

CHAPTER ONE

The South African Policy Environment

INTRODUCTION

One of the current South African government's immediate priorities when coming into power was to replace apartheid policy with a set of policy positions that more accurately reflected the contexts and needs of the country as a whole. This process has required significant (some might now argue excessive) amounts of energy over the past six years, but has ensured that there is now policy in most areas. In fact, as the Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, asserted, South Africa has arguably 'created a set of policies and laws in education and training that are at least equal to the best in the world.'¹

In this chapter, we provide an overview of policy positions relevant to this study of establishing a dedicated educational channel or service for South Africa. We also focus on a range of other policy processes focusing on the use of ICTs in the country.

EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

From an educational perspective, a range of policy processes relating to technology-enhanced learning, schooling, adult education, further education and training, higher education, and distance education shape the policy environment within which this study is located. These policy processes were, in many ways, initiated by the African National Congress's (ANC's) Education Desk before it came into power in 1994. They led to the development of numerous drafts of the ANC's *Policy Framework for Education and Training* and to an *Implementation Plan for Education and Training*, which were effectively precursors to the Department of Education's *White Paper on Education and Training*.

This section explores various policies relating to schooling, adult education, further education and training and higher education. In particular, the section will focus on how policies for each of the levels of education in South Africa impact on the use of information and communication technologies for teaching and learning and as a means for expanding access to education.

PRIORITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Minister of Education's recent *Call to Action* statement – released in July, 1999 – is the most recent policy statement seeking to shape education and training in South Africa. In this statement, the Minister not only gave credit to South Africa for formulating policies that are equal to the best in world, but also publicly admitted the dysfunctionality of elements of our education and training system. He made specific reference to, amongst others, inequalities in schools, problems of governance and management and low teacher morale, and poor quality

¹ Asmal, K (1999). *Call to Action: Mobilising Citizens to Build a South African Education and Training System for the 21st Century*, Statement by Professor Kader Asmal, Minister of Education, Tuesday 27 July 1999

of learning. Given these challenges, the Minister announced the following as priorities of the department of education:

1. Make our provincial system work by making cooperative governance work.
2. Break the back of illiteracy among adults and youths in five years.
3. Make schools centres of community life.
4. End conditions of physical degradation in South African Schools.
5. Develop the professional quality of our teaching force.
6. Ensure the success of active learning through outcomes-based education.
7. Create a vibrant further education and training system to equip youth and adults to meet the social and economic needs of the 21st century.
8. Implement a rational, seamless higher education system that grasps intellectual and professional challenges facing South Africa in the 21st century.
9. Deal urgently and purposefully with HIV/AIDS emergency in and through the education and training system.

These priorities are not particularly new, nor were they pronounced in a vacuum. However, they are important because the Minister admits that large parts of our education and training system are dysfunctional, and openly recommits government to working towards eradicating inequalities in schools, ensuring proper management, and ensuring that both young men and women and adults can access education. In many ways, though, these priorities were preceded by a number of policy documents, to which we now turn our attention.

THE TWO WHITE PAPERS

The first educational White Paper established clear policy commitments to education generally. This White Paper is important, because the general philosophy, goals, values, and principles outlined for the new education and training system will need to form the basis of any strategy for making use of technologies in education and training. The Technology-Enhanced Learning Investigation (TELI), completed in 1996, summarized these as:

- A commitment to providing access to quality education, and a right to basic education as enshrined in the Bill of Rights;
- A commitment to developing the full potential of South Africa's people for their active participation in all processes of a democratic society and their contribution to the economic growth and development of the country;
- Redressing imbalances of the past through the implementation of new teaching and learning strategies for the effective and flexible delivery of services within various learning contexts and through the equitable distribution of technological and other resources;
- Implementing learner-centred and outcomes-based approaches to education and training in order to achieve quality learning based on recognized national standards;
- Enabling all people to value, have access to, and succeed in lifelong education and training;
- Developing a problem-solving and creative environment in which new technologies are harnessed to produce knowledge, products, and services; and

- Integrating technology into the strategies intended to reach these goals so as to advance South Africa's ability to harness new technologies in its growth and development.²

This White Paper established a general approach to reconstruction and development in the school system. This was extended in the *Education White Paper 2: The Organization, Governance and Funding of Schools* and the South African Schools Act. Again, neither refer specifically to the use of technology, but commitment to 'an equitable distribution of education provision throughout the nation'³ will have two general ramifications for plans to extend the use of technologies within the education system:

1. They will need to locate themselves within broader efforts to achieve equity; and
2. They will have to guard against inadvertently contributing to the dilemma of catering exclusively to those schools that have the necessary physical infrastructure and skills amongst their teachers to be able to use technologies effectively.

Such plans will therefore have to focus on strategies to extend access to physical infrastructure and to support teachers and assist with the development of teachers' skills in using these technologies effectively

THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY (NQF) AND SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY (SAQA)

The NQF is a central pillar of the government's strategy for human resource development. The idea of a National Qualifications Framework for South Africa emerged in the early 1990s from the intention of transforming the nature and quality of education and training in South Africa (see a table of NQF bands and levels in chapter two). It is described as:

A human resource development system in which there is an integrated approach to education and training which meets the economic and social needs of the country and the developmental needs of the individual.⁴

This means that different forms of learning, whether they be full-time or part-time, distance learning, work-based learning, or life experience, will be recognized, accredited, and registered within this new framework. This integrated approach to education, training, and development is designed to enable individuals to learn regardless of age, circumstances, and level of education and training. That is, it will allow individuals to

integrate the full range of their knowledge, skills, understandings and abilities, providing them with a platform for further learning, should they so choose, and with the capacity to bring these integrated understandings to bear upon the improvement and development of their own lives and the lives of those around them..⁵

The South African Qualifications Authority Act of 1995 established SAQA as the organization responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of the NQF.

² Department of Education. (1996). *Technology-Enhanced Learning in South Africa: A Discussion Document: Report of the Ministerial Committee for Development Work on the Role of Technology that will Support and Enhance Learning*, Pretoria: Department of Education. p. 11.

³ Department of Education. (1996). *Education White Paper 2: The Organization, Governance and Funding of Schools, Notice 130 of 1996*. Cape Town: Department of Education. p. 10.

⁴ Department of Education, 1997. Directorate: Adult Education and Training. *A National Multi-Year Implementation Plan for Adult Education and Training: Provision and Accreditation*. Final Draft. Department of Education: Pretoria. p. 6.

⁵ *ibid.*, p.11.

The primary function of SAQA is to pursue the objectives of the NQF. With regard to *development* of the NQF, SAQA is responsible for:

- Formulating and publishing policies and criteria for registration of bodies responsible for establishing education and training standards or qualifications; and
- Accreditation of bodies responsible for monitoring and auditing achievements in terms of such standards or qualifications.

With regard to implementation of the NQF, SAQA is responsible for:

- Registration or accreditation of national standards bodies and accreditation bodies;
- Registration of national standards and qualifications;
- Ensuring international comparability of registered standards and qualifications; and
- Ensuring compliance with accreditation provisions.

All SAQA's functions are to be executed in consultation and cooperation with the departments of state, statutory bodies, companies, bodies and institutions responsible for education, training and the certification of standards that will be affected by the NQF.

Processes for development of standards and qualifications are becoming a central concern of education and training providers. Processes initiated within the SAQA regulatory framework include establishment and operationalization of twelve National Standard Bodies (NSBs). NSBs operate within the National Standards Bodies Regulations, which were promulgated on 28 March 1998 to provide a legal basis for their establishment and operationalization. According to the regulations, each NSB should normally be composed of six members in the categories of business, organized labour, community/learner, critical interest group, state departments and providers of education and training. The twelve NSBs represent organizing fields: NSB 01: Agriculture and Nature Conservation, NSB 02: Culture and Arts, NSB 03 Business, Commerce and Management Studies, NSB 04: Communication Studies and Language, NSB 05: Education, Training and Development, NSB 06: Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology, NSB 07: Human and Social Studies, NSB 08: Law, Military Science and Security, NSB 09: Health Sciences and Social Services, NSB 10: Physical, Mathematics, Computer and Life Sciences, NSB 11: Services and NSB 12: Physical Planning and Construction.

Not only is SAQA required to establish standards bodies, but also to put in place quality assurance processes. In terms of the SAQA Act, Education and Training Quality Assurance bodies are to be recognized by SAQA for the purposes of monitoring and auditing achievements in terms of national standards or qualifications. The regulatory framework for quality assurance – the Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies Regulations – was gazetted on 8 September, 1998.

According to the regulations, an organization or group of organizations can seek accreditation as an ETQA body in a social sector, economic sector, or an education and training subsystem sector. The regulations include:

- Specific provisions relating to the ETQA, including criteria for accreditation of ETQAs, membership and functions of ETQAs;
- Rules of procedure and financing the activities of ETQAs;
- Accreditation of providers of education and training;
- Appointment and functions of moderating bodies; and
- Inclusion of professional bodies and examining bodies in standard setting, quality assurance and moderation.

