

# Education and Skills Development

## FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING COLLEGES IN SOUTH AFRICA AT A GLANCE IN 2010

### Western Cape: Northlink FET College

Report prepared for the  
Department of Higher Education and Training

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## INTRODUCTION

In May-June 2010 the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) undertook, on behalf of the National Board for Further Education and Training (NBFET), an audit of the Further Education and Training (FET) college sector in South Africa. The corporate campuses of all fifty colleges were visited over a two-day period. In the course of the audit, the HSRC collected information on college governance and management, staff and student profiles, and student efficiency rates. While the research team's brief was to focus on college governance and management in an attempt to address the question of whether colleges were ready to be absorbed into the newly-formed Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and to operate on a defined autonomy basis, the comprehensiveness of the audit (entailing visits to all 50 colleges) provided the research team with an opportunity to collect information on the other aforementioned aspects: staff and student profiles; and student efficiency rates. The decision to collect these other pieces of information was motivated also by the rationale that colleges' ability to participate in the survey would itself provide a good indication of their capacity for self-governance. Indeed, the findings of the audit bear out the differential capacity of the different parts of the sector in responding to an exercise of this kind.

This report is indicator-driven, the key points of measurement within the five areas under investigation (governance; management; staff profiles; student profiles; and efficiency rates) having been condensed into high-level findings that can readily be absorbed by policy-makers and departmental officials alike.

There are two sections to this report. The first presents, in five sub-sections, a set of tables containing key high-level findings of the project. The five sub-sections are: Governance; Management; Staff Profiles; Student Profiles; and Efficiency Rates. The second section comprises a narrative report based upon the tables in Section 1.

The organising principle behind the report is comparative. There is a report on each of the fifty colleges, each report comparing the college's status or performance on any given indicator to the national profile and to the profile of the province in which the college is located. This enables the reader to assess "at a glance" the extent to which the college conforms to or deviates from national and provincial profiles.

### **Note on the data**

Every effort was made, during the fieldwork period and over the two months following it, to collect the six pieces of data from each college reproduced in the appendices: three questionnaires – Governance, Management and Administration, and Profiles and Efficiency Indicators; and three spreadsheets – council member, staff, and student profiles. Certain colleges were not, however, able to provide all the data requested. In total, the HSRC received completed Governance, Management and Administration, and Profiles and Efficiency Indicators questionnaires from all 50 colleges, council member spreadsheets from 41 of the 50 colleges, staff member spreadsheets from 46 of the 50 colleges, and student spreadsheets from 41 of the 50 colleges.

In order to provide as full a picture as possible of staff and student profiles, the research team has elected to supplement the missing data with data from the Further Education and Training Management Information System (FETMIS) data of the DHET. Accordingly, certain data in the tables in Section 1 are taken or derived from the recently released preliminary data-sets on the FET college system (DHET, 2011). The full data-set, showing which data is FET audit- and which data is FETMIS-derived, is available on request.

## SECTION 1: QUANTITATIVE OVERVIEW OF THE FET COLLEGE SYSTEM

### Governance

**Table 1: College governance, 2009-2010<sup>1</sup>**

	Council composition, 2010				Council member qualifications and competencies, 2010			Council meeting attendance, 2009 <sup>2</sup>
	# on council <sup>3</sup>	# black	# female	Age	# with qualification below diploma	# of specified areas in which members are collectively competent <sup>4</sup>	# of council members trained for council portfolio	Ordinary council meeting attendance
College	13	8	7	45	1	6	9	10 (ave.)
Provincial	15 (ave)	11 (ave)	5 (ave)	46 (ave.)	1 (ave.)	4 (ave.)	9 (ave.)	11 (ave.)
National	13 (ave)	11 (ave)	4 (ave)	46 (ave.)	2 (ave.)	4 (ave.)	8 (ave.)	11 (ave.)

Compliance with FET Act of 2006 <sup>5</sup>				Staff employer <sup>6</sup>		
Policies, plans & procedures (max. 64)	Financial (max.12)	Governance structures (max. 38)	Overall (max 114)	# employed by college (council)	# employed by state	% of staff employed by college (council)
47	12	34	91	404	319	56
59 (ave.)	12 (ave.)	35 (ave.)	105 (ave.)	240 (ave.)	155 (ave.)	58
49 (ave.)	10 (ave.)	33 (ave.)	92 (ave.)	141 (ave.)	144 (ave.)	49

### Key

1 Data derived from the Governance instrument in Appendix A and Council Member spreadsheet in Appendix B.

- 2 Combined attendance of the first four meetings listed by the college divided by the total possible attendance of the four meetings.
- 3 The FET Act (2006) specifies that there should be 16 members on the council.
- 4 No. of categories (out of 7) in which the college collectively has competence as per the FET Act of 2006 (one point allocated per category regardless of how many members are competent in a category).
- 5 The following variables were included under “Policies, plans and procedures”: V4.1-8; V4.18-33; V5.8; V12.2-7. Under “Financial governance” the following were included: V4.9-15. Under “Governance structures” the following were included: V1.2-3; V8.1-5; V9.1-4; V9.6-7; V9.9; V11.1-5.
- 6 Staff = all staff of the college (lecturing, management and support), of whom only two – the principal and his/her deputy – should (according to the FET Act of 2006) be management staff and employed by the state. Data derived from the Staff member spreadsheet in Appendix C.

## Management

**Table 2: College management, 2007-2010<sup>1</sup>**

	Finances				Reports	FETMIS System	ICT
	# of colleges with CFOs	Sources of college funding (%) <sup>2</sup>	Recapitalisation funding received, 2007-2009	# of qualified audits per college, 2007-2009	College submission of reports to council, 2007-2009 <sup>3</sup>	Name of system <sup>4</sup>	Effectiveness of college usage of ICT <sup>5</sup> (max. rating 42)
College	1	14	R 40,850,000	0	20	ITS	32
Provincial	6 (actual)	35	R 37,884,167 (ave.)	1 (ave.)	20 (ave.)	COLTECH (32) (actual)	39 (ave.)
National	14 (actual)	39	R 39,316,380 (ave.)	1 (ave.)	19 (ave.)	COLTECH (actual)	29 (ave.)

<b># of skills development-related MOUs</b>					
Business	Local communities	SETAs	Other education & training institutions	Local governmental departments and municipalities	Other institutions
3	3	1	3	0	2
3 (ave.)	2 (ave.)	1 (ave.)	2 (ave.)	1 (ave.)	2 (ave.)
2 (ave.)	0 (ave.)	1 (ave.)	1 (ave.)	1 (ave.)	0 (ave.)

**Key**

- 1 Data derived from Management and Administration instrument in Appendix D, the Staff Member spreadsheet in Appendix C, and the Student spreadsheet in Appendix E.
- 2 Percentage of income from sources other than: Donations; Money raised by the college; Money raised through loans; Income derived from investments; Money from services rendered; Student fees; Accommodation or other services.
- 3 Actual amount received over the three-year period.
- 4 Management, Student academic performance, financial audit, and Annual reports: two points for hard evidence, one for soft evidence, zero for no evidence.
- 5 System most commonly in use.
- 6 Composite rating based on v30.1-v31.5 in the Management instrument (see Appendix B): two points for hard evidence, one for soft evidence, zero for no evidence).

## Staff profile

**Table 3: College staff profile, 2008-2010<sup>1</sup>**

	Academic staff demography			Qualifications	Staff ratios			Teaching load	Staff disruptions to the teaching / learning process
	% female	% black <sup>2</sup>	Age	% of academic staff with less than first degree / higher diploma	Lecturer-to-student <sup>3</sup>	Lecturer to support staff <sup>4</sup>	Full-time to part-time lecturing staff <sup>5</sup>	# of periods taught per week	# of staff disruptions per college between 2008 and 2010
College	63	55	47	60	1 : 27	54 : 46	84 : 14	8	0
Provincial	57	54	45 (ave.)	45	1 : 26	55 : 45	78 : 22	18 (ave.)	0 (ave.)
National	47	77	39 (ave.)	57	1 : 32	60 : 40	88 : 12	20 (ave)	1 (ave)

	Academic staff loss and gain, 2008-2010										
	2008			2009			2010			Net loss/gain, 2008-2010 <sup>6</sup>	Total no. of lecturing staff
	Gain	Loss	Main cause of loss	Gain	Loss	Main cause of loss	Gain	Loss	Main cause of loss		
College	27	85	Resignation	41	34	Resignation	34	8	Resignation	-25	388
Provincial	32 (ave.)	39 (ave.)	Resignation	63 (ave.)	27 (ave.)	Resignation	29 (ave.)	7 (ave.)	Resignation	+51 (ave.)	222 (ave.)
National	44 (ave)	30 (ave)	Resignation (25 actual) (MD = 17)	59 (ave)	23 (ave)	Resignation (26 actual) (MD = 17)	28 (ave)	7 (ave)	Resignation (27 actual) (MD = 19)	+46 (ave)	167 (ave)

	Academic staff development in 2009		
	Proportion of staff trained (%) <sup>7</sup>	Time spent on training per staff member (days)	Proportion of total college expenditure on staff development (%)
College	52	1	0.4
Provincial	88	3	0.6
National	65	10 (ave)	1.4

**Key**

- 1 Data derived from the Management and Administration instrument in Appendix D and the Staff Member spreadsheet in Appendix E.
- 2 Black = black African, coloured and Indian / Asian.
- 3 Ratio of total number of lecturing staff to total number of students enrolled.
- 4 Percentage of total lecturing staff to percentage of total support staff.
- 5 Percentage of total full-time lecturing staff to percentage of total part-time lecturing staff.
- 6 Average net gain = "+" (e.g., +25); average net loss = "-" (e.g., -10).
- 7 Categories are: retirement; ill-health; death; resignation; unhappiness with college; and other.
- 8 Number of staff trained (v43.6) divided by the number of academic staff in the college (v.47.28+v47.37) (Management instrument, Appendix D).

