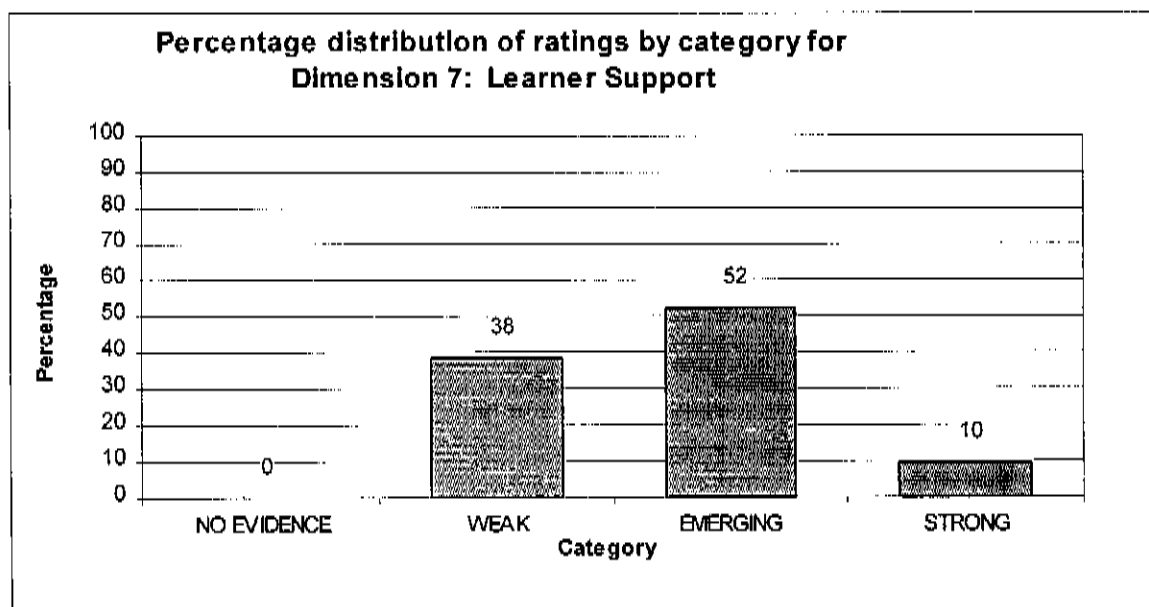
"Learner support" is now the only dimension where a high number (38%) of ratings indicate it as *weak*. Nonetheless, 52% of the ratings showed it to be an *emerging* dimension. This is a major improvement from the Baseline Report, in which 71% of ratings were *weak*, and appears to reflect genuine progress in addressing this dimension at the college level, although, as yet, too little in the way of systematised approaches. In this regard, it is noteworthy that this dimension will be reported in the next section as one of the weakest at the provincial Directorate level.

AVERAGE COLLEGE RATINGS WITH REGARD TO THE SEVENTH DIMENSION: LEARNER SUPPORT
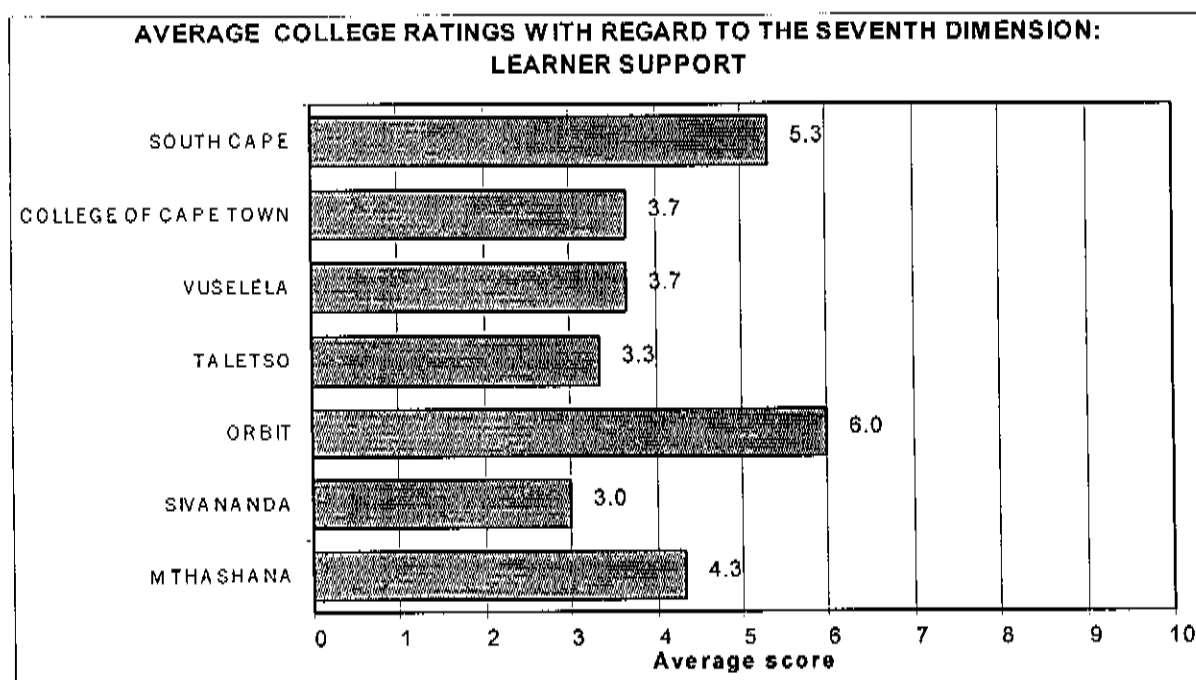
Several colleges show striking increases on this dimension, most notably Orbit, where the average rose from 2 to 6. This is largely because the college has a specially appointed learning coordinator to

put into place systems that address learner support concerns. Its campuses also have dedicated people, in some cases relieved of teaching duties, to provide one-on-one counseling for learners.