Bodies currently carrying out ETQA functions will continue to do so until the regulatory framework is operational. Where no quality assurance bodies exist, SAQA is mandated to perform this function in the interim. For example, private higher education institutions are required, in terms of the Higher Education Act, to register with the registrar for private higher education institutions. SAQA is responsible for providing interim accreditation to such institutions. Accordingly, SAQA initiated discussions with the Higher Education Branch of the Department of Education, the Certification Council (SERTEC), and the Quality Promotion Unit (QPU) to facilitate the accreditation of private higher education providers until the Higher Education Quality Committee is established and operational.

Other important quality assurance mechanisms will be Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs). The role of the SETA in relation to education and training quality assurance (ETQA) functions is important. Each SETA is required to seek accreditation from SAQA (South African Qualifications Authority) within one week of being established and are expected to satisfy conditions to be recognized as SETAs within eighteen months. All SETAs are required to be ETQAs, although not every ETQA will be a SETA.

The main requirement for SETA's as regards their ETQA functions, is to ensure that SAQA requirements are fulfilled. These include the requirements that:

1. The SETA does actually represent a sector;
2. The SETA should determine its area of primary focus of quality assurance in that sector, in other words, each SETA will have to enter into an agreement with SAQA about the levels and qualifications for which it will be responsible;
3. The SETA should not duplicate the work of another ETQA, such as the Higher Education Quality Council, various statutory and professional councils or the proposed Further Education and Training Quality Assurance body. In such cases agreements or joint assessment arrangements will be needed to avoid duplication and waste of effort in fulfilling ETQA functions for different levels of qualifications; and
4. The SETA as ETQA should have a quality management system, not only for influencing their own work but also to ensure that all providers have such systems and that these will be monitored and reviewed.

TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED LEARNING INVESTIGATION (TELI)

One policy process of relevance is the development of policy on technology-enhanced learning. TELI consists of two related documents, a Discussion Document and an Implementation Plan. It is important because it establishes a clear commitment to a particular approach to making decisions about using technologies in education and training (this is described in more detailed in Chapter Five).

The TELI Discussion Document stresses the importance of examining teaching and learning environments in depth before choosing which technologies to integrate into those environments. Further, it suggests that it is necessary to identify strengths and weaknesses of different technological options, and to use this to inform decisions that are taken. The report stresses throughout the danger of allowing technology choice to drive educational decisions about how to integrate technology use into teaching and learning environments. It offers a decision-making framework as a strategy to overcome this problem (this framework has recently been converted into a digital tool by the Department of Education to provide further support to decision-making processes). The emphasis is on appropriateness of technological

choice to educational context and need as a prerequisite to ensuring that scarce resources are used as effectively as possible. The decision-making framework contained in the TELI Discussion Document poses interesting challenges for implementation planning processes for any technology-enhanced learning strategy, and provides an essential starting point for any investigation of the possibility of using different technologies to support education and training.

The intention of this approach is to guard against technologically driven educational projects, which invariably do not provide effective or sustainable educational solutions. Questions posed in it remain a crucial reference point for any planning processes focused on using technologies (including broadcasting) to support schooling. They help to locate the use of technologies within broader teaching and learning environments and to identify where the gaps and potential weaknesses of the use of such technologies lie. This information can then be used to try to fill these gaps and remedy weaknesses through the establishment of appropriate partnerships with educational providers, government departments, educational resource developers, and other key agencies.

Also of relevance is the TELI implementation plan and list of proposed projects. The plan outlines nineteen related projects, of which six were identified as lead projects. Currently, Centre for Educational Technology and Distance Education at the Department of Education is engaged in the following projects emerging from the TELI plan:⁶

- *Audit of information and communication technologies in South African schools.* The University of Western Cape, EPU has produced a report on ICT in schools.
- *Multi-Purpose Community Centres.* The centre has carried out research and produced a report on *The Role of Technologies in Supporting the Development and Provision of Education and Training through Multi-Purpose Community Learning Centres.* This report is discussed further in chapter three.
- *Technical Standards and Protocols.* A Departmental Committee is developing technical standards and protocols for educational technologies. Responsibility for this project has recently been allocated, and initial meetings to establish the scope of the project has been held. An unofficial draft document has been circulated to the project's reference group.
- *Clearing House of Information.* A tender for the design and development of a web site of information relating to technology-enhanced learning initiatives in South Africa has been awarded. A printed version of aspects of the information available on the web site will be available, and distributed quarterly as part of *The Teacher.*
- *Coordination of Library Services.* Responsibility has been allocated for this function, which includes investigating the future of library services and norms and standards for school libraries.
- *Educational Broadcasting* – SAIDE has produced comprehensive reports for the SABC relating to School Based Educational Broadcasting Service for South Africa and Educational Intervention in the Field of Adult Education and Youth Development: Scenarios for the SABC. Besides these reports and a substantial strategic planning which has been conducted for SABC, this study into the feasibility of establishing a channel for South Africa is the most significant development in this area.

⁶ Tshenye N, Personal communication and public presentations, September 1998.

CRITERIA FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

The Centre for Educational Technology and Distance Education has developed a framework of quality standards for distance education. It is important, because it contains several value statements that can effectively be used to measure the quality of a technology-enhanced learning project. These standards were, of course, designed with distance education programmes and systems in mind, but, as the boundaries between face-to-face and distance education blur rapidly, it is becoming clear that many of them can be applied to any educational programme or system. While all of the standards set out in the framework have potential relevance, those possibly most directly useful are the standards covering course design and course materials. Specifically, the framework endorses the broad TELI approach in the following standards:

- The choice of media and type of technology is integrated into the curriculum design, and is justified in the light of the aims of the course, the required learning outcomes and learner needs and contexts.⁷
- Learners are supported to a considerable extent by the provision of a range of opportunities for real two-way communication through the use of various forms of technology for tutoring at a distance, contact tutoring, assignment tutoring, mentoring where appropriate, counselling (both remote and face-to-face), and the stimulation of peer support structures. The need of learners for physical facilities and study resources and participation in decision-making is also taken into account.⁸

POLICY RELATING TO GENERAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The General Education and Training band of the NQF comprises of early childhood development, Foundation phase (grades one to three), Intermediate phase (grades four to six), and Senior phase (Grades seven to nine). These levels are generally referred to as schooling, and practically refer to the ten-year period of compulsory education. The band also caters for levels one to four of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET). This section explores some of the policies relating to schooling and adult basic education and training.

School Governance

In 1996, the South African Schools Act set out a new framework for the ownership, governance, and funding of schools.⁹ A full year of reports, white papers, and bills preceded this. The process was marked by severe contestation, particularly over provisions such as school fees and the composition and powers of governing bodies. The Schools Act repealed all apartheid legislation pertaining to schools, abolished corporal punishment, codified compulsory education for children between the ages of seven and fifteen, and provided the framework for a unified school system. The policy requires that governing bodies at all

⁷ Department of Education, 1996, *A Distance Education Quality Standards Framework for South Africa*, Discussion Document Prepared by the Directorate: Distance Education, Media and Technological Services, Department of Education, Pretoria, p. 61.

⁸ *ibid*, p. 63.

⁹ Based on a contributed by Salim Vally and extracted from Vally, S.; Chisholm, L. and Motala, S. (March 1998). Poverty and Inequality Hearings: Education Theme. Background paper commissioned by SANGOCO and the Commission for Gender Equality and South African Human Rights Commission. Johannesburg: EPU Wits. Also, Vally, S. and Spreen, C-A. (May 1998). Education policy and implementation: February to May 1998. Commissioned by SIDA, Swedish Development Cooperation Agency. In *Quarterly Review of Education and Training in South Africa*, 5, 3.

schools be composed of parents (the majority group); educators; pupils (in secondary schools); non-educator staff; and a coopted non-parent member of the community.

According to the Act, governing bodies have the responsibility of promoting promotion of quality education in schools, draw mission statement for schools, and support teachers in their professional work. The Act also gives them the right to apply to the Head of Department to take responsibilities in areas of raising funds for schools, purchasing books and other material for teaching and learning, pay services for schools determine the extra curricula activities and the choice of subjects in the school.

Of particular interest is the contested area of compulsory user fees, which, in essence, contradicts previous commitments to free primary and secondary education. While the argument is made that payment of school fees by some communities will free up resources for poor schools, some feel that, in conditions of already existing disparities, it will tend to perpetuate inequality in education. A compelling view is that poorer communities that desperately require quality education will find themselves in situations where they can only afford rudimentary provision. On the other hand, more privileged communities, which benefited from apartheid, will continue to have access to superior education opportunities.