## Student profile

**Table 4: College student profile, 2007-2010<sup>1</sup>**

	Demography								
	% female	% black <sup>15</sup>	% disabled, 2008-2010	Age					
				15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40+
College	38	81	MD	23	46	13	7	6	5
Provincial	55	90	0.9	29 (ave.)	44 (ave.)	11 (ave.)	6 (ave.)	5 (ave.)	2 (ave.)
National	52	96	0.1	20 (ave)	56 (ave)	14 (ave)	5 (ave)	3 (ave)	2 (ave)

	Home province		Financial support		
	% students from outside province of college	% students not in receipt of support	% students in receipt of support from:		
			NSFAS	Other	
College	3	96	MD	MD	
Provincial	2	44	36	20	
National	9 (MD=18)	58	36	6	

	Student disruptions to the teaching / learning process	Enrolments			Student exit data
	# of disruptions per college, 2008-2010	% of students enrolled in 2010 in:			# of colleges that keep student exit data
		NC(V) programmes	NATED programmes	Other programmes	
College	0	18	44	38	1
Provincial	0 (ave.)	48	22	30	4 (actual)
National	1 (ave.)	58	32	10	18 (actual)

**Key**

1 Data derived from the Management and Administration instrument in Appendix D and the Student spreadsheet in Appendix E.

## Efficiency rates, 2007-2009

**Table 5: Student throughput rates, 2007-2009 (%): NATED (N) programmes<sup>1</sup>**

	Year			Average throughput rate for N programmes, 2007-2009
	2007	2008	2009	
College (%)	MD	MD	MD	MD
Province (%)	68	65	52	62
National (%)	45	50	46	47

**Table 6: Student throughput rates, 2007-2009 (%): NC(V) programmes**

	Year			Average throughput rate for NC(V) programmes, 2007-2009
	2007	2008	2009	
College (%)	21	19.2	20.7	20
Province (%)	25	23	23	20
National (%)	29	28	34	30

**Table 7: Student throughput rates, 2007-2009 (%): Other (NSC, occupational and skills programmes, other programmes)**

	Year			Average throughput rate for Other programmes, 2007-2009
	2007	2008	2009	
College (%)	MD	MD	MD	MD
Province (%)	69	70	68	69
National (%)	75	62	60	66

### Key

- 1 In Tables 5, 6 and 7, the efficiency rate is the number of students who passed as a percentage of the number of students enrolled in the programme – that is, the throughput rate – across all levels of the programme. Data derived from the Profiles and Efficiency Indicators instrument in Appendix F.

## SECTION 2: NARRATIVE REPORT

### COLLEGE GOVERNANCE

#### Profile of council

A juxtaposition of the purpose clauses of the Further Education and Training (FET) Act of 1998 (DoE, 1998) and the FET Colleges Act of 2006 (DoE, 2006) reveals only one major difference between the two:

FET Act of 1998	FET Colleges Act of 2006
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. To regulate further education and training;</li><li>2. to provide for the establishment, governance and funding of public further education and training institutions;</li><li>3. to provide for the registration of private further education and training institutions;</li><li>4. to provide for quality assurance and quality promotion in further education and training;</li><li>5. to provide for transitional arrangements and the repeal of laws; and</li><li>6. to provide for matters connected therewith.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. To provide for the regulation of further education and training;</li><li>2. to provide for the establishment, governance and funding of public further education and training colleges;</li><li>3. to provide for the employment of staff at public further education and training colleges;</li><li>4. to provide for the registration of private further education and training colleges;</li><li>5. to provide for the promotion of quality in further education and training;</li><li>6. to provide for transitional arrangements and the repeal or amendment of laws; and</li><li>7. to provide for matters connected therewith.</li></ol>

The 2006 Act makes provision for the employment of staff at public FET colleges – declaring that “The college is the employer of all lecturers and support staff” (DoE, 2006: 20(1)). This one distinction gives college councils powers – to create posts and appoint staff to them – not available to them under the previous dispensation.

In the FET Act of 1998 the nomination of council members was driven in part by considerations of stakeholder category representation:

- (9) The Member of the Executive Council must, by notice in the *Provincial Gazette*, and by any other reasonably practicable means, invite nominations for the members contemplated in subsection (4) (c) [not more than five persons appointed by the Member of the Executive Council] and (h) [such additional persons as may be determined by the council in consultation with the Member of the Executive Council] from -
- (a) the public;
  - (b) organised business; and
  - (c) organised labour.

This requirement is *absent* in the FET Colleges Act of 2006, where there is a different requirement –

(6) The council must, in consultation with the Member of the Executive Council, appoint four additional external persons with financial, human resources and legal skills as members of the council

– a requirement extended in the Standard College Statute (which also forms part of the 2006 Act) to include “a broad spectrum of competencies in the fields of education, business, finance, law, marketing, information technology and human resource management” (DoE, 2006: 6(1)(h)). Appointment of lecturing staff, then, pre-supposes certain kinds of academic and professional expertise amongst council members – which underpins the nature of the investigation of college council composition below.

## **Council composition**

The FET Act of 2006 specifies that there should be 16 members on each college council. The reasons for having a fairly large number of persons on councils are implied rather than explicitly stated in the FET Act (2006). From the Governance table in Section 1 we see that the average number of council members at national level is 13 while the provincial average is 15 – both fall short of the requirements of the Act as does Northlink College, which has 13 college council members.

The council should be broadly representative of the community served by the public college in terms of race, gender and disability (DoE, 2006: 7(c)). With regard to race, it should also be representative in terms of national and provincial demographics. With regard to gender, the council composition should ideally reflect the percentage distribution of females in the general population (52% female).

In 1998, Hall (1999) found, in a study of technical colleges in KwaZulu-Natal, that the majority (49%) of council members were white. There are no figures for the country as a whole (the National Business Initiative publications (Powell & Hall, 2000; 2002; 2004) do not report on this); but from the 2010 audit we see that, nationally, an average of 11 council members are black (black here, and throughout the report, comprises black African, coloured, and Indian / Asian persons). There has been a major change in council member representation since the late 1990s, black representation now approximating the proportion of black people in the general population (around 90%). Provincially, on average 11 council members are black. Northlink College’s council consists of 8 black members and 5 white members.

From a gender perspective, we see that 7 of the college’s council members are female, as against averages of 4 nationally and 5 provincially. While female representivity at national and provincial level falls short of the 52% ideal, Northlink College meets this.

## **Age**

Our interpretation of the age of council members is that a council with an average age of below 30 is possibly too young and inexperienced to govern a college with wisdom, while an average age of 60 or more would suggest that the council is on average too old, in that while it brings collective experience and wisdom to the governing process, it does not cater for

youth by bringing new blood into the council. The average age of council members in this college is 45, which compares with a national average and provincial average of 46.

## **Qualifications**

From a qualifications perspective, the possession by a council member of a diploma or above would ensure that members have a certain depth of knowledge in a particular discipline and are therefore well qualified to make judgements about issues of college governance, especially regarding academic matters. At national level, on average 2 council members have qualifications below a diploma. Provincially the average number of council members with a qualification below a diploma is 1, which is the same number for Northlink College. Overall, these figures suggest a relatively high level of education amongst council members.

## **Competence**

The 2006 Act, as indicated earlier, requires broad council competence in a range of specified areas. If all external members have expertise in the same field, however, this will compromise the ability of the council to make decisions requiring expertise in the other specified areas. A balance, therefore, would seem to be required. Collective competence in four of the seven areas would seem to suggest an adequate representation of areas of expertise; anything below four suggests that expertise may be lacking. Nationally, the profile reveals that members are mostly competent in four areas: education, followed by finance, business, and then law. The college council profile reveals that external members are competent in six of seven specified areas: education, business, finance, law, marketing and human resource management. The one area not covered is information technology.