2.7. Going beyond the College Level

The overall ratings by college provide a generally accurate picture of developments and challenges in the sector. However, it is clear that the merger process remains a work-in-progress. Many campus level staff still think in terms of their identification with their campus and are sceptical about the benefits of merger. This comes not just from those, often historically black, campuses that fear that they are being taken over by more powerful neighbours, but also from campuses with a strong sense of their own achievements, where there is a concern that they will be brought down to the same level as their supposedly weaker neighbours.

There are particular worries at a number of campuses about the playing out of the new college-wide financial systems being introduced at present. There are also concerns about the extent of knowledge sharing within colleges. In some of the more negative responses at campus level, there was a strong undercurrent of continuing racial tensions in the merged institutions. The improving ratings for community and business responsiveness hide the great unevenness of these characteristics. The old dispensation shines through these characteristics, with historically white, urban campuses stronger in their business links and historically black campuses stronger on community relations. This must be an area of particular concern in efforts to make colleges genuinely merged institutions.

2.8. Conclusions

The findings in this Section point to a good level of improvement since the Baseline Report. All dimensions rate in the *emerging* category and are above 4. The average rating per dimension has increased from 4 to 4.7. It is particularly important to note that "Learner support" and "Responsiveness", the two weakest ratings in the Baseline Report, improved by 1 and 0.7 points respectively. However, at 4.2, "Learner support" is clearly the weakest dimension and is in need of considerable attention.

At the level of characteristics, none are now below 4 and seven are at 5 or greater. It is striking that the highest rating is for "Enhanced human resources capacity" as this has been a key area of intervention by the SESD Programme. Indeed, there was a clear connection in perceptions at the college level between SESD activities and the improved ratings. Notwithstanding the progress against characteristics, five remain at only 4 or 4.1. These are "Vertical knowledge sharing", "Quality assurance systems", "responsiveness to SMEs", "Academic support" and "HIV/AIDS programmes". All of these areas require particular focus in the second year of the Programme.

Six out of the seven colleges now have average ratings greater than 4, as opposed to three in the Baseline Report. Indeed, two now have average ratings above 5. Particularly striking is the performance of Orbit, which was the weakest in the Baseline Report and was also a very poor performer on a number of indicators in the last national quantitative overview.[1]

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[1] Powell, L. and Hall, G. 2002 *Quantitative Overview of the Further Education and Training College Sector: The New Landscape.* Department of Education, Pretoria.

SECTION THREE

The Provincial FET College Directorates

3.1.   Introduction

The Baseline Report noted how jurisdiction over the college sector has shifted on a number of occasions over time between a national and a provincial responsibility. Since 1994 it has been a concurrent competence between the two levels. Inevitably this has led to some teething problems as both levels have sought to develop their own understandings of their roles. There has also been a particular challenge of developing provincial level capacity as there was little in place prior to 1994.

Since the beginning of the merger process, the provincial departments have found themselves trying to build a new relationship with colleges. In particular, the appointment of the new CEOs in colleges radically alters the way that colleges and provincial directorates interact. As CEOs, the new-style college principals are expected to show a new level of autonomous decision-making, whilst their bureaucratic rank of Director puts them at the same level as the provincial Directors. These changes require a new sensitivity and a shift in role for the provincial directorates. No longer can they simply direct colleges to follow their lead. Instead, they increasingly have to encourage them along desired paths. At the same time, provincial directorates face the challenge of judging when autonomy has led colleges down pathways that are not consistent with policy and regulations, and the sometimes greater challenge of bringing them back on to the right track. The smooth operation of the new system will take time and effort. This Report is written at a point when the new system is very young and not yet bedded down. This Section needs to be understood in that light.

This Section is based on interviews with relevant Chief Directors: FET and Directors: FET Colleges in the provinces, plus their staff and PTAs, where available. It is also informed by the college and national level research processes. As with other sections, it should be noted that the sector is characterised by complex interactions that make it difficult to separate the effects of different actors in progress or the lack thereof. In the sub-sections that follow, the provincial directorates are not always the only relevant actors and cannot receive either all the praise or all the blame for what has transpired.

3.2.   Capacity Building in the Provincial FET Directorates

The Baseline Report noted that this rated as an *emerging* characteristic in all three provinces. This took cognisance of the initial capacities of the directorates, which was relatively strong in the case of the Western Cape, and their development of staff establishments and organograms that were broadly

consistent with new functions and objectives. However, the Report also noted that these directorates were faced with a new range of objectives for which competencies would have to be developed.

The period since the Baseline Report has seen both progress towards and retreat from strong capacity. In KwaZulu-Natal, the development of a staff training programme, with a plan for this leading to NQF-accredited awards, is a sign of the great seriousness with which staff development is taken. However, the period has also seen the loss of one Chief Education Specialist to become a college CEO and a further reorganisation of portfolios within the Directorate. One major step forward in the province is the development of a rigorous FETMIS model, with a support structure of college staff engaged in the project.