Clearly this relates to use of technologies in the school system. Contestation around governance and funding affects any plan to increase physical access to technologies in schools. Such plans will need to devise sustainable solutions rather than simply dumping hardware on schools, forcing commitment by governing bodies to unaffordable expenses. There is a risk that physical infrastructure plans could create an unhealthy and irrational culture of demand that develops a momentum of its own and derails well-intentioned ideas. This happens particularly as people feel an emotional sense of injustice if they are not in line for whatever handouts are being offered. Paradoxically, this potentially reinforces disempowerment of local communities, whose time is absorbed in trying to gain access to handouts - orchestrated by international, national, or provincial entities - rather than developing locally driven, sustainable solutions that build on existing resources. A possible consequence is community dependence on handouts, which soon becomes very difficult to resolve (and is a key reason for the failure of many well-intentioned 'developmental' initiatives internationally). The White Paper's commitment to democratic governance and growing involvement by local governing bodies in the affairs of schools provides an in-principle resolution to the problem, provided it is accompanied by appropriate capacity development.

Curriculum 2005

A specific policy area of interest is Curriculum 2005. Of course, as with all South African educational initiatives, Curriculum 2005 exists within the broader policy framework sketched above, which sets clear philosophical and conceptual precedents.

Curriculum 2005 has, as its foundation, the establishment of the NQF and SAQA. Both SAQA and the NQF are intended to give structural weight to transformation of education at school level. This transformation is a shift from content-based to outcomes-based education (OBE). Curriculum 2005 draws on OBE principles to build better quality educational provision at school level. It seeks to shift focus from 'teacher input (instructional offerings or

syllabuses expressed in terms of content) to...the outcomes of the learning process'.¹⁰ The intention of Curriculum 2005 is to create nationally agreed outcomes, as well as criteria for assessing the achievement of these outcomes. This ensures common recognition and acceptance of qualifications, and builds greater flexibility in the education system in terms of where and how learning takes place and is assessed. The Department of Education established learning area committees for each of the eight identified learning areas. These learning area committees were responsible for identifying specific learning area outcomes that reflect the critical cross-field outcomes identified by SAQA (where critical cross-field outcomes are general outcomes that express intended results of education and training in a broad sense).

Clearly, though, this is the first – and possibly easiest – step of implementing Curriculum 2005. The more difficult process is using this to shift teaching and learning practices in classrooms around South Africa. It is at this level that the enormity of the objectives of Curriculum 2005 becomes evident. Curriculum 2005 seeks to change some of the traditional approaches to teaching, such as the following kinds of general shifts (which are illustrative of the types of shifts, not an exhaustive list):

- from passive to active learners;
- from examination-driven to ongoing assessment;
- from rote learning to critical thinking, reasoning, reflection, and action; and
- from textbook/worksheet-bound, teacher-centred education to learner-centred education, where the teacher is a facilitator of the learning environment.

Debates about the relative merits of OBE, which have been rife as the implementation of Curriculum 2005 starts to take effect, have had the unfortunate consequence of creating polarity of opinion based on qualitative interpretations of OBE. In public debate, the new curriculum has often been reduced to either 'good' or 'bad', depending on one's perspective. OBE is not, however, an intrinsically 'good' or 'bad' concept; its value depends on the way in which it is implemented and measurement of this value will vary significantly according to the context in which implementation is taking place. Nor does the articulation of learning outcomes constitute a measure of educational quality of any course or programme. Nevertheless, clear articulation of the intended outcomes of a course or programme does provide an essential initial tool that can be applied in measuring the quality of educational provision, and as such is an important step in establishing transparency in educational provision.

Because it challenges traditional pedagogies, the implementation of Curriculum 2005 is complex and highly contested. The implementation process has been further complicated by parallel efforts to establish democratic governance at school level and by the evolving relationships being established between national and provincial departments of education.¹¹

¹⁰ Department of Education. (1997). *Curriculum 2005: Lifelong Learning for the 21st Century: A User's Guide*. Pretoria: Department of Education. p. 32.

¹¹ A key feature of educational transformation in South Africa since 1994 has been the replacement of racially defined education departments with geopolitically defined provincial departments of education. This change has created complex relationships and poorly defined responsibilities. The move was intended to give provincial departments responsibility for implementation, while retaining responsibility for national policy ('norms and standards' and 'conditions of service' for teachers) at national level. The new reality is that agreements reached on policy and implementation issues at national level generate responsibilities for provincial departments of education that they are often unable to carry out, because of lack of managerial capacity, or simply because their budgets (designed and legally approved before the new mandate is received) are too small. As a result, the relationship between the national and provincial departments is evolving in two contradictory directions which

Equally, though, the success of its implementation is a crucial element in the transformation of South African education and training, and, to be most useful, processes that focus on developing resources (including technology based) will need to ensure that they contribute constructively to ensuring this success, rather than impeding it.

Adult Basic Education and Training

Adult education in South Africa has undergone tremendous changes in the past few years. Some of the important changes relate to, first, the conceptualization of adult education and, second, the placing of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) on the NQF. The latter changes effectively mean that ABET has gained better recognition. Appendix two provides a detailed analysis of how adult education has evolved over time, while this section explores policy changes in adult education.

One of the changes brought about by change of government in 1994, was new conceptions of adult education. These include the Reconstruction and Development programme, which brought an understanding of adult education as an important area of human resource development. The Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training (1996) stated very clearly that the government wished to develop an

ABET system that is based upon principles of equality, redress, development, reconstruction, access, integration, partnership, sustainable use of resource, a flexible curriculum, out-comes based, standards of attainment, the recognition of prior learning and cost effectiveness.¹²

The Department of Labour has also produced a number of policies that are undoubtedly, of great significance to ABET. Among such policies are Skills Development Act (1998), which has advocated the recognition of prior learning to allow adults whose education had been disrupted to re-enter the education system. The Skills Levy Act to be implemented next year will require companies to contribute half a percent of their payroll to a National Skills Authority tasked to oversee and regulate provision of education and training through Sector Education and Training Authority (SETAs). The Minister of education is currently seeking ways to collaborate with the Minister of Labour to ensure that ABET benefits from the levy.¹³

The NQF bands and levels table in chapter two shows that, ABET is placed in the first NQF level, which comprises the General Education and Training band. This is equivalent to the period of formal compulsory schooling, and is thus seen as a standard or 'benchmark', which will accommodate an ABET qualification for youth and adult learners. The ABET sub-levels one, two, three, and four correspond with grades three, five, seven, and nine respectively.

The implementation and establishment of the NQF through SAQA provides a framework for a new, integrated approach to adult education and training. Within this framework, it is clear that adult education is now recognized on the NQF, and, as such, constitutes an integral part of South Africa's national education and training system. This means that the scope of educational policy and planning has broadened to encompass adult basic education and education for out-of-school youth.

need to be monitored: while there are moves to increase the autonomy of provincial departments, the decision-making and negotiation processes which might resolve the current tensions have yet to be designed.

¹² Department of Education (1996) Policy on Adult Education and Training. Pretoria, Department of Education

¹³ Motlale S, Vally, S and Modiba M (July 1999). "Call to Action" A Review of Minister K. Asmal's Educational Priorities in Quarterly Review of Education and Training in South Africa. Vol.6. No.3. Wits University Education Policy Unit

Another important development relating to adult education regards the adoption of the principles of lifelong learning and recognition of prior learning. These principles are integral to proposed plans to link ABET with further education and employment opportunities within the NQF. One of the key objectives of the Multi-Year Plan is that it must resonate 'with the broad social and developmental imperatives of the country at national and provincial levels and local levels'.¹⁴ In this regard, it is contiguous to proposals contained in the Skills Development Act. This act represents a new approach to education, training, and skills development in the national economic sector.

Although policies on adult education and training do not dwell much on use of technology, the Multi Year Plan's mission to increase the numbers of learners through mass mobilization to reach an overall target of some 2.5 million learners by the year 2001¹⁵ suggests a need to explore how technologies can be used to support achievement of this mission.