## **Training in portfolio area**

Besides the possession of qualifications and experience in a specified area, council members should ideally have undergone some training in their portfolio areas. A training rate where fewer than half of the council members have been trained in their portfolio area would suggest that the council is not optimally placed to make governance decisions, while a rate of more than half would suggest basic competence in decision making. At the national level, we see that an average of 8 out of 13 council members have received some training in their portfolio area – suggesting a healthy emphasis on training by colleges. At the provincial level an average of 9 members have been trained. In this college, 9 council members have undergone training in their portfolio area. Northlink is typical of the Western Cape in this rating.

While training in a portfolio area would seem to be important, however, exposure to portfolio-specific training in governance is no guarantee of enhanced performance. This aspect was not gauged in the course of the fieldwork.

## **Council meeting attendance, 2009**

One of the concerns around any elected body's functionality is the extent of meeting attendance (let alone meaningful participation). The capacity of a body to make decisions representative of the various constituencies of which it is composed would seem to depend fundamentally on the number of persons either voting for or achieving consensus on a particular issue. Clause 10(2) of the 2006 FET Colleges Act specifies that a council meeting quorum is half plus 1. This suggests that, to be considered adequate, the average attendance of ordinary council meetings in any given college should be above 50%. Poor attendance would therefore be below 50%.

We see from the national profile that the average ordinary council meeting attendance per college in 2009 – an average for the first four meetings for which attendance was indicated by college council secretaries – was 11 out of a national average of 13 members per council. Well above 50% of members attended ordinary council meetings nationally, then – a robust state of affairs. This compares with a provincial average of 11 out of 15 members per college council. Against the backdrop of these national and provincial averages, Northlink College achieved a slightly lower average attendance figure of 10 out of a possible 13 members per ordinary council meeting.

The council chair had numerous points to make about the establishment and functioning of the college council and, in particular, the impact of the FET Colleges Act of 2006 on it. These include:

- There has been continuity in the college's council in that the chair and at least three other members served on the council prior to its re-establishment under the new FET Colleges Act of 2006. The college has also been fortunate in that it was able to tap into expertise in both its current and previous council. Another positive feature in relation to the council is that it is well integrated into the college, which has spent a much time making it feel a part of the college.
- It has been a challenge keeping council members informed about and up-to-date with FET developments and the role they need to play. First there was the new Act in 2006, then the new curriculum in 2007, and in 2008, the national plan. Every year has started with a landscape shift and councillors have been "pretty shell shocked" by it all.
- The FET Act of 1998 required council members to perform a civic duty. On the other hand, the FET Colleges Act of 2006 requires them to play an executive function. The extent of their role and level of responsibility has been a surprise to many councillors. Not only is their role as employer significant, but they also have to make financial decisions. The issue of the extent to which council members can be held personally liable for financial problems has also been a concern.

## **Compliance with FET Act of 2006**

A range of questions in the Governance instrument probed the extent to which FET colleges have complied with specifications of the FET Act of 2006 in three areas: policies, plans and procedures for college governance; financial governance; and governance structure

establishment. (See the Governance instrument for the full set of variables included under these three areas.)<sup>1</sup>

The Governance instrument asked project field-workers to indicate whether colleges had provided *hard* evidence (H) of the existence of a characteristic, *soft*, or spoken (S), evidence of a characteristic, or *no* evidence of a characteristic. Two points per variable were awarded for hard evidence, one for soft evidence, and zero for no evidence. As the Governance table in Section 1 of this report reveals, colleges could score a maximum of 64 points on the “Policies, plans and procedures” section, 12 points on the “Financial governance” section, and 38 points on the “Governance structure establishment” section – a grand total of 114 points.

While the national averages indicate greater compliance with financial governance and governance structure establishment than with policy, plan and procedure establishment, any score less than 100% in each of these three categories – or a total score of 114 – connotes a lack of full compliance, which in terms of corporate governance indicates greater or lesser deficiency.

With regard to “Policies, plans and procedures” – which included questions on the college’s strategic plan, student support, code of conduct and disciplinary measures for staff and students, conditions of employment for staff, the language policy of the college, and the college’s admissions policy – the national average score was 49 (out of 64) per college. The provincial average was 59, and the college score was 47. Surprisingly, Northlink College performs slightly worse than the national average for this (2 points less) and significantly lower than the provincial average (12 points less).

With regard to “Financial governance” – which included questions on college appointment of an auditor and a financial officer, approval of the college’s financial budget, and council determination of tuition and accommodation fees payable by students / employees – the national average score was 10 (out of 12) per college. The provincial average and college score were both 12. This reflects an exemplary level of financial governance in the college and province overall.

With regard to “Governance structure establishment” – which included questions on council establishment of an academic board and students’ representative council, appointment of committees, the composition of the academic board, and the determination of the functions of and procedures at committee meetings – the national average score was 33 (out of 38) per college. The provincial average was 35, and the college score was slightly lower at 34.

From a provincial perspective, the cumulative or overall average score is 105 out of 114. This is well above the national average of 92. The college scores 91 out of 114. This puts the college 1 point lower than the national average score and a high 23 points below the provincial average. In this regard, Northlink does not stand out in relation to its level of FET Act of 2006 compliance.

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<sup>1</sup> The following variables were included under “Policies, plans and procedures”: V4.1-V4.8; V4.18-V4.33; V5.8; V12.2-V12.7. Under “Financial governance” the following were included: V4.9-4.13, and V4.15. Under “Governance structures” the following were included: V1.2-V1.3; V8.1-V8.5; V9.1-V9.4; V9.6-V9.7; V9.9; V11.1-V11.5.

## Staff employment

The staff spreadsheet gauged the extent to which the college had indeed appropriated for itself the role of staff employer as required by the 2006 FET Colleges Act. “Staff” includes all staff of the college (lecturing, management and support), of whom only two – the Principal and his / her deputy – are management staff and appointed by the Member of the Executive Council (Education) in the province.

The profile of staff appointed by the college versus those appointed by the state indicates the colleges’ levels of compliance with the FET Act of 2006. Nationally, an average of 141 staff members were found to have been appointed by the college (council), 144 by the Department of Education: 49% of staff, then, were appointed by the college (council). Since all staff except management were supposed to have been appointed by the college in the wake of the 2006 FET Act, there has been widespread non-compliance with this aspect of the legislation.

Blame for such non-compliance cannot, however, be laid at the door of individual colleges. Before the FET Act of 2006 was enacted, some colleges already had a large number of council-employed staff – due in part to the state’s failure to fill college posts. After the promulgation of the Act, the transfer of departmental staff to colleges was handled provincially rather than at college level. Staff were never fully transferred to colleges, moreover, because of failed negotiations between staff (unions) and the Department of Education over the issue. This resulted in colleges’ retention of all the departmental staff (other than those who elected not to remain in the college) they had prior to the Act. Non-compliance with the staff transfer requirement, therefore, is a systemic rather than a college issue.

A further aggravating factor is that while, in the FET audit, most colleges classified department staff transferred to colleges as department staff, some colleges, depending on their interpretations of the request for information, may have classified these staff as college council employees. This means that while some colleges would have reported that the majority of their staff had been employed by their councils, most colleges will have reported half or fewer than half of their lecturing staff as being employed by their councils (Taylor, 2011).

The declaration arising from the 2010 FET Summit asserted that, henceforth, all *core* staff of the college would be appointed by the DHET, all non-core staff by the college. This distinction mirrors the situation in schools, where School Governing Bodies (SGBs) appoint what the Department of Basic Education would deem “supernumerary” staff to reduce teacher-student ratios in the classroom. The rationale behind the DHET’s decision with regard to FET college staffing is presumably to allow colleges to appoint part-time staff drawn from industry on an ad hoc, modular basis as the need arises.

The irony is that college non-compliance with regard to staffing, whatever the reasons for it, may have simplified the staffing procedures that will follow from the DHET’s new staffing policy.

According to the CEO, transferring department staff to the college brought about various challenges including some associated with centralised bargaining. A key problem is that this

created instability in the college staff establishment. While the state provided stable conditions of employment this now became the responsibility of councils. Acting as employer is not only a big responsibility for councils, it is considerable work and council members in the college's HR committee have had to put in much extra time to deal with appointment issues.

## **COLLEGE MANAGEMENT**

### **Finances**

This section on the management of college finances deals with four areas: the number of colleges with Chief Financial Officers (CFOs); the sources of college funding; receipt of recapitalisation funds; and the number of qualified audits per college.