The challenge of moving staff away from an old bureaucratic mindset appears to be progressing well in the KZNDEC Directorate. However, it is apparent that the need for a new way of interacting with colleges remains a major challenge for staff. There appears to be a strong working relationship between the Director: FET Colleges and the PTA, which also serves to strengthen the capacity of the Directorate to deal with the complexity of its new tasks.

However, amongst the professional staff in the Directorate, there is also a strong sense of being overstretched, given the wide range of responsibilities with which they needed to deal. This was contrasted with the narrower technical responsibilities in the schools sector. There are also complaints about under-resourcing. It was argued by one person that the overstretching of staff had also had the negative effect of weakening internal communication as staff were rarely in the office together to communicate.

The North West is in the process of effecting a radical restructuring of the way that the province supports the FET college sector. The province has been divided into regions with a considerable degree of autonomy. The previous Director has become Chief Director for one of these regions. He has not been replaced yet at the provincial level, although a new Directorate is planned. At the same time, the SESD Programme has lost its PTA, who has become a college CEO in another province. Although the provincial FET Chief Director has oversight of the college sector, this is not his primary role and he lacks the necessary staff to support him. The overall effect of all this is to reduce the capacity of the province seriously.

Whilst the Western Cape had the strongest capacity of the Programme provinces in terms of the previous dispensation for colleges, it had not yet developed much capacity in terms of the new system at the time of the Baseline Report. However, it is apparent that there has been good progress in addressing these weaknesses.

It can be argued that both the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal should now be rated as *high emerging*, whilst the North West appears to have fallen back as far as the *very weak* category. It is to be hoped that, with the new structures in place in January, the North West will be able to build capacity rapidly.

3.3. Supporting Mergers

The Baseline Report also rated this as an *emerging* characteristic across all three provinces. At that time, the merger process had only just resulted in new councils, which were weak. Permanent CEOs had not been appointed. Since the Baseline, the councils appear to have been strengthened and the new CEOs have been appointed, although this process has been rather slow and not without problems.

KZNDEC is working very actively to strengthen the merger process. There are a series of monthly meetings between KZNDEC and the colleges, including meetings with council chairs. Strikingly, the Chief Director for FET, who shows a keen interest in the college sector, having worked in it previously, chairs a large number of these meetings. The province has also led the way in delivering a "Best Practices Forum" (see below) at which knowledge being generated by the Programme was shared with the other colleges. At this Forum, a series of working groups were set up across Programme and non-Programme colleges in order to share experiences in specific areas of working of the new colleges. Outside the Programme, KZNDEC have also hosted a large provincial FET Convention at which it communicated the new college system to more than 2 000 stakeholders in the province. Considerable work has also been done at the Programme colleges in terms of staff development through the SESD Programme. More negatively, some of the college CEOs appear to be taking their new autonomy in unhelpful directions and are not participating actively in some of the new structures that KZNDEC has established.

The North West's lack of capacity has meant that it has not played a particularly proactive role in taking the merger process beyond the appointment of the new CEOs. Whilst the Chief Director: FET has been meeting monthly with the college CEOs, the lack of staff in his team and the absence of a permanent PTA have limited the real impacts of the province on colleges' performance.

The Western Cape was the first province to promulgate legislation regarding mergers, anticipating the eventual national decision. This has left it well-placed in terms of having established strong interim management teams at college level. However, much of the lead that the province had over others evaporated during the slowness of the CEO appointment process, only completed in mid-September, and repeated problems with the application process for the new promoted posts. This has led to an unfortunate degree of mistrust about the broader merger process at the college level.

Although it has faced problems with managing the new system, KwaZulu-Natal does appear to have continued to make progress in this area. An improved rating of *high emerging* appears justified. The North West's larger problems with capacity have also negatively impacted on this characteristic and a decline in rating to *weak to emerging* appears justified. The Western Cape has clearly also had some problems in managing the merger process but the province appears to have been largely successful in the end. A continued rating of *emerging* is suggested.

3.4. Communications and Knowledge Sharing

The Baseline Report showed a strong divergence between a *high emerging* rating for KwaZulu-Natal and *weak to emerging* ratings in the other two provinces.

As noted in the previous sub-section, KZNDEC has been able to begin to implement some of its ambitious plans for communications within and beyond the college sector in the province. The strong interest in the college sector from the Chief Director is also a very positive sign and should lead to better articulation between strategies for colleges and schools, although this has not yet been realised at a substantive level. However, the greater autonomy of colleges does appear to have had negative implications for knowledge sharing on some occasions.

Horizontal knowledge sharing is eased in the North West by the presence of only three colleges, all of which are within the Programme. However, it is clear from the college reports that there is a gap in vertical communication due to the lack of a viable provincial Directorate at present.

The Western Cape does not appear to have been particularly proactive in this regard and seems to allow colleges more autonomy than in other provinces. From the college perspective, there appears to be relatively good vertical communication when required but a perception that the WCED does not prioritise horizontal communication between colleges.

The progress of KwaZulu-Natal in this area justifies an *emerging to strong* rating. The two other provinces remain unchanged at *weak to emerging*.