In his call for the nation to 'break the back of illiteracy among adults and youth in five years', Kader Asmal has also presented a number of challenges to business, non governmental organizations, and the general public in terms of their involvement in fighting illiteracy. Major campaigns, such as Ithuteng (Ready to Learn), launched by the Department of Education in 1996 and Thousands Learner Project launched by the national Literacy Coalition all had a mission to ensure that millions of adult learners have access to education. In order to intensify the campaign to fight illiteracy, the Minister has invited non-governmental, religious, political, educational, educational and community organizations to design a major programme of voluntary service on behalf of literacy education.'¹⁶

FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Further Education and Training (FET) is a new band in the education and training system, designed to integrate education and training. It includes learning programmes that will be registered on the NQF from levels two to four, and that will correspond with grades ten to twelve in the school system and N1 to N3 in the technical college. It is envisaged that, when fully developed, FET will provide access to high quality education and training that will offer a wider range of options to a diverse range of learners. Currently, it is estimated that there are nearly 8,000 FET providers catering for almost 3 million learners and that FET already accounts for over ten billion Rands of expenditure annually.¹⁷

The White Paper on FET sees it as an 'important allocator of life chances' in so far as it is directed at those learners who are

situated at the cross-roads between General Education and Training (GET) and entry to HE [higher education] and the world of work...As such, it provides both initial and second-chance opportunities to young people and adults.¹⁸

¹⁴ Department of Education. Directorate: Adult Education and Training. *A National Multi-Year Implementation Plan for Adult Education and Training: Provision and Accreditation*. October 1997. p. 143.

¹⁵ *ibid.* p. vi.

¹⁶ Motala S, Vally, S and Modiba M (July 1999). 'Call to Action' A Review of Minister K. Asmal's Educational Priorities in Quarterly Review of Education and Training in South Africa. Vol.6. No.3. Wits University Education Policy Unit

¹⁷ Department of Education (1998). *White Paper on Further Education and Training: programme for the transformation of Further Education and Training*, August 1998

¹⁸ *ibid.* p. 14.

The document also states that FET is ‘designed to promote the integration of education and training, and to enhance learner mobility and progression, which are at the heart of the NQF [National Qualifications Framework]’.¹⁹

The Ministry of Education envisages that the transformation of Further Education and Training will

address the transformation of the senior secondary school system, the technical colleges and community colleges, and the development of new, meaningful education and training opportunities for young people outside formal education. The widening of participation in FET must also include working adults and those of our people experiencing long-term unemployment.²⁰

As indicated earlier, this new band has been designed to combine education and training. Traditionally, vocational education in South Africa has been defined as skills-training in specific occupations,²¹ that is in terms of responding to specific demands of the employment market. However, with a new integrated approach to education and training, it is expected that vocational education will be part of the Further Education and Training (FET) band. Hence,

the new [FET] curriculum will overcome the outdated divisions between ‘academic and ‘vocational’ education, and between education and training and will be characterized not by ‘vocalisation’ of education, but by a sound foundation of general knowledge, combined with practical relevance. The curriculum will offer the learner flexibility and choice, whilst ensuring that all programmes and qualifications offer a coherent and meaningful learning experience.²²

There is no doubt that FET is expected to play a major role in the education and training of young men and women and adults in South Africa. It is expected that successful FET system will provide diverse programmes designed to impart knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values South Africans require as ‘individuals and citizens, as life long learners and as economically productive members of society’.²³ According to the Minister, the FET sector should be as accessible as possible to adult learners who for various reasons were unable to continue their education. He also emphasized the significance of ensuring that educators in this sector become leading practitioners in the assessment and recognition of prior learning so that able and experienced adults may be admitted to diverse educational programmes.²⁴

As it is envisaged that FET will play a major role in terms of preparing people for the world of work, the implementation of the Skills Development Act will also present a challenge for FET institutions and provincial authorities. They will have to develop their capacity to offer and manage learnership made available by the Sector Education and Training Authority; to launch and sustain programmes which will attract support from the National Skills Fund.²⁵

¹⁹ Ministry of Education (1998) *Education White Paper 4- A Programme for the Transformation of Further Education and Training*, 25 September 1998. p. 14.

²⁰ *ibid.* p. 15.

²¹ *ibid.* p. 52.

²² *ibid.*, p. 30.

²³ Department of Education (1998) *Education White Paper 4: A programme for the transformation of Further Education and Training*, Pretoria: Department of Education, 1998

²⁴ Asmal K, (1999) *op cit*

²⁵ *ibid.*

With its emphasis on combination of education and training, FET policy in South Africa is perceived from other quarters as enhancing the new human capital view of education, and therefore accepting uncritically the notion of a direct relationship between education and economic growth.²⁶ In fact Motala et al (1999) have raised a serious concern arguing that:

An FET system which places less emphasis on redress and promotes narrowly- defined vocational goals aimed at meeting the labour requirements of capital will not, as the minister hopes, make for a vibrant FET system consistent with the needs of our society.²⁷

A study of technical colleges by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) found that local and regional FET institutions shared resources superficially. Also, it discovered that technical colleges are not responsive to the needs of their disadvantaged communities and, other than links with parastatals such as Iskor, Eskom, and Sasol, technical colleges have few links with other companies.²⁸ These findings suggest that the challenge is not only in linking education and training but also in increasing communication among FET institutions themselves and between these institutions and companies.

Notwithstanding current problems with FET, the sector is poised for development and expansion in the light of recent events at the level of policy and preparation for large-scale implementation. Various processes initiated by the Department of Education led to a number of positive, outcomes including:

- Adoption of national policy²⁹ and legislation³⁰ on Further Education and Training late in 1998;
- Formation of a national stakeholder body, the National Board for Further Education and Training (NBFET) in mid 1999;
- Review of provincial pilot programmes delivered between 1996 and 1999 targeted at meeting the education and training needs of out-of-school and out-of-work youth;
- Completion, by October 1999, of audits of technical colleges in three provinces (Gauteng, Kwazulu Natal and Western Cape); and
- Appointment of teams of specialists for the purpose of modernizing curricula of vocational education courses offered mainly in technical colleges.

Similarly, processes initiated by the Department of Labour have led to:

- Adoption of national policy and legislation³¹ in late 1998 on skills development of the workforce;
- Formation of the National Skills Authority; and
- Review of pilot projects, anticipating the learnerships that are intended to replace the apprenticeship system.

²⁶ Motala S, Vally, S and Modiba M (July 1999). "Call to Action" A Review of Minister K. Asmal's Educational Priorities in Quarterly Review of Education and Training in South Africa. Vol.6. No.3. Wits University Education Policy Unit

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ *Education White Paper 4: A programme for the transformation of Further Education and Training; Preparing for the twenty-first century through education, training and work* Department of Education, Pretoria, August 1998.

³⁰ *Further Education and Training Act, 1998 (Act No. 98 of 1998)*

³¹ *Skills Development Act, 1998 and the Skills Development Levies Act, 1999*

The FET sector is thus poised for development. The Department of Education identified a number of priority areas in its National Strategic Plan for 1999 to 2001 as a step towards operationalization of FET policy. These include:

1. Development of norms, standards, and procedures for the registration of private Further Education and Training institutions;
2. Development of national guidelines for programme-based formula funding;
3. Research on the design of a Further Education and Training Education Management Information System;
4. Review of the incorporation of senior secondary schools into Further Education and Training;
5. Institutional development and support;
6. Development of norms, standards and procedures for the declaration of Further Education and Training institutions;
7. Improvement of learner performance in Further Education and Training; and
8. Revision and modernisation of selected Further Education and Training instructional offerings.

HIGHER EDUCATION

As in other areas of South Africa's education and training system, higher education was not immune from ills such as racial divisions and lack of coordination, common goals, and systematic planning that plagued our education system. Higher education also lacked clear strategy to deal with shape and size of the system, social and economic needs, overall funds available, growth rates, and elimination of unnecessary and wasteful duplication.³² The government needed policies to facilitate the transformation of higher education. The appointment of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) in 1995 marked the beginning of a process that was to transform South Africa's higher education from a racially and ethnically divided system to a non-racial, equitable and properly coordinated system. Appendix three provides details on higher education.

The NCHE embarked on a consultative process and produced a report which was followed the Green Paper and White Paper on Higher Education, which in turn led to the Higher Education Bill and, subsequently, Higher Education Act.³³ The White Paper on Higher education defines higher education as comprising all learning programmes leading to qualifications higher than the proposed Further Education and Training Certificate. A programme-based approach recognizes that higher education takes place in a multiplicity of institutions and sites of learning, using a variety of methods, and attracting an increasingly diverse body of learners.³⁴

The White Paper also makes a number of proposals. First, it proposes that higher education institutions must provide education and training to develop the skills and innovations necessary for national development and successful participation in the global economy. In addition, higher education has to be internally structured to face the challenge of

³² See NCHE Report (1996), *A Framework for Transformation*, Pretoria, pp. 42.

³³ A Green Paper is a discussion document that is distributed to stakeholders and citizens for comment and feedback. A White Paper is a and official framework document of policy that can be implemented by stakeholders, but it is not yet Law. A Bill is Law that is signed by a Minister before it is approved by parliament. Once the Bill has been debated by parliament and is approved, the State President then signs it into Law, at which point it becomes an ACT

³⁴ *ibid.* p. 17.

globalization, in particular the breaking down of national and institutional boundaries which remove spatial and geographic barriers to access.