### **College appointment of CFOs**

Although the FET Colleges Act of 2006 does not demand that colleges appoint CFOs – the requirement is that “The council of a public college must appoint a financial officer” (DoE, 2006: 32(2)) – the person responsible for managing college finances must perforce deal with huge and / or complex budgets and be well versed in the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) and Treasury regulations. The likelihood of a financial officer succeeding in this role is slight. For this reason, some colleges – notably those in the Western Cape – have appointed CFOs.

At the national level, only 14 of the 50 colleges have appointed a CFO – which may contribute to the high number of qualified audits reported by colleges over a three-year period (2007-2009). At the provincial level, all 6 colleges have appointed a CFO including Northlink College. The presence of CFOs in the Western Cape is one of many indicators of comparatively favourable college operation in the province.

### **Sources of college funding**

Whence colleges derive their funding is a key issue for college management. Since all colleges in the FET sector are (in different measures) state-funded, we would expect departmental funding to constitute the largest source of college income. This is assessed in each college in relation to other sources of income.

The question posed in the Management questionnaire concerned the percentage of income derived from sources other than: donations; money raised by the college; money raised through loans; income derived from investments; money from services rendered; student fees; and accommodation or other services. Nationally, 39% of college income was derived from sources other than those listed – which means that nearly three-fifths of college income came from the listed sources, which do not include a grant from the Department of Education. This accounts in large measure for the financial plight in which many colleges find themselves.

At the provincial level, an average of 35% of funding comes from sources other than those listed above. In this college, 14% of the college funds are derived from non-listed sources which include Department of Education grants. This places a significant burden on the college to generate necessary income. In terms of the sources of funding listed above, Northlink College generates the vast majority of its income from student fees.

### **Recapitalisation funding received, 2007-2009**

One major source of income over the period 2007 to 2009 was the Recapitalisation Fund, set up by the state to inject colleges with much-needed capital to position them to become major players in the post-school education and training landscape. An excerpt from the 21 June 2006 Minutes of the Education and Recreation Select Committee of the Parliamentary Monitoring Group looking at the recapitalisation of FET colleges (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2006) is worth quoting from extensively in this regard, since it encapsulates the context within which the Recapitalisation Fund was established:

Ms Penny Vinjevoold (Deputy Director-General: Further Education and Training (FET), DOE) addressed the Committee .... She explained that the recapitalisation of the Further Education and Training Colleges (FET Colleges) was aiming to address the problem of unemployed youth in the country. At present 87% of children were enrolled in secondary schools, and the FET colleges had the least enrolment in South Africa. The Department aimed to improve the quality of the programmes offered and increase the enrolment in the colleges. The old N1 to N6 programs were out of date and were not leading to employment. These programmes would be phased out from 2007. The FET colleges did have the capacity and infrastructure, Treasury had given R1,9 billion for the recapitalisation process and thirteen new programmes would be introduced in 2007.

Against this backdrop, this college report seeks to pit the recapitalisation amount received by the college against the average amounts received by colleges nationally and provincially. From the Management table in Section 1 we see that the national average was R39,316,380. The provincial average in the Western Cape was R37,884,167, while this particular college received an amount of R 40,850,000. This is higher than the provincial and national averages. Since the Recapitalisation amounts received by colleges depended on the nature and strengths of their submissions for funding, however, the reasons for the differentials in the amounts received by colleges in a province and by the different provinces in the country are not strictly comparable. A sizeable proportion of the fund in this college was spent on: building new classrooms (35%), purchasing equipment (33%) developing/purchasing curriculum/programme materials (11%) and upgrading of college sites (10%).

### **Qualified audits per college, 2007 to 2009**

An *unqualified* audit is issued when it is the opinion of a firm's auditors that its financial statements are fairly presented in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). Such an audit does not necessarily mean that the firm is financially strong or that its future is favourable, since even financially weak firms generally receive unqualified audits (Financial Dictionary, 2010b). A *qualified* audit is issued when an auditor states that he/she is

unable to render a full opinion about a company's finances, or a portion thereof, because the company's accounting does not meet with GAAP or because the information was for some reason incomplete. In other words, a qualified opinion states that the company's accounting is so inadequate that the auditor cannot render an opinion (Financial Dictionary, 2010b).

Nationally we see that, on average, each college in the country received a qualified audit in two of the three years (2007, 2008 and 2009) under review. This is a poor reflection on the accounting capacity of colleges, underscoring the need for a CFO to be appointed in each college. This said, the appointment of a CFO is no guarantee either of the financial soundness of a college or of its capacity to receive an unqualified audit – though a competent CFO is likely to be an asset to any organisation.

Provincially, the figure is 1 qualified audit per college over the 3-year period. This college did not receive any qualified audits in the period under review.

## **Reports**

Each FET college, as per the 2006 Act, needs to submit a number of specified reports to its council on an annual basis. The measure here is of the composite number of management, student academic performance, financial audit and annual reports submitted to council over a three-year period (2007-2009). The college should score 22 to 24 points on this measure to be compliant (two points for the existence of hard evidence, one for soft evidence, and zero for no evidence). The annual report for 2009 may not have been produced yet at the time of the survey, in May / June 2010 – hence the small margin of error.

Nationally, we see that, on average, each college scored 19 out of 24 points on this measure. This suggests that colleges across the board are falling short of the requirement of the Act, if only by a small margin. Both provincially and in this college the figure is 20, which is slightly above the national average.

## **Further Education and Training Management Information System (FETMIS) and Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**

FET college management of information is one of the more critical aspects of its operational capacity. In an information age where the collection and storage of data are computerised, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Management Information Systems (MIS) are often synonymous. The FET audit ascertained that in practice the two are indeed inextricably linked – MIS relying entirely on the ICT platform in place in the college.

The Management instrument sought to ascertain which particular system was used in each of the 50 colleges. In the light of the fact that many colleges have traditionally used the COLTECH system, we briefly review this system here.

On its web-site (COLTECH, 2010), COLTECH describes itself as having been established in 1990 to provide training to staff members of technical colleges (hence the name). In June 1991, COLTECH bought an administration system used by five colleges since 1990 with all rights. This system was revamped, and reference manuals and training manuals were written, leading to the implementation of the first COLTECH system in June 1992. Between

1992 and 2000 the number of users increased to more than 110 technical colleges, community colleges and schools. There are purportedly more than 30 colleges of education using the system.

The first measure used here reports on the system most commonly used nationally, provincially and in the college in question. Nationally, we see that the COLTECH system is most widely used; 28 of the 50 colleges use this system. MIS usage tends to be provincially determined. For example, in the Free State and KwaZulu-Natal all colleges use the COLTECH system, in the North West the DB 2000 system, while in the Eastern Cape, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the Western Cape, almost all colleges uses the same, provincially-determined, system. In Gauteng, however, half the colleges use COLTECH, the other half other systems.

COLTECH is also the predominant system used in the Western Cape. In contrast, Northlink College uses the Integrated Tertiary System (ITS).

The questions in the Management instrument from which the second composite variable used here – Effectiveness of college usage of ICT (regardless of the name of the system) – were constructed have to do with e-mail connectivity, internet access, inter-campus connectivity, college-Department communication, web-site management, use of ICT in the teaching / learning process and in student support, and ICT support and maintenance. As in the case of the Compliance section in the Governance instrument reported on above, two points were awarded for the existence of hard evidence, one for soft / spoken evidence, and zero for no evidence of the characteristic. Nationally, each college scored, on average, 29 out of a possible 42 points on this measure – suggesting that colleges collectively have a long way to go in meeting the needs of their end users (whether staff, students, stakeholders, or their education line managers). The Western Cape scores an average of 39. This college scores 32 which is 3 points above the national score and 7 points below the provincial score. Even though Northlink appears to have a very well established and effective ICT system, it lost points in this category as it could only supply soft evidence for some of the criteria rated and its website was not up-to-date.

### **Skills development-related Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)**

The number of skills development-related MOUs between a college and external stakeholders (education and training institutions, Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and industries) is in all likelihood a strong measure of the responsiveness of the college to the skills demands of the labour market. MOUs below are considered according to six categories:

1. Business
2. Local communities
3. SETAs
4. Other (non-SETA) education and training institutions
5. Local government departments and municipalities; and
6. Other institutions not yet mentioned.

Across the board, there are very few MOUs with external stakeholders at both national and provincial levels. Whether this is a function of incomplete reporting by colleges themselves or by the fieldworkers who verified this reporting is not clear; it may be that colleges disclose further MOUs when they verify the accuracy of the current report.