3.5. Linkages and Responsiveness

Here too there was divergence in the Baseline Report, varying from a *high emerging* rating for KwaZulu-Natal, through an *emerging* rating in the North West, to a *weak to emerging* rating in the Western Cape.

The strong initial position of KZNDEC in this regard does not appear to have been built upon significantly in the last six months and this will clearly be an important area for future developments in the province. In the North West, commitment to this area does not appear to be manifesting in clear leadership and colleges are clearly seeing problems due to the economic woes of the province. WCED appears to see this as a matter that it is primarily up to the colleges to address. In all three provinces, it is clear that national level policy problems are negatively affecting performance.

KwaZulu-Natal appears to have slipped back to an *emerging* rating; with the other two provinces being rated at *weak to emerging*.

3.6. Learnerships

All provinces were rated as *weak* in this domain in the Baseline Report. That Report noted a verbal commitment from the provinces to the importance of learnerships, but little sense of real progress in moving towards delivery.

In the case of KZNDEC such a commitment remains obvious, but developments are still very weak. There was clearly considerable frustration both with the lack of college initiative in this regard and with the confusion caused by policy incoherence at the national level. Although similar worries are present in the other two provinces, there has been some movement forward in the North West. However, it is in the Western Cape that the most significant change has taken place. The WCED has taken the initiative here in gaining accreditation from Umalusi. It uses this accreditation to bypass the need for colleges to follow as onerous a process, and also assists in linking colleges with SETAs.

KwaZulu-Natal still rates as *weak*, although the North West can be raised to the *high weak* category. The developments in the Western Cape justify it being rated as *emerging*.

3.7. FET College Staff Development

The Baseline Report rated KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape as *emerging* but the North West as *weak*. At that point there had been some unsystematic efforts in the former two cases, but no real strategy development or wide scale implementation.

Progress is evident in this regard in all provinces as the SESD Programme begins to have an impact. In KwaZulu-Natal a strategy has been developed in conjunction with the University of Natal, and its implementation has begun.

However, there are four clear challenges at present. First, improvements in staff development across the SESD Programme colleges needs to be more widely shared across all colleges in the three provinces. Second, the impact of some inputs, such as assessor training, will clearly depend on the ability of staff to implement new ideas. This is hampered by the lack of curricular change in the core DoE programmes. Third, there is some college-level unhappiness about the way that decisions are taken about who goes on what courses, and the highly formal way in which staff development is understood. Fourth, the process of staff development has been slowed somewhat by delays in the process of agreeing new staff establishments. When these new establishments become active in January, it is to be expected that greater progress in staff development will take place.

Improved ratings are justified for each province: KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape rating as *high emerging*, whilst the North West rates as *high weak*.

3.8. Staff Development in Mathematics, Science and Technology

This was rated as *very weak* in KwaZulu-Natal and the North West in the Baseline, and *weak* in the Western Cape. Unfortunately, there appears to be little if any progress in this area and this requires close attention by the SESD Programme. None of the ratings should be increased.

3.9. Learner Support

Learner support was rated as *weak* in all provinces in the Baseline Report. Since then, there has been some development in line with the SESD Programme and dedicated staff will be in place for the new academic year. However, it will be important that the learner support systems in the Programme colleges become effective quickly and that provincial directorates begin to build such systems across all colleges.

Given the progress to date, there appears to be a case for improving the rating in each case to *high weak*.

3.10. HIV/AIDS

The Baseline Report rated this as *weak* in KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape, but *weak to emerging* in the North West. As with a number of other dimensions, the Baseline Report noted that there was a stated commitment to action from the provinces, but little implementation. This remains largely the case to date.

No increase in ratings appears justified in any province.

3.11. Summary Table

AREAS OF ACTIVITY	KWAZULU-NATAL	NORTH WEST	WESTERN CAPE
Capacity building in the FET Directorate	HIGH EMERGING	VERY WEAK	HIGH EMERGING
Supporting mergers	HIGH EMERGING	WEAK TO EMERGING	EMERGING
Communications and knowledge sharing	EMERGING TO STRONG	WEAK TO EMERGING	WEAK TO EMERGING
Linkages and responsiveness	EMERGING	WEAK TO EMERGING	WEAK TO EMERGING
Learnerships	WEAK	HIGH WEAK	EMERGING
FET college staff development	HIGH EMERGING	HIGH WEAK	HIGH EMERGING
Staff development in mathematics, science and technology	VERY WEAK	VERY WEAK	WEAK
Learner Support	HIGH WEAK	HIGH WEAK	HIGH WEAK
HIV/AIDS	WEAK	WEAK TO EMERGING	WEAK

3.12. Conclusions

Overall, there is a sense of progress in the provincial directorates. However, this is highly uneven, both across characteristics and across provinces. Positive points of particular note include the Western Cape's strategy with respect to learnerships and KwaZulu-Natal's continuing efforts in knowledge sharing across Programme and non-Programme colleges. Across all provinces, however, there are few signs of progress regarding the final three categories in the table: staff development in SMT, learner support and HIV/AIDS. It will be important to address these areas particularly strongly in the next year of the Programme. The restructuring of FET functions and the lack of a permanent PTA for most of the year have clearly impacted negatively on the delivery of the programme in the North West. However, the province does have the potential to catch up.