Second, there should be a shift from current practice, in which the size and shape of higher education system is determined by uncoordinated institutional decisions and student enrolment and programme institution. Instead, the White Paper proposes development of a planning framework that will form a basis for the development of overall national and institutional three-year 'rolling plans'. These indicative plans could be adjusted, updated, and revised annually. The White Paper argues that a three-year planning cycle, with data, resource estimates, targets, and plans annually updated, enables the planning of growth and change in higher education to be more flexible and responsive to social and economic needs. It permits adjustments to be made on the basis of actual performance, and introduces greater predictability, and hence stability into the budget process.³⁵

Third, there should be an increase in the relative proportion of public funding used to support academically able but disadvantaged students. Proposals to meet the development goals include expansion of enrolments in postgraduate programmes at the masters and doctoral levels. This will be aimed at supply the high-level skills necessary for social and economic development and providing for the needs of the academic labour market. It also entails expanding the range of programmes and increasing enrolments based on open learning and distance education, especially for young and older adults, with particular emphasis on women.³⁶

Fourth, there is need for a goal-oriented, performance-related public funding for higher education. This entails an introduction of new formula for block grants to institutions to support their teaching and recurrent costs.

Fifth, the White Paper on Higher Education proposes earmarked funding for institutional redress, student financial aid schemes, and other specific purposes. Institutional redress will be allocated within a programme of targeted funding to redress deficiencies experienced in particular historically disadvantaged institutions. The proposal for earmarked funds for student financial aid schemes is premised on the Ministry's endorsement of an approach to higher education funding that is based on a sharing of costs between private beneficiaries (students) and the state, representing the public interest. It is aimed at ensuring that capable students are not excluded from access to higher education because of poverty. Earmarked funding is also recommended for specific purposes aimed at encouraging innovation and adaptation. For the period from 1998 to 2000, specific purposes that have been identified are: improving student completions, research capability and development, postgraduate training, capital works, development in planning capacity, and regional collaboration. All institutions can apply for earmarked funds for specific purposes, but will be required to relate their submissions to strategic plans.³⁷

The White Paper further proposes measures of accountability on institutions relating to their use of public subsidy. It argues that the basis for improving public accountability in higher education is making public funding for institutions conditional on their Councils providing strategic plans and reporting their performance against their plans. Plans have to contain measurable goals and target dates supported by key performance indicators.

³⁵ *ibid*, p. 1.

³⁶ *ibid*. p.21.

³⁷ NCHE Report (1996) p. 51.

The changes that have been recommended for funding of higher education are not peculiar to South Africa, having been introduced in other countries in response to pressures of the market and diminishing resources available for higher education. In explaining these changes within the higher education in Europe, Weiller argues that it represents a new game being played in European higher education. Some call the game 'deregulation', some call it a combination of greater autonomy and greater accountability, some call it a shift from input controls to output controls, and others simply call it 'passing the buck'.³⁸ He further argues that the game is being played at different stages. It is being played on the stage of governance, on the stage of new programmes of study and accreditation, on the stage of personnel regulations, and increasingly on the stage of new higher education legislation. This game, which used to involve the university and the state, now involves a third player, something called 'the market'. It finds expression in the form of action in the direction of deregulating higher education, of performance-based models of resources allocation, of inter-institutional competition, of efficient management structures, of the development of specialized 'products' in higher education, even of privatization. Weiller notes that it is with regard to question of financing that the new higher education discourse of the market becomes most tangible, most controversial, and thus most revealing.³⁹

The White Paper further proposes a cooperative governance model for higher education in South Africa, based on the principle of autonomous institutions with a proactive government and in a range of partnerships. A distinction is made between governance arrangements at systems level and at institutional level. At a systems level, the Higher Education Act legislates the establishment of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) as statutory body. Its major function is to advise the Minister on any aspect of higher education. Through its Higher Education Quality Committee, the CHE will be responsible for promoting quality assurance in higher education and will accredit higher education programmes. At institutional level, the Act legislates the establishment of Councils, Institutional forums, and student services councils. One implication for the introduction of cooperative governance model is, for example, that institutional autonomy is to be exercised in tandem with public accountability.

Use of technology in higher education becomes of particular importance as the White Paper on higher education focuses on distance education. The White Paper argues that distance education and resource-based learning, based on the principles of open learning, have a crucial role to play in meeting the challenge to expand access, diversify the body of learners, and enhance quality in a context of resource constraint. They enable learning to take place within a multiplicity of sites, at the learner's own pace, using many media and a variety of learning and teaching approaches. They are appropriate for learners who are already in employment, or who need to earn each in order to meet the study costs.⁴⁰

The White Paper proposes and supports the following initiatives in the use of distance education and resource based learning:

1. Development of a national network of centres of innovation in course design and development. It argues that this would enable the development and franchising of well-designed, quality and cost-effective learning resources and courses, building on the

³⁸ Weiller, N, (1999) States and Markets: Competing Paradigms for the Reform of Higher Education in Europe, Paper presented at the Comparative and International Education Society, Toronto, p.2.

³⁹ *ibid.* p. 2.

⁴⁰ White Paper on Higher Education (1997), pp. 26-27.

expertise and experience of top quality scholars and educators in different parts of the country.

2. Contact and distance education institutions will be encouraged to provide effective and flexible learning environments on a continuum of educational provision, in which educators will be able to select from an increasing range of educational methods and technologies those most appropriate to the context in which they operate. It is argued that this development, together with a regional network of learning centres, will not only broaden access, but also facilitate access and enhance quality education, especially in rural areas and less-endowed urban institutions.⁴¹

Initially, these methods of distance education and resources based learning were developed as distinctly different from face-to-face education methods, with the unfortunate result that distance education has come to be seen as a provision for those people denied access to face-to-face education. The growth of new communications technologies, however, has begun to make the notion of 'distance' difficult to interpret, while opening a great number of educationally and financially viable means of providing education.⁴²

The issues being discussed in this overview should be understood within the wider macro-economic policy context informed by two key development strategies. First, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), on the basis of which the NCHE Report and White Paper Three were framed, emphasizes equity, redress and increased education participation through expansion and massification of higher education. However, under the GEAR macro-economic framework, massification has been constrained by increasing fiscal discipline and availability of resources. The parameters of change are much more directed towards issues of efficiency, effectiveness, and quality within a contracted system rather than expansion and massification. Second, as outlined in the Skills Development Act, the bias towards performance is also linked to the need for generating skills necessary for South Africa to compete successfully in the global market. It appears that there is a tension between the dual demands on government to meet basic needs through increasing the provision of higher education to ensure higher participation and growing pressure to maintain fiscal discipline. Proposals to facilitate increased access through distance education strategies and resource-based learning might go a long way towards alleviating pressure on the existing resources. However, there is a need to pay attention to the quality of distance education programmes, so that this expansion of access does not lead to provision of poor education.

TECHNOLOGY POLICY

BROADCASTING POLICY

In a study focusing on the feasibility of establishing a dedicated educational service, broadcasting, broadcasting policy has obvious relevance. South African broadcasting policies, like educational ones, have developed dynamically. Because the government department responsible for broadcasting – the Department of Communication – focused much of its initial work on the pressing need for development of policy on telecommunications, the result is that the process for developing policy on broadcasting was only relatively recently completed. In this discussion, we will focus first on the development

⁴¹ *ibid*, p. 27.

⁴² South African Institute for Distance Education (1997), *The Higher Education Policy Process: An open Learning Perspective*, SAIDE, p. 79.

of the IBA and then on the White Paper on Broadcasting. In looking at the latter document, our focus will be on comments of educational broadcasting and on convergence issues.

The Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA)

The IBA was established by Parliamentary Act 153 of 1993, which describes its purpose as providing 'for the regulation of broadcasting activities in the public interest',⁴³ setting up the IBA for this purpose. In describing the purpose of the legislation in more detail, the following relevant objectives for the IBA are included:

- Promote the provision of a diverse range of sound and television broadcasting services on a national, regional and local level which, when viewed collectively, cater for all language and cultural groups and provide entertainment, education and information;
- Promote the development of public, private and community broadcasting services which are responsive to the needs of the public;
- Ensure that, in the provision of public broadcasting services...the need for educational programmes...are duly taken into account.⁴⁴

These provisions collectively stress the responsibility of broadcasting to play a constructive educational role. This was developed further by the IBA in its Triple Enquiry Report of 1995. This report notes the requirements of the Act that broadcasting services should contribute to education. To this end, a Task Group for the Transformation of Educational Broadcasting was established by the IBA as part of the report compilation process, and a full report by this Task Group is appended to the document. The Report itself stresses the importance of partnerships and integrated planning approaches to educational broadcasting. It states that:

The planning process would need to plan simultaneously for the production and dissemination of educational programming, the equipping of schools and community centres and the development of ongoing user support systems.⁴⁵

It also stresses the importance of local relevance and appropriateness, a mixed media approach, responsiveness to the challenges posed by new technologies, needs-driven planning, a balance between quality and quantity, and developing appropriate schedules for educational programming as conditions for the success of educational broadcasting.