The average number of MOUs with business at the national level is 2 per college, while the average number of MOUs with SETAs, Other education and training institutions, and Local government departments and municipalities is 1 per college. Nationally there are on average no MOUs with local communities or other (unspecified) institutions. Particularly noteworthy, from an FET Summit policy perspective, is the paucity of MOUs with SETAs – one of the key indicators of college success as identified at the FET Summit itself.<sup>2</sup>

The province averages 3 MOUs with business, 2 with local communities, 2 with other education and training institutions, 1 with SETAs, 1 with local government and 2 with other institutions. The average total score for the province is 11 while the overall score for the college is 12. This is slightly higher than the provincial average number of MOUs and much higher than the national average total of 5 MOUs. The break down for Northlink College is 3 MOUs respectively with business, local communities, and other education and training institutions, as well 1 MOU with a SETA and 2 with other institutions. While the fieldworkers did not see evidence of additional MOUs with any other SETAs or stakeholder groups, the scope of Northlink College's dealings with business and SETAs from a programme perspective suggests that it may have additional MOUs with these two stakeholder groups.

## STAFF PROFILE

### Profile of academic staff

#### Race and gender

Section 7 of the 2006 FET Colleges Act specifies that lecturers and support staff be employed with due regard to: ability; equity; redress of past injustices; and representivity. Three of the four have a particular bearing on race, gender and disability.

In 2002 (Powell & Hall, 2004), 54% of lecturing staff nationally were black, while 46% were white. While this reflects an improvement on the 1998 profile, where only 39% of the lecturing staff were black, it nonetheless paints a skewed picture of racial distribution in a country where nine out of ten persons are black. The profile in 2010, 16 years into democracy, reveals that 77% of lecturing staff are black – as against a black student population in 2010 of 96%. While 77% reflects a 23 percentage point improvement within an eight-year period, it continues to reflect a lack of black representation in the staff complement.

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<sup>2</sup> The Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, made an impassioned plea at the Summit both to SETAs and to industry to forge partnerships with the colleges to offer qualification programmes which would be SETA-accredited.

The gender profile is somewhat less encouraging. In 2002 (Powell & Hall, 2004), 47% of lecturing staff were female. That percentage has not changed in eight years. Attempts will need to be made to grow the female quotient to 52% – the percentage of females in the general population. The odds, it may be argued, are stacked against women in a largely technical arena. Engineering and business studies have dominated N-programme provision since inception, and five of the NC(V) programme areas – Management, Building & civil construction, Engineering & related design, Electrical infrastructure construction, and Mechatronics – are traditionally male-dominated preserves. But as the student enrolment profile in universities has shown (Cosser with Sehlola, 2009), while 29% of male students who were in grade 12 in 2005 enrolled in business / commerce programmes (rather than in other programme areas) in universities in 2006, 32% of female students did so. This suggests that the business-oriented programmes in the NC(V) – Office administration; Marketing; and Finance, economics & accounting – as well as programmes such as Information technology & computer science, Primary agriculture, Hospitality, Tourism, and Education, training & development should be able to attract more female students. And if more female students enter these fields, the lecturing staff component should follow suit.

With a female academic staff quotient of 63%, which is higher than the provincial and national averages, women are in fact over-represented at Northlink College. This is also the case at provincial level, although less so, with 57% of the academic staff being female. In terms of racial representivity, 55% of the college staff were black at the time of the audit. While this is below acceptable racial representivity figures, it is slightly better than the provincial figure of 54%. Overall, these figures suggest that racial transformation has not occurred optimally at this college and in the province more generally.

According to the CEO, transformation with regard to employment equity is ongoing and a real challenge. He noted that experience in the sector is a scarce commodity. As such staff recruitment thus needs to be a focus.

## **Age**

The staff profile table indicates the average age of lecturing staff across the college sector. An average age of above 55 would seem to be too high, suggesting that no new blood is coming into the college and that skills transfer to the younger generation is not occurring. Older staff, moreover, may not be the best placed persons to teach on the NC(V), some college principals suggesting that older staff struggle to appropriate new teaching methodologies.

From the profiles we see that, nationally, the average age of lecturing staff in 2010 is 39; provincially it is 45, and in this college it is 47. These figures suggest an equitable distribution of younger and older staff across the system. Nationally, the average age of lecturing staff in 2002 was 42 (Powell & Hall, 2004). The average age of staff has therefore hovered around the 40-year mark over the past 8 years. This suggests that there has been a steady influx of new staff to replace ageing or retiring staff.

## Qualifications

The National Business Initiative report of 2004 (Powell & Hall, 2004) deemed lecturing staff with less than a diploma to be un- or under-qualified, and therefore considered staff with a diploma to be qualified. However, in this report our benchmark for qualified staff is staff with a degree or higher diploma. The benchmark here is the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (the NPFTED – DoE, 2007), which specifies that all school-teachers are to be degreed. Such a requirement would seem to be equally, if not more, important in the context of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) at the FET (i.e., grade 10-12-equivalent) level *and above*, given that FET colleges now fall within the higher education and training band by virtue of their inclusion within the DHET.

In 2002, the percentage of lecturing staff with less than a degree / higher diploma was 54%. In 2010, we see that, nationally, 57% of lecturing staff have less than a degree / higher diploma, which indicates not only that there has been a regression in the qualifications levels of staff but that nearly half of all lecturing staff nationally are not deemed qualified by the NPFTED standard. Universities of technology will have to work with colleges to ensure that their staff achieve higher mean rates of qualification. At the provincial level, 45% of lecturing staff have less than a degree / higher diploma and are thus underqualified. In this college, 60% are at this level. While the rest of the province performs on average almost 10% better than the rest of the country, Northlink falls below both national and provincial standards with regard to the formal qualification level of its lecturers.

Qualification level is not the only measure of lecturer effectiveness, however. Staff experience in industry and teaching experience in the college are equally important measures in determining lecturer qualification for the job. In this regard, the national profile reveals that 74% of lecturers in 2010 had three or more years' experience in industry, and that 58% had three or more years' experience in college teaching (in their present college).

## Staff ratios

### Lecturer-student ratio

It is a truism that the smaller the class, the more individual attention students receive, the higher their academic performance should be. A consideration of the lecturer-student ratio in colleges is therefore important. In 2002 (Powell & Hall, 2004), the lecturer-student ratio was 1 : 20. In 2010, the ratio is 1 : 32. This means that class sizes have increased significantly over the decade to a ratio approximating the norm proposed for the schooling system (between 1 : 35 and 1 : 40). An essentially favourable lecturer : student ratio in the college system does suggest, however, that student outcomes should be much better than they are. Provincially, the ratio is 1 : 26. The ratio for this college is 1 : 27. On average, the province has a more favourable lecturer to student ratios than the rest of the country.

### Lecturer-support staff ratio

The ratio of lecturing to support staff may be a measure of how much emphasis an institution places on the teaching / learning process. A strong lecturing staff contingent may convey this

message. At the same time, an under-staffed support structure may place undue administrative burdens on lecturing staff, impacting negatively on teaching time. Balance is therefore required. In 2002 (Powell & Hall, 2004), the lecturer-support staff ratio nationally was 1.9 : 1 (or 65 : 35, in percentage terms). By 2010 this had shifted to a ratio of 60% : 40%, indicating a slight shift towards a larger administrative staff complement over the decade. Provincially, the ratio of lecturing to support staff is 55% : 45%. The ratio for this college is 54% : 46%.

While the data seem to indicate a favourable lecturer to support staff ratio, however, this does not necessarily mean that lecturers are well supported. In a college environment lecturers do not have direct administrative support. While there may appear to be a sufficiently large number of support staff, however, given that such a complement includes staff in central offices (managers, PAs and administrators) and at campus level (campus managers, receptionists, and grounds and hostel staff), lecturing staff are largely responsible for their own administration (Taylor, 2011). Time spent out of the classroom, then, is likely to be devoted to the very high administrative load attached to offering NC(V) programmes.

### **Full-time to part-time lecturer ratio**

According to Hall (1999), we would expect – based on the large number of instructional offerings – to see a range of full-time versus part-time lecturing staff in colleges. Ninety-three percent of lecturing staff in KwaZulu-Natal technical colleges in 1998 were on full-time contracts – which for Hall pointed to the high cost of employing part-time staff.

With the introduction of the NC(V), however, the provisioning dynamics have changed. In 2010, the national ratio of full- to part-time lecturing staff was 88 : 12, still heavily skewed towards full-time staff – but hardly surprising given that colleges are funded to provide full-time NC(V) programmes. When colleges do provide learnership and skills programmes they usually contract in staff, predominantly on a part-time basis, to offer them. Such staff are remunerated from the funds received for the particular programmes being provided (Taylor, 2011).

Provincially, the picture is significantly different. The Western Cape has a full-time to part-time staff ratio of 78 : 22 – almost double the national average for part-time staff. The ratio for this in Northlink College is 84 : 14 which is very similar to that of the national average.