It is apparent that all three provinces face very different situational challenges and have very different approaches to their work. All three have followed very different routes also in coming to terms with the challenge of greater college autonomy. Whilst the provinces are different, it will be important to strengthen interactions between them. This has been negatively impacted upon by the absence of the NMU. It is to be hoped that this will be resolved soon and that it can function as a valuable tool for inter-provincial knowledge sharing.

SECTION FOUR

The National Directorate

4.1. Introduction

This section is based on a joint interview with the Director, Public and Private Further Education and Training Colleges and the Chief Director: FET Institutions and Programmes in the DoE, and a separate interview with the Chief Technical Advisor. It is also informed by interviews with provincial directorates, where staff were asked to comment also on the national picture.

4.2. Ensuring that the Programme has Systemic Effects

In the Baseline Report we noted that the SESD Programme was clearly aligned with the Department of Education's overall strategy for the sector. However, this phase of the Programme evaluation reflects powerful concerns from the DoE regarding the extent to which the Programme is being effective as a sectoral support-type intervention.

The DoE sees the ideal programmatic function of the SESD intervention as being a tool for innovation-for-policy. However, the Department is concerned that the Programme is not yet sufficiently well-enough focused to serve this function. The DoE argues that the Programme is too broad in its proposed objectives and needs to build on previous interventions such as the College Collaboration Fund by highlighting focused areas for improvement – such as curriculum development. Moreover, the DoE is concerned that the Programme is not sufficiently well-developed in terms of how any such learning can be communicated across provinces and through the national structures.

Given that previous Danish aid to skills development in South Africa was very much designed as a model of innovation for policy development, there appears to be no fundamental difference between the DoE and Danida in this regard. Rather, the challenge appears to lie in finessing the operational details of how the Programme can best be a resource for national policy development, whilst remaining true to what appears to have been a basically sound Programme design.

4.3. Establishment of the National Management Unit

At the heart of the challenge of refining the policy-critical role of the Programme lies the failure to date to establish the NMU in practice. Although the Baseline Report noted that a decision had been made regarding the establishment and convenorship of the NMU, this has not yet resulted in a first meeting, nor is it clear that such a meeting can be expected until there is agreement between the two parties

over a set of Terms of Reference for the NMU. It appears that such a decision is being put on hold until the Danida mission in October 2003 has been completed.

The NMU is likely to be important for building formal communication regarding the Programme between the national and provincial department levels, and between the Programme and non-Programme provinces. In this regard, it will be important to get full buy-in regarding the NMU at the time of the Danida mission.

4.4. Strategic Planning and Capacity Building for the Public and Private Further Education and Training Colleges Directorate

The FET Branch and the Colleges Directorate have been successful in bringing about the reconfiguration of the institutional landscape of the college sector in recent years. However, the capacity of the Directorate remains weak for addressing other important aspects of the ongoing reform process. In particular, staffing is far below acceptable levels. Although the CTA and the Director are clearly working closely together, there is nothing within the SESD Programme that amounts to a real strategy for building the Directorate's capacity.

However, it is far from clear what impact the Programme could reasonably expect from such an intervention as the ultimate responsibility for capacity development in this regard lies with the DoE. In this light, it should be noted that the Chief Director has been active in seeking to develop a programme for post-graduate studies for staff at national and provincial levels. However, understaffing appears a more serious issue for the national Department at present than the knowledge and skills of the staff already employed. In the context of the SESD Programme, it is important to determine more clearly the desired role of the Programme in building capacity at the national level.

4.5. Design of a National FET Communications and Advocacy Strategy

As noted in the Baseline Report, a process in this regard has taken place independent of the SESD Programme and a new strategy is in place. Nonetheless, it is apparent that the college sector faces very serious challenges in this regard, which are likely to impact on the eventual performance of the SESD Programme. Therefore, it will be important to continue to monitor the relationship between the national strategy and the Programme's efforts, and to seek to maximise the synergies.

4.6. Evaluation of FET Colleges' Three-year Plans and One-year Operational Plans

Although the Programme has provided some support to both colleges and the Department in this process, it appears that there could have been more done in this regard. In part this relates to staffing

in the Programme: one PTA having resigned to become a college CEO and another having been on maternity leave early in her appointment. One important measure of the ultimate performance of the SESD Programme will be its impact upon strategic planning processes in the Programme colleges, a point that is clearly understood by the CTA.

4.7. Facilitation and Monitoring of Programmes for Building Colleges' Capacity for Management and Governance

A range of interventions have been delivered with respect to this target. College councils and management are generally positive about the quality of these inputs, and this is reflected in ratings in Section Two above. The use of consultants with educational specialisms was seen as an important advantage of this programme as compared to other more generic management consultancy inputs that had previously been delivered to colleges. Nonetheless, the DoE points out the need to continue to refine such inputs so that they are focused on the real needs of colleges.

4.8. Dissemination of Best Practice

It is too early to judge the dissemination of best practice meaningfully given that such practice is only beginning to emerge. Nonetheless, some of the concerns raised earlier in this Section are relevant here. As was noted above, the first provincial "Best Practices Forum" has recently taken place. Others are planned for the other provinces in the next few months. There is also a national forum planned that will bring together colleges and departments across the three Programme provinces, as well as the national Department. Whilst the first forum appears to have been widely seen as successful, it will be important to refine the structure so as to maximise the learning potential from this series of events and structures.

There are already national structures for knowledge sharing in the FET system. These include the annual FET Convention and a HEDCOM sub-committee. It will be important to ensure that the Programme effectively shares knowledge with these structures over the rest of its lifespan.