The Triple Enquiry Report provides the following summary of recommendations for educational broadcasting:

- The national public broadcaster be required to broadcast educational programming daily to address the educational needs of the public, including young children, youth and adults.
- The national PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) should, during the course of a year, flight programming which supports the curriculum-related activities of different educational and training sectors. In doing so, the national PBS should also ensure that its educational programming covers a wide range of subjects and fields.
- The national PBS should, over the course of a year, flight programming which supports non-curriculum related human resource development and educational needs in a wide range of social and economic sectors.

⁴³ Parliament of South Africa. (1993). *Independent Broadcasting Authority Act 153 of 1993*, Cape Town. <http://wn.apc.org/iba/legis.htm>.

⁴⁴ Parliament of South Africa. *op cit*.

⁴⁵ Independent Broadcasting Authority. (1995). *Triple Enquiry Report*. Johannesburg: IBA. p. 16.

- The proposal of the Task Team on Educational Broadcasting be accepted and the education sector be given adequate opportunity to assess the need for, desirability and viability of dedicated educational stations/channels. In the case of radio the Authority will make frequencies available for this purpose. In the case of television, the Authority will look into all technological possibilities that will allow for an educational channel.
- Structured partnerships should be formed between broadcasters and education stakeholders and a process begun as soon as possible, to integrate planning for the production and dissemination of educational media, the equipping of schools and community centres and the development of ongoing user support systems.
- Educational broadcasting be funded through a mix of funding sources including commercial revenues accrued by the national PBS, sponsorship, grants from non-governmental agencies and most substantially through a government grant to the national PBS.⁴⁶

The Triple Enquiry Report emphasizes local content. It proposes, for example, that sixty percent of public educational broadcasting should be South African, and the PBS must allow for 'the equitable treatment and development of all eleven official languages'.⁴⁷

White Paper on Broadcasting

The White Paper on Broadcasting contains many references to educational broadcasting. It refers back to the green paper, broadcasting requirements set out by the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), and various models for the SABC. It devotes a chapter to 'Broadcasting and Human Resource Development', in which two distinct areas of broadcasting in the human resource strategy of the country are outlined:

- The use of broadcasting to support the provision of education and information to the South African population; and
- The Human Resources Strategy to develop broadcasting practitioners and skills.⁴⁸

The first is obviously most directly relevant to public educational broadcasting, as it relates to the use of broadcasting as a resource in support of both the formal and informal education. In this context broadcasting is a tool for the dissemination of educational materials to learners in all corners of the country in a timely and cost effective way. Broadcasting is used as a support structure in the provision of materials for human resources development aiding the educators, teachers, trainers and learners wherever they may gather for educational purposes.⁴⁹

The white paper articulates objectives for broadcasting in human resource development and roles for the public broadcasting sector, the commercial sector, and the community sector. In this, the role of the public broadcaster is articulated as follows:

The public broadcaster must shoulder the main responsibility to provide programming that is educative as well as curriculum and skills related through its Public Broadcasting Services. These services target a range of audiences

⁴⁶ IBA. *op cit*, p. 11.

⁴⁷ *ibid.* p. 12.

⁴⁸ Department of Communications. (4 June 1998). *White Paper on Broadcasting Policy*, http://www.polity.org.za/govdocs/white_papers/broadcastingwp.html.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

that need and require different educational resources and can therefore go a long way towards developing a culture of life-long learning.⁵⁰

In contrast to the public broadcaster's role, the paper separates the commercial sector's contribution into two components:

- 'commercial educational services', which refers to the role of broadcasters in providing educational materials with the convergence of technologies; and
- 'social contributions' which refers to educational contributions to priority areas as part of contributing to the Public Interest.⁵¹

The paper states that the community sector 'is ideally placed to deliver developmental and educational programmes at a grassroots level'.⁵² It goes on to state that:

The Government is of the view that education should be included as an integral object of the community sector. Educational institutions and developmental organizations should be encouraged to forge partnerships with the community sector for the provision of educational and developmental programmes.⁵³

Finally, the possibility of introducing a dedicated educational channel, which is the focus of this study, is once again mooted.

The policy document also highlights the convergence of technologies and possibilities presented by new technologies. Regarding broadcasting policy in general, the convergence of technologies has led to a new regulatory body responsible for regulating both the broadcasting and telecommunications areas. Following the tabling of appropriate legislation to enable the merger of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) and the South African Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (SATRA), the new regulatory body will commence operations in the 1999/2000 financial year.

The paper alludes to a possible role for new technologies in educational broadcasting, with this statement:

Government is aware that broadcasting can play a meaningful role if it is integrated into a coherent system of educational delivery through multi-media approaches involving the Internet, print and other non-broadcast media.⁵⁴

It makes clear government's more specific priorities with regard to use of new technologies, by articulating objectives for South African production:

Multi-media production for CD-ROM or Web sites in the mid- to long-term will be crucial. Priority for the immediate term will be on production of conventional radio and television materials that can be made available to a wide range of South Africans. Of course, such productions can be re-purposed for use in multi-media.⁵⁵

Government policy positions on the Internet and multimedia are outlined in a chapter in the white paper devoted to 'digital convergence and multimedia'.⁵⁶ This chapter focuses on cable

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ Chapter Seven: Digital Convergence and Multi-Media, *ibid.*

and other multi-channel distribution services, including new interactive media and services delivered via the Internet. A possible role articulated for multi-channel distribution services is 'the delivery of public and educational services'. The Government commits itself to directing the Regulator to conduct a Public inquiry and report to the Minister of Communications by December 1999 on the introduction of a regulatory regime for the multi-channel distributions systems.⁵⁷

The green paper outlined how the Internet is evolving from a narrow-band interactive facility to wide band transmission of sound, data and images, explaining how 'eventually broadcast services will be delivered via the Internet'.⁵⁸ The white paper goes on to introduce some of the difficult issues raised by new technologies for the broadcast arena. Issues of regulation, global consumer access, unlicensed competition, and challenges placed on enforcement of copyright and other intellectual property rights are mentioned. A few tentative solutions, like the state intervening through local Internet Service Providers, a subsidy for local content to ensure a South African presence on the Internet, and a Government emphasis on rolling out terrestrial distribution that has Internet television capacity are posited. In brief, concerning the Internet, the policy commits Government to:

- where possible, making Government information available electronically;
- allowing citizens to communicate with Government electronically; and
- studying the possibility of placing information kiosks or other means of accessing the Worldwide Web in public places.⁵⁹

The question of whether or not broadcasting technology should be changed from analogue to digital transmission is posed, but not answered. Because digital transmission has different implications for the radio and television arms of the broadcasting sector, the discussion is separated accordingly. Regarding digital television, various choices relating to transmission and equipment standards are raised. Discussion on digital radio is a reflection on international developments. The policy states that:

The Government wishes to preserve in a digital age, a similar policy framework that observed South Africa's cultural imperatives, including obligations relating to local content production, geographic coverage of services and the provision of a comprehensive range of services by public, private and community broadcasters.⁶⁰

Two phases of digitization are identified: preparation and transition, followed by implementation. In the first phase, which may last several years, broadcasters and independent producers will be encouraged to consider conversion of their studio, production and communication technologies from analogue to digital, and, as this conversion takes place, to develop all necessary capacity to operate as a digital broadcaster.⁶¹

An important component of this first phase is the conversion of archive material within the SABC. All converted programmes will be available to programme makers and possibly online service providers. Multimedia applications for these materials may be explored. In addition, a Digital Broadcasting Advisory Council, supported by the Department of Communications, will be established. The committees established will advise the council

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Department of Communications. (1997). *Broadcasting Policy: Green paper for Public Discussion*. <http://www.doc.gov.za/docs/policy/broadcasting.html>.

⁵⁹ Summarized from Green Paper, *ibid.*

⁶⁰ Department of Communications. (4 June 1998). *op cit.*

⁶¹ Department of Communications. (4 June 1998). *op cit.*

about ‘technical issues’ and submit a report to Government by the 31st December 1999. Presumably, this council will focus on phase two of digitization as no further mention is made of the implementation phase in this white paper.

The Department of Communication also raises questions that are indirectly relevant to education. These include issues of local content, where, for example, the following question is raised:

How can South Africa play a role in developing a regional production sector that is culturally and developmentally relevant to Southern Africa (e.g. educational programmes, music industry)?⁶²

Likewise, the issue of language is also raised, with questions asked about the relationship between broadcasting and development of the country’s official languages.