The FET Summit provision for colleges to appoint non-core staff may be interpreted as an invitation to colleges to expand their programme provision through the appointment of part-time staff. However, the funding for such appointments would clearly have to come either from colleges themselves or through partnerships with SETAs and the private sector.

College-SETA and college-private sector partnerships increasingly became a core dimension of the programme mix, particularly in the more “settled” colleges, in the years (2004-2006) immediately preceding the onset of the NC(V) dispensation. In other words, colleges embraced demand-led, unit standard-based, NQF-aligned provisioning (learnerships, NQF-aligned qualifications, skills programmes, and the like) in partnership with external stakeholders. Such delivery was largely driven by contracted, part-time teaching staff – almost a separate provisioning stream – and human resource departments out of necessity had to adapt their systems to facilitate the recruitment and appointment of suitable staff. This

state of institutional adjustment effectively came to a halt as a result of the all-consuming demands of NC(V)-alignment and –implementation (Garisch, 2011).

## **Teaching load**

The issue of teaching load explains the staff complement, the extent to which lecturing staff are over- or under-extended, and the extent to which staff can give individual attention to students. In most cases, lecturer time is devoted to teaching (theory and / or practicals), lesson preparation, marking, and general administrative duties. Nationally, the average number of periods per week spent on teaching theory and running practicals is 20 – which in a 40-hour week leaves half lecturers' time for non-contact duties (preparation, marking, and administrative responsibilities). While this would seem to reflect a balanced allocation of time and human resources, however, the inordinately large administrative burden imposed by the NC(V) probably, as indicated above, accounts for the large majority of this non-contact time.

A limitation of this indicator lies in the fact that teaching periods are of different lengths – some 60 minutes, some 35 minutes, and some possibly of other lengths – depending on the post level. It would therefore have made more sense for the instrument to have asked colleges to indicate the number of *hours* taught per week.

## **Staff disruptions to teaching / learning**

Staff disruptions are a sign of staff dissatisfaction with an aspect of their jobs, which impacts negatively on productivity, morale, the teaching / learning process, and student behaviour (the ripple effect of staff disruption). Disruptions may be symptomatic of management problems, governance concerns, or other issues. Staff disruptions impact negatively on the image of the institution, which is likely to affect student enrolment decisions. Even *one* staff disruption per year, of whatever nature and whatever the cause, is detrimental to an institution.

Nationally, every college on average experienced 1 staff disruption over the three-year period (2008-2010), which systemically reflects very poorly on the FET college sector as a whole. At the provincial level and at this college, however, there were no staff disruptions for this period. This stands out from the national profile positively, again showing the comparatively high functioning capacity of Western Cape colleges.

## **Academic staff loss and gain**

The anecdotal sense of the writing team from visits to the colleges – collectively, covering in the region of twenty colleges – was that there was a net *loss* of lecturing staff over the three-year period. However, the data firmly contradict this.

In terms of average net loss / gain over the three-year period under investigation, we see that at national level there was an average gain of 46 lecturing staff and at the provincial level a net gain of 47, which is considerably higher than the national average. Conversely, Northlink College shows a loss in staff which, at -25, starkly contrasts with the national and provincial averages. While the college experienced an overall loss of staff in the audit period, on

average, all colleges experienced a relatively high turnover in this period. Northlink College's largest loss of staff occurred in 2008 when significantly more staff were lost than gained.

At the level of staff turnover, nevertheless, we calculate from the national profile figures that, across the three years, an average of 7 staff left each college per trimester; and if we compare these losses with the average number of lecturing staff per college (167 nationally), we see that staff turnover amounted to 4% per trimester.<sup>3</sup>

The main cause of staff loss – resignation – is reported in Table 3 in Section 1 of this report – on the assumption, made at the instrument design stage, that there would have been a net loss, not gain, of staff given the changes in employment conditions of staff following the promulgation of the FET Act of 2006. The reasons for net gain have not been probed, but are likely to be due to the need to appoint staff to teach on the NC(V) programmes in addition to the N-programmes, as well as to replace staff losses.

At the provincial level, resignation is the main cause of staff loss. Northlink College exhibits the same pattern, with resignation being the main cause of staff turnover.

### **Academic staff development, 2009**

Academic staff development is important not only for enhancing lecturers' knowledge and understanding of their areas of expertise but for its impact on student academic performance. Where new curricula (for example, the NC(V)) are introduced, it is imperative that lecturers learn not only *what* to teach but *how* to teach the new programme.

### **Proportion of staff trained**

Deciding what an acceptable level of training is will depend on the training model (cascaded down from the Department of Education) and the qualifications of staff, as well as the reduced need for training this implies). At the national level, we see that, on average, 65% of staff were trained across the entire college system in 2009.<sup>4</sup> For three-quarters of lecturing staff to have undergone some form of staff development represents a high level of training – a level nevertheless incommensurate with the poor academic results of college students across the system, as reported on below. Provincially, 88% of lecturing staff received some training. At this college, 52% of staff have undergone some form of skills development. This figure is considerably below the provincial and national averages.

### **Time spent on training**

Nationally, each academic staff member trained spent on average a total of 10 days on training. Again, the acceptability of this figure depends on the type and purpose of the training – though 10 days per staff member means 10 days (or two working weeks) out of the

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<sup>3</sup> Total loss of staff over three years = 61. Divided by 3 to obtain an annual average, this is 20.3; and divided by 3 again to obtain a trimester average, this is 6.8 (rounded off to 7).

<sup>4</sup> Data for this and the next calculation (of the average number of days spent on staff training per annum) came from two sources: the FET audit, which accounts for the data for 34 of the 50 colleges; and the FETMIS database, which accounts for the data for the remaining 16 colleges.

classroom. Provincially, the figure is lower, at 3 working days. In this college, 1 working day during 2009 was spent on academic staff development. On the whole it would appear that nationally, staff went on longer training courses in 2009, while in the Western Cape, including Northlink College, brief training sessions were the focus of training.

### **Proportion of staff expenditure on staff development**

Nationally, the audit revealed that, on average, 1.4% of colleges' total expenditure went on academic staff development over the 2009/10 period (7 colleges did not supply data for this calculation). It is difficult to pronounce on the acceptability of this figure; but given that companies pay 1% of their annual *payroll* to the SETA under which they fall, the staff development expenditure figure would seem to be acceptable. The impact of staff development, however, is not easily measurable: one needs to control for other factors that may explain improvements in staff performance. But where there are obvious benefits of development that lead, for example, to staff attainment of qualifications, staff promotions, improved assessment and moderation practices, and improved student outcomes that are demonstrably due to staff training, such development would seem to be justified.

At the provincial level, 0.6% of total expenditure went on staff development. Northlink College spent 0.4% of total expenditure on staff development in 2009 –less than the province and less than a third of the national average spending on staff development. Overall, in the audit period, Western Cape Colleges spent significantly less on average than other colleges.

## **STUDENT PROFILE**

### **Demography**

#### **Gender**

While in 2002 (Powell & Hall, 2004) a total of 40% of students enrolled in colleges were female, by 2010 this figure had risen to 52% – which is exactly representative of the proportion of females in the general population. The implications of this shift at the systemic level are enormous: females are now fully represented in the college sector. However, this figure masks differences that may obtain at programmatic and course levels, not to mention at faculty / department / school management levels.

This college has a female population of 38% which is 14% short of meeting gender representivity requirements. On average the figure in the province for this is 55%, indicating that there is greater representation of female students in other colleges in the province. Addressing gender representivity should certainly be on Northlink College's agenda.

#### **Race**

From a race perspective, 96% of students nationally are black, which is higher by 6% than the percentage of black people in the general population and in fact *over*-representative of the black population. The effect of this is the displacement of the 2002 figure of 17% of white

students in the college sector (Powell & Hall, 2004) into other institutional types (presumably universities) and therefore, ironically, the continued marginalisation of black African learners.

The provincial and college figures for percentage black student enrolments are similar – 90% and 81% respectively. Based on the general population nationally, black people are slightly under-represented at the college.

## **Disability**

With regard to disability, the Code of Good Practice on the Employment of People with Disabilities (DoL, 2002) provides a framework for the recruitment and selection of persons with disabilities which would apply equally within the FET college sector as within all other workplaces.

Nationally, 0.1% of students enrolled over the 2008-2010 period were reportedly disabled. This percentage is based on data from only 24 of the 50 colleges, however, and is therefore unreliable. At the provincial level 0.9% of enrolled students were disabled. The percentage of disabled students for this college is unknown as this data was not provided.