4.9. Coordination of Provincial Activities with National SAQA and Department of Labour Structures

This is a highly complex issue, which is receiving considerable national government attention at the time of writing. Regardless of the nature of any reforms to the NQF system, it appears that the national components of the Programme will continue to be largely independent of each other, with only the CTA and the HSRC straddling the two elements. However, there is likely to be scope for the

practical linkages between the DoE and DoL components of the Programme that help to strengthen the articulation of the two Departments' programmes on the ground. The role of learnerships in colleges could be a particular strategic area in which the Programme could build best practice in this regard, as is envisaged as part of the DoL component (see Section Six).

Section Five will note an improved relationship between SAQA Southern Regional Office and the Western Cape Education Department. However, there seems little prospect of this being replicated in other regions or at the national level in the foreseeable future. SAQA has long had an intention to develop a nationwide presence but has lacked the resources to do so. There is little likelihood that the current review process will provide SAQA with the funds for this. In the absence of a system of regional offices and a national core, the processes by which the experiences of the Southern Region-WCED interaction get fed into national relations between SAQA and the DoE are inadequately developed in both theory and practice. Indeed, the national office of SAQA appears to be entirely absent from the Programme at present. It is unclear as to what leverage the SESD Programme has for addressing these issues.

4.10. Development and Implementation of a National FET Strategy for HIV/AIDS

The DoE has shown a strong and unambiguous public commitment to addressing the challenge of HIV/AIDS in the education system for several years already. Given DoE's other plans in this area regarding strategy development, the role of the SESD Programme seems to be primarily about developing better practices at the college and provincial levels. However, it will be important to ensure that the lessons gained in such a process can be fed into any new policy process.

4.11. The Provincial FET Directorates' Views of the Current Status of Relations with the National Department of Education (DoE)

As the Baseline Report noted, responsibility for FET colleges has always had provincial and national elements, and the relationship between these two has often changed. It is not surprising, therefore, that there appear to be residual tensions between provincial and national understandings of their respective roles in management and facilitation of the FET college system. The lack of progress regarding the status and role of the NMU is clearly related to this legacy, at least in part.

However, it is clear that relations between the two levels are relatively positive and continue to improve as all parties come to better understand the nature of the new college sector and their respective roles therein. There appears to be a good degree of mutual comprehension and collegiality between the national and provincial directorates.

4.12   Conclusions

The SESD Programme remains strongly aligned with vision of the national Department. Nonetheless, a challenge remains in strengthening mutual understandings between Danida and the DoE regarding the mechanisms by which the Programme can maximise its usefulness for policy development and system-wide improvement.

Knowledge sharing and the dissemination of best practices are clearly important to the policy impact of the Programme. Both the Programme and the DoE have emerging strategies for knowledge sharing and there is a need to ensure increasing synergy between these.

The FET Branch of the Department of Education has shown itself capable of driving through a complex process of reform in the college sector in recent years. However, it remains understaffed, making it struggle to complete the reform process as effectively as it would wish. Support to the Directorate in terms of capacity development is a stated aim of the Programme. However, it is far from clear how the SESD Programme is supposed to deliver on this.

Although the failure to activate the NMU points to continued uncertainties in the relationships between the national and provincial levels of the system, this needs to be balanced by a clear sense of strengthening relations between the two levels. It is apparent from the provincial level that there is considerable respect for the national Director and that provinces are broadly appraised and supportive of the national vision.

The SESD Programme has an ambition to contribute to better articulation between DoE, DoL and SAQA. This is clearly challenging. The results of the current consultation process regarding this relationship and its past weaknesses will inevitably be far more significant than the efforts of one programme. Nonetheless, there is evidence (see Section Five) that the Programme has promoted a stronger practical relationship between SAQA's Southern Regional Office and the Western Cape Education Department, although this is unlikely to have national significance in the absence of other SAQA regional structures. It appears that the national components of the Programme will continue to be largely independent of each other in terms of their structures. However, at the level of practice (see Section Six) there is scope for the DoE and DoL components of the SESD Programme to work together in ways that could then translate to better national articulation over time.

SECTION FIVE

The SAQA Southern Regional Office

5.1. Introduction

As noted in the Baseline Report, the SAQA Southern Regional Office was established in February 2002 as the regional presence for NQF advocacy and communication about standards setting and quality assurance in the Western and Eastern Cape. It was meant to serve as a "one-stop shop" providing input on problems and difficulties experienced by SETAs, providers and learners at the regional level.

In terms of the SESD Programme, the Regional Office is tasked with focusing specifically on assisting the colleges to translate SAQA registered unit standards into learning programmes. Through discussion with the colleges, WCED and SAQA nationally, the Regional Office has decided to interpret this as requiring a focus on the fundamental unit standards for intensive support, but will continue to provide initial assistance to learning programme development across the colleges as a whole as needed.

A series of evaluation dimensions were suggested in the Baseline Report by which the performance of the Regional Office should be measured in pursuit of its SESD commitments. These were to be tabled at the NMU for ratification as the criteria for future evaluations. However, as has already been noted in Section Four, there has been no NMU and so the status of the dimensions remains informal. Nonetheless, they will be used to structure this Section as no criticism of them was raised during the dissemination of the Baseline Report.