School-Based Educational Broadcasting

In April 1998, SABC Education and the national Department of Education commissioned a strategic planning exercise, which culminated in a report entitled, *A School-Based Educational Broadcasting Service for South Africa - Strategic Plan Developed for the South African Broadcasting Corporation*. The aim was to prepare for the phased implementation of a school-based educational broadcasting service that supports teaching, learning, and whole school development. The report describes a strategic plan that will ensure educational relevance and financial sustainability.

In developing an understanding of the nature of the service, the point of departure was that the research would support implementation of a school-based service. This is important because it implies that broadcasting will occur during school hours, and will be used by learners and teachers at schools. The process developed a clear in-principle understanding of the implications of establishing such a service. In doing this, it located a school-based service within a broader broadcasting service supporting schooling through a wide range of broadcasting interventions.

The in-principle approach required an exploration of the relationship between education and broadcasting. This closed off unnecessary debate about whether or not there was any educational role for television or radio. In South Africa, this has already been resolved in the affirmative. This changed the focus of the planning significantly, because it recognizes that the public broadcaster has an educational mandate that it *must* fulfil. The plans were therefore informed by broadcasting prerogatives, not just educational ones. Linked to this, too, was the fact that other role players and policy makers have – during earlier planning processes – prioritized school education as a focus for SABC Education. Consequently, these plans focused on roles that a broadcasting service could most usefully play in supporting school education, in terms of:

- Curriculum support;
- Professional development of teachers; and
- Governance, management, and administration of schools.

The school-based educational broadcasting service was launched early this year. There are several conceptual and logistical challenges associated with this. Therefore, the initial focus of school-based educational broadcasting is limited to Foundation Phase education.

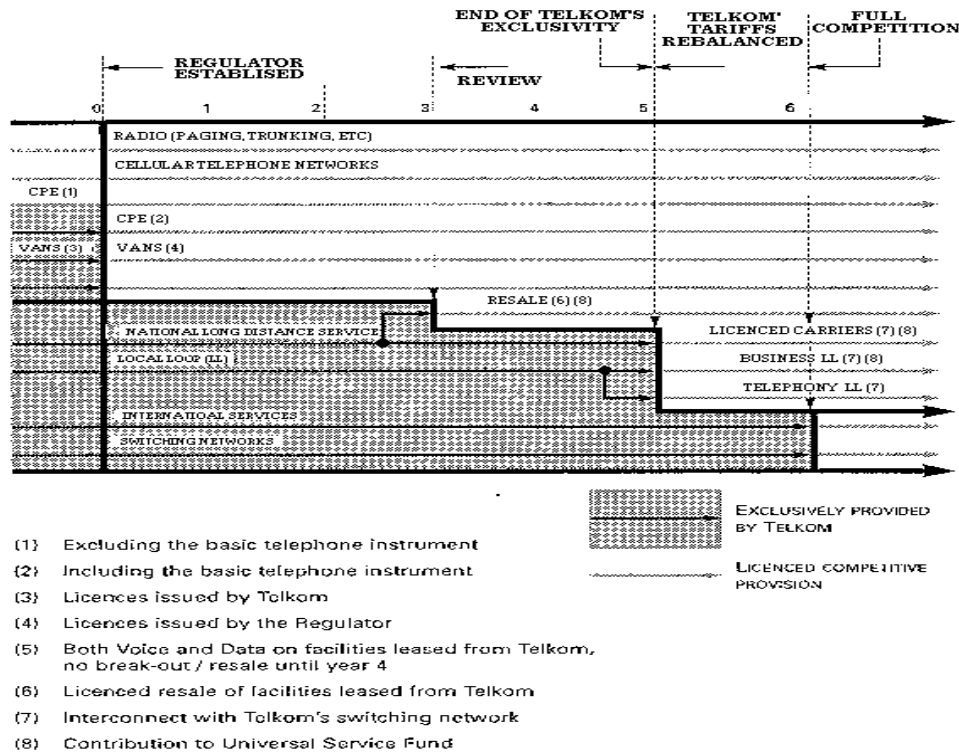
⁶² *ibid.*

TELECOMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Official policy and legislation now governs telecommunications. Perhaps the most immediately obvious aspect to this policy, which was released in 1996, is that it granted a period of exclusivity to the existing terrestrial telecommunications carrier – Telkom SA – in certain areas:

Telkom will be licensed to operate the PSTN [public switched telephone network] and the public switched data network (PSDN) for a period of exclusivity with clear-cut contractual obligations and performance criteria, as determined by the Regulator. The rough aim is to install 20 telephones per 100 population by the year 2000, recognizing that this in part depends on demand, which itself depends in part on affordability. Telkom's stated plan to double the existing network and fully modernise it is seen as a viable means to accomplish the universal access/service goals.⁶³

The policy does, however, map out clearly how this period of exclusivity is expected to pan out, as this figure indicates.⁶⁴



In addition to this, however, the policy, and legislation which flowed from it has also established two important new mechanisms. The first is the South African Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (SATRA), which takes responsibility for regulating telecommunications activities in South Africa, both in areas where monopoly has already been eroded and in those areas reflected in the figure above where it will be removed gradually. This regulatory authority will be merged with the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) by the year 2000. The second is the Universal Service Agency, which has

⁶³ <http://www.doc.gov.za/docs/policy/telewp.html>.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

been tasked with the responsibility of extending telecommunications access in South Africa's historically disadvantaged communities.⁶⁵

The Universal Service Agency

The Universal Service Agency (USA) is a statutory body established by telecommunications policy⁶⁶, with a mandate to provide universal access to telecommunications to all South Africans. Its mission is to

promote affordable Universal Access and Universal Service in Information and Communication Technologies for disadvantaged communities in South Africa, to facilitate development, empowerment and economic growth.⁶⁷

As a primary strategy for achieving this, the USA has followed up on one of the initiatives proposed at the ISAD Conference, namely the establishment of Multi-Purpose Community Centres (MPCCs). It intends to support this initiative through the establishment of telecentres. Telecentres are intended to serve particular communities, and, as well as providing telecommunications, many are intended to provide other services such as small business support, health, and education and training services. In this way, many people will use telephones for different purposes, making telecommunications provision economically viable while meeting the needs of the community.

The USA notes that, for telecentres to provide a long-term solution, they must become sustainable. Thus, it has committed itself to working with other organizations, including schools, libraries, churches, existing community centres, and civic organizations. The key point is not just to run a few projects, but to develop a replicable model of running telecentres effectively in disadvantaged areas.

The USA also acknowledges the need for a range of support services. These include: development of partnerships with other initiatives; establishing a national training scheme; monitoring of telecentres; and establishment of a computer clearing house. To support this work, a Universal Service Fund has been established, which will mainly be financed through licence conditions established by SATRA for telecommunications carriers. The first few centres were established in 1998.⁶⁸

Of particular interest is the USA's involvement in the supply of equipment to telecentres and schools. Many personal computers that have become too old for new generations of software in industry and commerce are still usable in community centres and schools, which have lower-level computing requirements. Consequently, the USA has started a project called the Universal Computer Project:

The Agency has established the Universal Computer Project (UCP), a Section 21 non-for-gain organization. The Universal Computer Project coordinates the identification, collection, storage, repair and dissemination of new and used computers from technology companies and corporates to telecentre, schools and rural based community organizations and centres. The UCP also identifies

⁶⁵ Of course, in addition to these developments, the policy covers a range of issues on telecommunications and development, market structures, ownership, radio frequencies, tariffs, and other relevant issues. The full document can be viewed at: <http://www.doc.gov.za/docs/policy/telewp.html>.

⁶⁶ Telecommunications Act (1996)

⁶⁷ <http://usa.org.za>

⁶⁸ Universal Services Agency, <http://usa.org.za/>, <http://usa.org.za/works/bplan.htm>.

and coordinates training programmes for the people working in these centres on the use, repair and maintenance of computer equipment, thereby promoting technology related skills and ultimately better communication links between communities, government, business and non-governmental organizations.⁶⁹

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Department of Communication has released a position paper entitled *South Africa's National Information and Communications Superhighway*. The paper asserts that 'South Africa will have an advanced Fibre Optic-based communications network in place in the next three years'.⁷⁰ This is based in large part on the assertion that:

The idea of consolidating government networks and to ensure that the various existing networks talk to each other is vital for the attainment of a fully automated government that is accessible 24 hours day and to all citizens. The government is the single most important producer of information and has a special obligation to share its information with the public.⁷¹

Further recommendations approved by South Africa's cabinet and document in this paper are:

- Consolidating government's network and technology in order to ensure efficient service to the public;
- Establishing a ministerial information and communications technology investment cluster in order to further speed up the growth of a sector that has massive potential and which will place South Africa on the global communications highway. This will be convened by the Department of Communications;
- Defining and developing the One -Stop shop concept
- Preparing legislation for e-commerce, digital signature and multimedia convergence and encryption;
- Setting up a Centre for Information and Communications Technologies as an advisory body comprised of both the public and private sectors; and
- Continuing work to lay out a high-speed information network throughout the country.⁷²

These projects have only recently received Cabinet approval, and thus have not yet started in any meaningful way, although there are some pockets of activity.