## **Age**

The age of South African technical college / FET college students has traditionally set them apart from their international counterparts. Whereas students in the Australian TAFE system, for example, span age categories across the traditional student and working-age spectrum (58% of TAFE graduates in 1999 were older than 24 – NCVET, 1999: 40), South African students are on average far younger. Thus, for example, in 2002 (Powell & Hall, 2004) the largest proportion of students (42%) were 20 to 24 years old, followed by 15 to 19 year olds (23%), 25 to 29 year olds (18%), 30 to 34 year olds (9%), 35 to 40 year olds (5%) and 41-plus-year-olds (4%).

The 2010 cohort reveals that, nationally, three-quarters (76%) of students were under 24 at the time of the survey in May / June. Fifty-six percent of students fell into the 20 to 24 year age category – an increase of 14 percentage points over the 2002 figure. From a comparative perspective – comparing the 2010 data with the NBI (Powell & Hall, 2004) distribution – South African college students are on average getting younger: whereas in 2002, 36% of students were older than 24, in 2010 only 24% of students are older than 24. One of the greatest challenges confronting the sector is to attract working-age persons into colleges to upgrade their skills and for colleges not to be seen as the exclusive preserve of school leavers. This is not to gainsay the importance of the sector as a stepping stone to university study for those pursuing technical and / or technological subjects, but only to flag the importance of developing an older cohort of student workers through a strengthened relationship between colleges and industry.

In the Western Cape we find that 29% of students fall in the 15 to 19 year bracket with 44% in the 20 to 24 year bracket, 11% in the 25 to 29 year bracket, 6% in the 30 to 34 year bracket and older students make up the remaining 10%. At this college 23% of students are between the ages of 15 to 19, 46% fall into the 20 to 24 year bracket, and 13% in the 25 to 29 year bracket. Older students make up the remaining 18%. We see from these figures that

this college closely follows the national distribution pattern in that the majority of students fall into the 15 to 24 year age group.

## **Home province**

The home province of students is an important variable because it indicates the extent to which students choose, or have, to migrate to access FET college learning. The assumption behind FET institutional planning is that all students should be able, and want, to enrol in colleges in their home provinces. However, in the 2010 profile we see that almost 1 in 10 students nationally (9%) migrated to other provinces to access a college education. Without probing the reasons for this, we can speculate that student migration is a sub-set of the larger migration patterns we see in the country, where large numbers of the population migrate from rural to more urbanised provinces, particularly where there are greater perceived employment prospects. Thus, for example, a previous HSRC study (Kok, Gelderblom, Oucho & Van Zyl, 2005) has shown that while the Western Cape and Gauteng are net importers of people, the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and the northern provinces contiguous with Gauteng (the North West, Limpopo and Mpumalanga) are net exporters of people.

From the 32 college profiles that provided the FET audit data for this calculation, we see that the Kok et al. finding is indeed borne out in the Gauteng figures: a massive 29% of students enrolled in colleges in the province hailed from other provinces. The KwaZulu-Natal profile contradicts the Kok et al. finding, however: according to the FET audit, 10% of students studying in the province's colleges came from other provinces to do so. Similarly, 15% of Mpumalanga students came from other provinces – the only data likely to be fairly reliable, since all 3 colleges in the province keep migration data. Because of the high proportion of missing data, then, the findings as a whole, and particularly the national findings, should be treated with caution.

## **Financial support**

From a national planning perspective it is clearly very important for the DHET to be able to plan its successive budgets according to the current profile of students accessing study loans and bursaries. Hence the focus in this report on National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) funding of students. Such an exercise also throws light upon the financial situations of students and their parents' / guardians' income levels. The increased use of NSFAS support may be indicative of the extent to which information about student support is made available to students and potential students in colleges and in their communities.

Collection of data on student financial support is also important for the college in terms of its request for annual subsidy for student fees from the Department of Education.

From the 2010 FET audit we see that 58% of students nationally (N = 22 colleges only) were not recipients of financial support. If this figure is indeed representative of the country as a whole, it underscores the significance of the DHET decision to fund all financially needy FET college students enrolled in 2011. The figure of 58% not in receipt of financial support compares with a figure of 44% in the province and 96% in this college. As such, Northlink

College deviates from the trend of students in the Western Cape securing funding more readily than students in the rest of the country.

Of the 42% of students who did receive support, 36% nationally received support from the NSFAS, 6% from non-NSFAS sources. A calculation from statistics in NSFAS (NSFAS, 2010) and DBE (2010) reveals that 53,537 of the 420,475 students enrolled in FET colleges in 2009 received NSFAS funding (13% of the students enrolled in that year), which would suggest that the NSFAS-funded student figures from the FET audit are hugely inflated.

By way of comparison, a calculation from statistics in the same two sources (NSFAS, 2010; DBE, 2010) reveals that 138,235 of the 837,779 students enrolled in universities in 2009 (17%) received NSFAS funding. Very similar proportions of FET college and university students were therefore recipients of NSFAS financial support in 2009.

Provincially, 36% of students were supported by the NSFAS and 20% of students received non-NSFAS funding support. As such, significantly more students in the province (19% more) receive NSFAS than non-NSFAS funding. No data was provided on this by the college so no comparison can be made. Overall, non-NSFAS sources of funding are more plentiful in the Western Cape than the rest of the country at 25% and 7% of the funding provided respectively.

### **Student disruptions to teaching / learning**

Student disruptions may have various causes: symptoms of dissatisfaction with certain aspects of college management, administration, or teaching, including finance, fees, meals and accommodation; first-year students' ball and other social events; orientation and initiation practices; or unhappiness with lecturers – to name some of the more common ones. Or there may be external causes, such as service delivery protests in the community – which upsets learning by virtue of student involvement in such protests or the intimidation of students by those members of the community who are protesting.

As in the case of staff disruptions, nationally every college experienced, on average, 1 student disruption over the three-year period (2007-2009). The impact of such disruptions on student academic performance is incalculable, but is likely to be large.

Provincially, the average number of student disruptions per college over the three-year period was zero and the same was true for the college.

### **Student enrolments by programme type**

In 2002 (Powell & Hall, 2004), 86% of students enrolled in colleges were enrolled in N-programmes, the balance (14%) in non-N (i.e., non-accredited) programmes. In 2010, by contrast, 58% of students nationally were enrolled in NC(V) programmes, 32% in N-programmes, and the balance (10%) in other programmes (adult learning, skills, learnership, and NIC programmes). At the provincial level, 48% of students were enrolled in NC(V) programmes, 22% in N-programmes and the balance (30%) in Other programmes. At this college we see that 18% of students were enrolled in NC(V) programmes, 44% in N-programmes and 38% in non-NC(V), non-N programmes.

The prevailing overall trend is that the NC(V) programmes have become dominant, growing in reaction to policy requirements. While this is so, on average Western Cape colleges have fewer enrolments for NC(V) and N-programmes than the national averages and significantly more enrolments for other programmes. Northlink College follows this pattern in the sense that it has fewer enrolments for NC(V) programmes and more enrolments for other programmes than the national averages, but the similarity stops there. As a proportion of its total student population, Northlink's enrolments for NC(V) programmes are very low – they are 41% below the national average and 30% below the provincial average. On the other hand, its enrolments for N-programmes are very high – these are 12% above the national average and 22% above the provincial average. The college's enrolments for other programmes are also very high – they are 29% above the national average and 8% above the provincial average.

These figures show that Northlink College has not shifted from N to NC(V) programmes to the same extent as other colleges. When one takes the other programme category into account, it is also clear that the programme offering at the college is highly diversified. An analysis of Northlink's programme offering shows that the college offers a wide range of programmes in most fields of training. While most are in the FET band, the college has a fairly significant focus on HE programmes. Its programme offering includes:

- Eleven NCV programmes including electives for a number of these programmes;
- N1 to N6 N programmes (N programmes are available in all fields);
- Six learnerships;
- A large number of skills, competency based and occupational / NQF programmes;
- A large number of trade tests; and
- Foundational programmes for the NCV and an access programme for CPUT.

Expansion of the FET college sector is henceforth to be driven by a Programme Qualifications Mix (PQM) approach (FET Summit Task Team 2, 2010). The proposal reads as follows:

This proposal assumes that there is a need for institutional diversity, that not all colleges will provide the same programmes and that the exact programme and qualification mix will be determined based on an agreed upon set of criteria .... One consequence of this diversity will be that individual colleges may develop areas of special programmatic expertise. In these areas they may well offer a spread of programmes across a range of related occupational areas and across more than one level on the NQF. They may also develop more structured partnerships with relevant SETAs. This will enable learners to progress from one occupational level to the next at the same college. Such colleges may well form programmatic partnerships with relevant universities of technology and other universities.

The enrolment profile depicted above provides clear guidelines for how differentiation by programme offering and thence expansion of the college sector might proceed.