This Section was also made more challenging to write by an inability to arrange a face-to-face meeting with the SAQA Regional Office during the period of fieldwork in the Western Cape or during visits of Regional Office staff to SAQA in Pretoria. After offering to conduct the meeting through the HSRC's video conferencing facilities in Cape Town and Pretoria, it became necessary eventually to agree to a telephonic interview. This was clearly undesirable and limited the extent to which it was possible to judge beyond what was presented orally. However, the evidence presented was compared with quarterly reports obtained from the CTA and interviews with other participants in the province for triangulation.

5.2. The Development of Stronger Competences in the two Programme Colleges Regarding the NQF

It is apparent that the Regional Office has engaged with both Programme colleges since the Baseline Report and has recently offered workshops at both. However, the extent of such interactions to date is very limited and they are too recent to judge reasonably. Moreover, there are problems in ascribing a significant impact to the Regional Office regarding college competences with respect to the NQF for a number of reasons.

First, as one college reported, much of the learning that has taken place at college level since the introduction of the NQF occurred before the establishment of the Regional Office. As a result, the most advanced colleges in NQF terms have already developed their own networks and strategies for accessing necessary knowledge. It will take a lot of time and effort for the Regional Office to be seen as the first source of such information, and this will never be the case for much information.

Second, there are a number of other organisations promoting NQF-related competences in colleges. In the case of the same college, at least two other organisations have been involved there in NQF development activities in the last six months. It thus becomes difficult to see what specific effects the Regional Office is having as compared to other donor projects or service providers.

Third, the impact that developing NQF-related competences can have in colleges is severely constrained by the predominance in these colleges of DoE programmes, which remain unaligned to the NQF. Even where the Regional Office is building knowledge of the NQF, much of it cannot be capitalised upon in the absence of the promised new curricula.

5.3. The Regional Office as a Disseminator to non-Programme Colleges and a Pilot for other Regional Offices

The first part of this dimension speaks to the specific task of the Regional Office taking learning from its interactions with the Programme Colleges and documenting it in order to disseminate it to other colleges in the Province. This was raised as a particular concern in the Baseline Report. However, no evidence was presented at this time to suggest that such a process has yet taken place in a meaningful way. As Sections Two and Three both note, sharing between colleges in the Western Cape remains weak.

As was noted above, there is as yet not much learning of this kind to document. However, there appears to be a bigger issue here. There is little sense that the Regional Office sees it as a priority to develop special interventions for the Programme colleges, which it would then disseminate to others in the Western Cape. It is important to remember here that the Regional Office's prime mandate from SAQA is to support the spread of the NQF across all provider types in both the Western and Eastern

Cape Provinces. Thus, there appears to be some tension between its own mandate and its perceived responsibilities under the SESD Programme.

The Southern Regional Office is the first and only such office within the SAQA structure. In the SESD Programme it is understood that it will be a pilot for other offices. In this regard, the Regional Office reports that the processes by which its capacity has been developed have been carefully documented, as have the types of functions that it has been called upon to fulfill. However, given the current uncertainty about the future size and role of SAQA, it is far from clear that the Southern Region should be seen as a genuine pilot for similar structures in the rest of the country. The lack of sibling offices clearly also has wider implications for how the office operates.

5.4. Identification and Communication to other Provincial Actors of Blockages to Implementation of the NQF

The Regional Office provided evidence of it having played an important role in meeting with other key stakeholders at the provincial level such as the WCED, other government departments and SETAs to discuss the future development of the NQF in the province. This is part of what appears to be a relatively strong provincial networking efforty at this level. The channels of communication between the WCED and the Regional Office also appear to have strengthened since the time of the Baseline Report. However, here again, it is difficult to be clear what added value is brought by the Regional Office as compared to the role played by the WCED in facilitating such processes. Equally, it is apparent that many of the most serious obstacles to the implementation of the NQF lie at the national level. These are largely unamenable to provincial influences.

5.5. The Construction of a Quality Assurance Network

The proposed evaluation dimensions spoke to assessing the degree of success the Regional Office had in building a quality assurance network and its role in such a network when operational. In the current round of interviews, the Regional Office suggested that such functions were not its responsibility as they lay instead with WCED and Umalusi. It is clear that this issue needs to be addressed in the SESD Programme design and it is particularly unfortunate that the Regional Office did not respond to the appearance of these recommendations in the Baseline Report.

5.6. Feedback to SAQA Nationally

It is evident that this is a key function of the Regional Office. However, there are two points that need noting here. First, it appears difficult for the Regional Office to see how there is a specific SESD

element to this function and, hence, why this should be reported in the SESD context. Second, it is hard to see whether there is indeed a piloting role to the way that this feedback is being managed, given the great uncertainty about the future development path of SAQA. The future shape of the relationship between the Regional Office and SAQA could be altered profoundly by the final decisions regarding SAQA's future and may well necessitate a revision of the role envisioned for the Regional Office in the SESD Programme.

5.7. Performance as a Conduit for Queries and Clarifications between Colleges and SAQA Nationally

The role that the Regional Office envisages for itself clearly includes acting as a go-between that can build better local understandings of the complex NQF process. The Regional Office is active in this regard. However, it faces a reality, noted already in this section, in which other actors have already developed strategies for dealing with such problems over the seven year period in which there was a national but no regional office. Whilst the Regional Office is playing a role here, it will be far more difficult to see whether it can and should play the central role in this regard. Any redefinition of the evaluation criteria for the SAQA component of the SESD Programme would need to address this issue.