POSTAL POLICY

Finally, the Department of Communications released a *White Paper on Postal Policy* in May 1998. A number of points emerging from this policy document about new technologies are worth noting.

- Through its universal distribution network the Post Office is thought to be in a good position to provide the bridging network between the different levels of technology.

⁶⁹ Universal Services Agency, <http://usa.org.za>

⁷⁰ <http://www.doc.gov.za/docs/pr/1998/pr0304a.html>.

⁷¹ *ibid.*

⁷² *ibid.*

- The Post Office commits itself to providing access to technology to developing communities through its multi-purpose centres which are intended to give public access to e-mail, facsimile and Internet services; and
- ‘Hybrid electronic services’ are being investigated by the Postal Sector. These are described as follows in the white paper:

Hybrid services involve both the delivery of a hard copy version of a message that originated from the sender in electronic form, and the translation of a hard copy communication into electronic form for transmission to a recipient by modem or other electronic networks. These services speed the transmission and delivery of hard copy communications.⁷³
- The white paper devotes a paragraph to explaining its Volume Electronic Mail (VEM) service, which is labelled as being ‘at the forefront of development’.⁷⁴ VEM is being investigated for the delivery of large volume, point-to-multi-point, regional delivery. A Hybrid Data Interchange service is envisaged to provide a bridge between trading partners at different stages of adopting electronic communications technology, a fax-on-demand document storage and retrieval service.⁷⁵

RELATED POLICY POSITIONS

INFORMATION SOCIETY AND DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

In addition to educational, telecommunications, and broadcasting policy, there are other policy positions that focus specifically on the development of an information society and are relevant to this study. In many ways, these policy processes were ushered in by the Information Society and Development (ISAD) Conference, a G7 Conference held in South Africa in 1996. At this Conference, South Africa put forward a position paper, which articulates a range of national initiatives designed to foster an information society in South Africa. The paper notes that:

The information revolution is changing the world very rapidly. These changes are global and inescapable. Further, the rate of change in the information revolution continues to increase exponentially. This will have enormous economic consequences, and great potential for spreading benefits currently enjoyed by developed countries. This great rate of change demands a very flexible approach to policy formulation. However, the challenges facing developing countries are different in many respects to those facing developed countries. In developing countries, the Information Society must serve national development needs, and focus on the disadvantaged sectors and under-developed areas.⁷⁶

⁷³ Department of Communication. (May 1998). *White Paper on Postal Policy*, http://www.polity.org.za/govdocs/white_papers/postalwp.html.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁵ *ibid.*

⁷⁶ Mbeki T, (April 1996) *The Information Society and the Developing World: A South African Perspective, Draft Five, Version 5.1*, presented at the Information Society and Development Conference, <http://wn.apc.org/nitf/ppexec.htm>.

In response to this challenge, the paper identified a range of national interventions, each intended to contribute to serving these ‘national development needs’. These were:

1. Establishment of Centres of Excellence to develop applications meeting the needs of the communities they serve;
2. Establishment of Multi-Purpose Community Centres for universal access, in which IT will be the backbone for a range of services defined by their communities;
3. Development of a Government Online pilot project to support the development of open and efficient government;
4. Development and implementation of a national qualifications framework for IT; and
5. Support for the establishment of a Contemporary African Music and Arts Archive to record and promote South African national cultural and artistic heritage.⁷⁷

COMMUNICATION TASK GROUP

Another relevant policy process is the work of the Communication Task (ComTask) Group. The ComTask report emerged from the activity proposed at ISAD of supporting open and transparent government by development online governmental services. This task group, which was commissioned by the Deputy President of South Africa, consulted over an eight-month period with South African institutions, professional bodies, and all levels of government.

Its purpose was to compile a set of recommendations on an information strategy for the South African government. As the report points out:

A new communications system is an economic and political imperative for the ‘information age’. Its purpose must be to provide a network throughout the country which provides every citizen with the information required to live and to control their lives.

The ComTask report analyses government communications strategies in 1996, explores the South African media, sketches out development challenges, presents international perspectives on government communication systems, and then presents a set of recommendations on the way forward. These include recommendations on the introduction of new structures (and dissolution of some existing ones), on personnel and training within the government, on roles for the Department of Foreign Affairs to improve South Africa’s image internationally, and on developing and increasing access to information.

The establishment of the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS), in May 1998, followed this report. The GCIS:

is envisaged as a system of government communications headed by a Secretariat characterized as:

- A strategizing body located in the Presidency dealing with issues of government message, communications strategy, and corporate image.
- A body to integrate, coordinate and rationalize the work of all communications structures in government, including training.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁸ Government Communication and Information System (GCIS), <http://www.gcis.gov.za/>

The GCIS sees the implementation of the structural changes recommended by the ComTask Group Report. The following were initial objectives of the GCIS for its first year:

- Development communications: The aim of this is to ensure that all South Africans are empowered to know their rights and to take full advantage of the socio-economic opportunities. In this regard GCIS expects to play an important role in servicing tele-centres and multi-purpose community/information centres.
- Streamlining the government communications system: It is envisaged that the Secretariat shall hold regular meetings with ministerial and departmental communicators. It is also envisaged that the relationship between the GCIS and the provincial structures shall be defined during the course of 1998. Areas of collaboration within the system will include that of strategy and message; international image-building; bulk-buying of advertising space, and training.
- Training: One of the immediate ComTask proposals that GCIS will be attending to is the establishment of a National Training Board for government communication. This will service the whole of government.
- Building partnerships with the Media: The GCIS relationship with the media shall be built on the recognition of the principle that they share a common responsibility and obligation: that of keeping the public informed. At the same time, GCIS shall explore avenues to ensure that a diversity of voices can be heard through the South African media.
- Better utilization of Internet Technology: It is envisaged that the GCIS Website shall provide a single entry point for government information, with all government departments being encouraged to develop their own websites.⁷⁹

The GCIS offers the following services to the government departments, bodies, private sector and NGOs and the public at large.⁸⁰

- Broadcast production Services;
- Exhibitions;
- Event Management;
- Campaign Planning;
- Graphic design and layout;
- Information enquiries service; and
- Internet support services

It has also established an Interim Government Communications Training Council (IGCTC). It is envisaged that the IGCTC will in a later stage be transformed into an Education and Training Quality Assurer in line with the requirements of the National Skills Development Act.

The IGCTC has developed and adopted the following programme of action.⁸¹

1. To develop a skills plan for government communications;
2. To develop government communications learnership;
3. To assess education and training in the sector; and

⁷⁹ *ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid*

⁸¹ *Ibid*

4. To build awareness of the NQF process.

DEPARTMENT OF ARTS, CULTURE, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY

Another government department responsible for examining issues related to the developing Information Society is the Department of Arts, Culture, Science, and Technology (DACST). This Department has also released a policy document on science and technology, which refers to the importance of developing a South African vision for the information society. The paper poses the following questions:

- What should we do to prevent being marginalized by the accelerating rate of innovation in information technology in the world?
- How can we participate globally without merely throwing open our markets to foreign products, thus increasing our dependency on the developed world?
- How can we empower ourselves with a capacity for IT innovation?⁸²

It then sets out a range of strategies for encouraging innovation and diffusion of science and technology throughout South Africa, many of which represent efforts to find answers to the above questions.

As part of its work, DACST has approved plans to establish 43 arts and culture centres in disadvantaged communities within South Africa. This project is worth mentioning, both because it represents a different intended use for centres from those conventionally stated (conventional uses mostly being health, education, and telecommunications) and because sites have already been identified for the project to begin. DACST is keen to ensure that these centres are not only used for arts and culture purposes, however, particularly as this would not lead to the implementation of sustainable structures. Hence, it is seeking suitable partners to find a range of alternative uses for the centres.

DACST has also just completed the National Research and Technology Foresight Project. The first questionnaires for this process were circulated in December, 1998. Its intention was to canvas the opinions of a wide range of key players in South African society, with a view to identifying and proposing future ICT sector research and technology areas and related market opportunities over the next twenty years.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have provided an overview of policy positions relating to broadcasting, education, and telecommunications. Each of these demonstrates an in-principle commitment to an environment in which a range of technologies is appropriately used to support education. The policy environment is only one indicator of a country's potential to make use of technologies in meaningful and appropriate ways. Having explored the rich and enabling policy environment in the country, it becomes imperative to explore educational needs and context at a more practical level. This constitutes the focus of chapter two.

⁸² Department of Arts, Culture Science and Technology, *White Paper on Science and Technology*, http://www.polity.org.za/govdocs/white_papers/scitech.html (accessed on 27/8/98).