### **Student exit from the college**

The FET audit revealed that very few colleges nationally – only 17 out of 50 (N = 44) – keep exit data on students. This lack of key data renders claims about the employability of FET college graduates highly unreliable. Since so few colleges actually keep student exit data, however, these figures are hardly representative. The key finding here is in fact the paucity of colleges keeping data on student destinations – an important task for colleges in the context of unsubstantiated claims about the employability of FET college graduates. Provincially, the situation is better where half (3 out of 6) of the colleges keep exit data. Northlink College is one of these.

## **EFFICIENCY RATES, 2007-2009**

The importance of efficiency indicators cannot be overemphasized: they provide an indication of how efficient a college is in terms of student performance – the key responsibility of colleges. The standard of a college is judged by the academic performance of its students.

The efficiency indicators reported below refer to the throughput rates of students in the colleges over a three-year period (2007-2009). The throughput rate is calculated by dividing the number of students who pass an examination by the number of students who enrolled for the programme for which the examination constitutes the summative assessment. In other words, unlike pass rates, which divide the number of students who pass as a percentage of the number of students who sat for the examination, the throughput rate includes those students who dropped out of the course during the trimester or year.

The throughput rates discussed here do not trace a cohort of students from one year of study to another – which is ideally the best way to assess student performance. Rather, the rates measure throughput in the course of each of the three years and then across the three-year period.

Throughput rates are reported by programme type – that is: NATED, NC(V), and “Other”. The latter type includes general education, learnerships, skills programmes, adult learning programmes, national introductory courses (NICs), and “other” programmes not mentioned. Disaggregations are not provided here, since the focus is on headcount enrolments and not student enrolments across the different courses that make up a programme (where there would obviously be duplications of headcount enrolments).

The data below are not likely to be completely reliable. Their unreliability may be a function of various factors, five being the following. First, the national examinations section of the Department of Education may not have furnished colleges with examination results timeously. Second, there may have been poor moderation and quality assurance of data. Third, missing data in the tables in Section 1 may be attributable to lack of administrative capacity in the college supplying the data. Fourth, many colleges supplied data on student enrolments but not on student passes. A zero or lack of response may have been interpreted

by the fieldworker as missing data, notwithstanding careful re-checking of the data against the Profiles and Efficiency Indicators questionnaire after the data capturing phase. And fifth, with regard to NC(V) throughput rates, not all colleges interpreted “passed” as students who passed all seven subjects in the NC(V); anecdotal evidence suggests that some colleges may have interpreted “passed” as “passed five subjects”, some as “passed four subjects”.

Another difficulty lies in the interpretation of data for the calculation of the throughput rate for NATED programmes. At the time of the research the NATED programmes were being phased out, hence the drastic decrease in numbers in the years 2007-2009. In 2009 some colleges had no new intake: the students who enrolled did so for the purposes of completing incomplete qualifications. Because large numbers of these students were not registered for full qualifications, potential certifications were not considered. Such colleges, for statistical purposes, counted only those students who were registered for a full qualification, for example, all four subjects on the same level. It appears that not all colleges interpreted certification statistics in the same manner.

With these provisos, we see that, at the macro level, students enrolled for N-programmes perform, on average, better than students enrolled for NC(V) programmes, and that students enrolled for “Other” programmes perform much better than students in the other two programme types. The national average throughput rate for N-programmes is 47%, for NC(V) programmes it is 30%, and for “Other” programmes it is 66%. Expressed differently, for every 100 students who enrolled for Other programmes, 34 either failed or dropped out; for every 100 students who enrolled for N-programmes, 53 either failed or dropped out; and for every 100 students who enrolled for NC(V) programmes, a massive 70 students failed or dropped out. The throughput rates for N-Programmes and NC(V) programmes are alarmingly low, the rate for Other programmes significantly higher. These are not flattering figures by any standards, and point to the amount of work FET colleges need to do to persuade their line managers and their clients alike (students, their parents / guardians, and the nation at large) that the colleges are, at worst, functional.

A comparison between these rates and those of students seven years ago, in 2002 (Powell & Hall, 2004) – when the NC(V) programme was of course not offered – reveals that the throughput rate of students enrolled for N-programmes at the post-N3 level in 2002 was 57%, at the FET level (i.e., N1, N2 and N3) 47%. The 2009 throughput rate of 45% is marginally lower than in 2002 at the FET level and significantly lower at the combined level (i.e., N1 through N6), where the rate was 52%.

While it is not possible to make a direct comparison between the FET college and schooling sectors – since the Department of Education publishes examination results for matriculants and not for all students enrolled in grades 10 to 12 (DoE, 2010) – it is nevertheless instructive to compare the throughput rate of students enrolled for the NC(V) in 2008 (the latest results available) with that of students enrolled for grade 12. Such a comparison reveals that while the throughput rate of FET college students enrolled for NC(V) programmes in 2008 was 28%, the throughput rate of those enrolled in grade 12 in schools was 58% – more than double that of college students. There is, proverbially, no comparison between the results of students of the two sectors.

Furthermore, the trimester and semester enrolment options within colleges render annual throughput rates misleading as students can enrol in the third trimester of a year and complete a learning programme six months later, in the next year. For this reason, the above comparisons – between the 2002 and 2009 throughput rates in colleges and between the 2008 throughput rates in colleges and schools – should be taken to be merely indicative.

At the provincial level, the throughput rates are: 62% for N programmes; 20% for NC(V) programmes; and 69% for Other programmes. This mimics the national pattern, with learners faring better in N-programmes than in NC(V) courses and Other programmes exhibiting throughput rates that are significantly higher than the other two programme types. The throughput rate for this college for NC(V) programmes is 20% which is worse than the national average for these but is typical of the province overall. No comment can be made on the college's throughput for N-programmes and other programmes as this information was not provided by the college.

## **COLLEGE PERFORMANCE AGAINST NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL BENCHMARKS**

From the above presentation of findings against the indicators measured, we see that the college under investigation performed, on average, better than or at least at the same level as the country and the province on indicators for: specified areas in which council members are collectively competent; council member portfolio training; report submission to council; financial governance; appointment of a CFO; no qualified audits; number of MOUs; gender representivity of staff; lecturer to student ratio; and keeping exit data on students.

The college fared worse than the country and the province on the following indicators: overall compliance with the FET Act of 2006, and more specifically with regard to policies, plans and procedures; sources of funding; percentage of lecturing staff with the required qualification level; racial representivity of academic staff; loss of staff; proportion of staff trained; and the level of student access to funding. In addition, while the effectiveness of the college's ICT usage is better than the country, it is worse than the province. Furthermore, its throughput for NC(V) programmes is the same for the province but worse than the country.

Although Northlink College's score against the different audit indicators is better than many other colleges nationally, it has the lowest scores in the province for a number of these. One thing to be borne in mind when comparing Northlink to other colleges in the province and country is that it is a very large college with a headcount of over 10 000 students and it offers a very broad range of programmes. Its size and the scale of its delivery means that its headcount fluctuates constantly as enrolments for short courses / skills programmes take place on a daily basis. In many ways, this sets the college apart from other colleges, especially smaller colleges that mostly provide NC(V) programmes – the only part of the mandate of FET colleges that is fully funded by the DHET.

In their interviews, the CEO and council chair commented on areas of strength in the college as well as challenges it has faced. Key points raised include:

- In the CEO's view, the merger strengthened the college through combining the management, staff and infrastructure of a number of different colleges. A benefit was that some of the campuses that make up the college came into the merger with "superb resources". In response to the merger, the college also introduced ITS in 2006, a system considered to be far superior to COLTECH.
- According to the council chair (who is also a member of the FETCEO), all councils struggle with the challenge of how they should work together with management. In Northlink College, while councillors do not see their role as managing the college, they also do not fully understand what their governance role actually means and what kind of support they need to provide to the college. As such, the chair feels that it is an advantage that Northlink management understands FET colleges well and can provide direction in this regard. Furthermore, the CEO adopts a strong management style and is prepared to stand his ground when dealing with issues and problems in the college. Importantly, he does not "pass the buck" onto the council. Another advantage at Northlink is that there is good information flow in relation to the council.
- Both the CEO and council chair noted that keeping the council well informed and trained is a key challenge for the college.
- The CEO reported that college infrastructure needs to be upgraded to meet the needs of programme delivery, enable occupational health and safety compliance, and to cater for disabled students.
- The CEO also drew attention to the fact that while the college has made advances in the area of providing student support services, it especially needs to extend the support it provides in the area of academic support. This, in his view, will help to improve the throughput rate in the college.
- One of the most serious challenges Northlink College has experienced relates to funding. This is an issue that the CEO and council chair agree on. The current funding norms favour NC(V) delivery, which constitutes only about 15% of the college's delivery. Currently, most of the college's funding comes from student fees. Unless state funding is provided for non-NC(V) provision, it will be difficult for a college like Northlink to carry on providing the range of programmes it does.

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