5.8. Conclusions

There is a pressing need for further clarity about the nature of the SAQA component of the SESD Programme. The Regional Office does not appear to agree with several of the criteria on which it was to be judged. It also seems to have difficulties in seeing the relationship between its SESD Programme commitments and its core functions as a SAQA Regional Office.

The work of the Regional Office, and hence the evaluation thereof, is seriously complicated by factors outside its control. First, its creation seven years after the establishment of SAQA and the NQF means that the more proactive amongst other stakeholders have already established ways of interacting with the NQF system and are unlikely to see the Regional Office as that important, at least until it can develop a reputation for itself. Second, its status as a "pilot" regional office appears rather questionable as it was far from evident when it was established that SAQA would be in a position to expand to other regional offices after the NQF Review process was complete. This still seems to be the case as the end of the consultation period on the government's response draws to a close. Third, the speed at which the NQF is implemented in the college sector is determined in large part by the DoE and its decisions regarding its core programmes. The efficacy of workshops about the NQF is limited when college staff perceive that they will not be able to implement new ideas for the

foreseeable future. All of these issues have potentially negative effects on how this component of the SESD Programme is likely to operate, and need to be addressed.

It is unfortunate that the evaluation dimensions were not formally ratified by the NMU. It is even more unfortunate that the Regional Office did not raise concerns about the appropriateness of the characteristics after the Baseline Report. It becomes crucial, therefore, to get agreement about the nature of the SAQA component and how it should be evaluated before the next phase of assessment. It will also be important to get access to SAQA at national level to explore elements of the regional-national dynamic more closely, as well as the role of the national office in the larger SESD Programme, as noted in the previous section.

SECTION SIX

The Department of Labour

6.1. Introduction

This section is based on interviews with the Deputy Director General: Employment Services and Skills Development and the Chief Training Advisor, as well as participation in a series of meetings and workshops during the design phase of the DoL component. This design phase was still underway when this section was written. As noted in Section One of this report, it will not be until this design phase is completed that a formal baseline evaluation of the intervention will be possible, as there remains some likelihood that the scope of the component may be altered.

From activities in progress and from the original National Implementation Plan for the SESD Programme, it appears that there are three principal elements that have been envisaged for the DoL component. First, and where activity has concentrated to date, is the proposed roll out of the Venture Creation Learnership, piloted in Durban with support from Danida's Provincial Skills Development Programme (PSDP). Second, the National Implementation Plan also envisages support to the development of additional learnerships, including ones to be delivered by colleges within the DoE component. Third, the Plan proposes the continuation of support to the capacity of the DoL's provincial structures in KwaZulu-Natal, where much of Denmark's previous support to skills development had been focused

6.2. Roll out of the Venture Creation Learnership Pilot

An important component of the previous Danish programme of assistance to skills development was the piloting of a new learnership designed to facilitate the transition into self-employment of retrenched workers. Given the indications of success from the Durban-based pilot, it was proposed that it be rolled out nationally as part of the current SESD Programme.

Since the conceptual work on the initial pilot, the DoL have become concerned about the likely low employment rates of those enrolled in learnership programmes who were not previously employed. For this reason, the initial target group for the national programme will be those who have already completed a learnership but who have not secured employment. As such, the learnership answers directly to a major policy concern of the DoL, and the government as a whole.

The design phase of the learnership has been characterised both by a conscious strategy of building from the experience of the pilot (including appointing the same project manager) and a process of

engaging with relevant stakeholders, including other government departments and agencies and several SETAs.

The clear national commitment to this sub-component, including championing from the most influential figure in the national skills development system, suggests that the current design phase will build into an operationalised programme in which Danish funds will provide a catalytic role. However, the final form of the national roll out has not been determined at the time of writing.

It is evident that the sub-component is seeking to make a major intervention in a developmentally crucial but very challenging area. It will be important that realistic success indicators be agreed both for the Danida contribution and the Venture Creation Learnership Programme as a whole.

6.3. Development of other Learnerships

The SESD Programme's National Implementation Plan speaks of one output being "relevant and gender-balanced learnerships, especially relating to SMMEs, implemented by the FET institutions and other providers". This goes beyond just rolling out the Venture Creation Learnership. However, at present, this has not yet been acted upon. Nonetheless, interviews with both the DDG and the CTA indicate that both see this sub-component as being of considerable strategic importance.

It was noted in Section Four that there is considerable strategic potential in using this sub-component as a way of increasing synergy between skills development practices of the DoE and DoL. It also speaks very directly to the Development and Immediate Objectives of the Programme. As such, it is important that this sub-component should receive considerably more attention in the second year of the Programme than it did in the first.

6.4. Capacity Building in the Department of Labour, especially in the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Office

Whilst the Programme documents contain a vision of capacity development for the Department, particularly in its KwaZulu-Natal provincial structures, it is clear that the Department sees such a concern as less pressing than the successful delivery of the Venture Creation Learnership nationally. It will be important during the Review Mission of October 2003 that an agreed position is developed on the importance or otherwise of this sub-component.

6.5. Conclusions

It is apparent that all three potential elements of the DoL component have significant positive implications for the overall national strategy for skills development and its operationalisation. However, it is important that the DoL component also develops a clear strategy for system-wide learning from its elements, as is envisaged in the National Implementation Plan.