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(HRDC)**

REPORT TITLE

**FORGING TVET COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS – IMPLICATIONS
FOR THE POST-SCHOOL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF FIGURES.....	IV
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	V
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	VI
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. TVET COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS IN A DEVELOPMENTAL STATE	2
3. INTERNATIONAL PROTOCOLS AND CONVENTIONS	5
4. SUCCESSFUL TVET PARTNERSHIPS	6
5. DEFINING PARTNERSHIPS	9
6. CHANGE DRIVERS	11
7. THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT	13
8. THE PARTNERSHIP ENVIRONMENT.....	17
8.1. TYPOLOGY OF PARTNERSHIPS	18
9. PARTNERSHIP PROTOTYPES.....	20
9.1. Case Study 1: KZN National Tooling Initiative (KZNTI)	20
9.2. Case Study 2: Consortium Model	24
9.3. Case Study 3: Leadership Exchange Programme (LEP).....	28
10. FINDINGS	33
11. RECOMMENDATIONS	35
11.1. The Development of Partnership Guidelines and Framework	35
11.2. Build the Capacity of TVET College and DHET Staff	36
11.3. Implement a Performance Management Regime	37
11.4. Strengthening SETA and TVET College Linkages.....	37
11.5. Strengthening International and Regional Partnerships.....	38
11.6. HRDC Investigation	38
12. CONCLUSION	40
13. REFERENCES.....	41

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships.....17

Figure 2: KZNTI Architecture22

Figure 3: KZNTI Delivery Structure.....23

Figure 4: Consortium Model24

Figure 5: Consortium Model Offerings26

Figure 6: Balance Scorecard27

TABLE OF TABLES

Table 1: DHET-FET Turnaround Strategy16

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABET	ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING
BEE	BLACK ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT
DHET	DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION TRAINING
FET	FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING
HET	HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING
ILO	INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION
NEET	NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING
OECD	ORGANISATION OF ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT
PSET	POST SCHOOL EDUCATION AND TRAINING
SMME	SMALL MICRO AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISE
TVET	TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING
UNESCO	UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANISATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this paper is to propose measures for strengthening and supporting partnerships between Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges and a range of stakeholders.

Since the advent of democracy there has been a proliferation of policy outlines that make constant referral to South Africa as a “developmental state” and the solutions to its structural problems as contained within that ideological paradigm. Closely in step with the developmental state narrative, the *Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2012)* and the subsequent *White Paper (2014)* labour the point of promoting the growth of strong partnerships between TVET Colleges and employers.

However, both policy papers specifically forewarn that “the possibility of partnerships between public and private institutions should be explored within a clearly defined regulatory framework that sets out the parameters for operation”. It is the contention of this paper that this, indeed, is precisely what is lacking in the TVET college partnership discourse.

Generally, the most common reason advanced for college-industry partnerships is the need to ensure that the curriculum of TVET colleges is aligned to the needs of the workplace to ensure a smooth transition from college-to-work.

The overriding focus tends to be on the breadth or number of partnerships from a statistical perspective, however defined, rather than the qualitative dimensions, modalities and outcomes of partnerships. For instance, the Department of Education’s *Linkages and Partnerships: audit 2003* is essentially a quantitative description of the relationships developed by TVET colleges with industry, non-government organisations, communities and government. Arguably, the weakness of this approach in the discourse, mentioned earlier, is that it often creates the misleading impression that partnerships in the TVET college sector are widespread.

There are no specific models to adopt directly when establishing partnerships. Varying national, historical, political, ideological, cultural and socio-economic contexts of different TVET systems make it impossible to find turnkey solutions. What works in one context may fail in another.

The need to create working partnerships between TVET colleges and stakeholders, particularly industry, is borne out of the intention to make TVET colleges responsive to the

needs of stakeholders, especially, but not exclusively, the labour market. As government reconfigures the PSET sector, it is necessary to ensure that TVET colleges make a meaningful contribution to addressing national socio-economic goals. As institutions designed to address the artisanal skills development in the intermediate occupational level, it will be difficult to pursue the state's grand plans of infrastructural development such as SIPs without this set of institutions.

Although each partnership arrangement is different, they share some common characteristics: they bring together public- and private-sector partners; partners work together toward shared objectives; each partner contributes time, money, expertise, and/or other resources; and decision-making and management responsibilities are shared in varying degrees. Most importantly, there must be a value proposition.

Three partnership models are discussed: KZN Tooling Initiative; the TVET Consortium Model and the British Council-DHET Leadership Exchange Programme. With this in mind, there is a need for policy clarity from the DHET with specific reference to its stance on TVET college partnerships with public and private sector organisations.

Developing a framework of incentives designed to enhance the motivation and participation of parties is a key factor for successful partnerships. Since college staff may not get readily involved, partnerships may only be achieved by drawing stakeholders into reciprocal and systematic interaction. Creating a financial stake is usually a pragmatic and effective way to make partnerships happen.

At another level, it is also necessary to develop DHET staff responsible for promoting and supporting TVET college partnerships. Strengthening the DHET's capacity to provide mechanisms and oversight for partnership development, monitoring and evaluation is a necessity.

Underperforming TVET colleges are unlikely to develop sustainable partnerships. Successful partnerships are based on a value proposition for partners. Stakeholders especially are unlikely to want to engage with under-performing TVET colleges, except for perhaps altruistic reasons.

Relationships between SETAs (which represent organised business and labour) and TVET colleges appear to be distant. This has meant that the opportunities that used to exist for longer-term developmental partnerships between employers and public education institutions have been replaced by short-term contract opportunities.

TERMINOLOGY

- In a private-public sector partnership, parties undertake a joint business project of mutual benefit, constructed around a business plan with various partners contracting to provide services.

- A social partnership is structured around a social agenda with defined benefits and risks and an agreement to work together constructively and synergistically to solve a problem or provide a service. Such partnerships will have a business dimension in their management and evaluation.

- An education partnership is developed between an education organisation and a prospective business employer for the purposes of two-way learning about the practical and theoretical dimensions of school and the world of work in order to complement classroom based-learning with the intention of equipping learners to enter the world of work.

- A learning partnership is where the parties within a partnership commit to a learning agenda for their own professional development.

- The terms FET and TVET are used interchangeably.

1. INTRODUCTION

The overarching purpose of this research paper is to propose measures for promoting partnerships between Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges and their stakeholders with a view to expand access; improve quality; enhance equity; build productive organisational and student capacity; increase student placement and college-to-work transitions.

This paper locates the partnership discourse within the notion of a developmental state and global protocols and conventions since South Africa is a member state of the United Nations. It provides a rationale for TVET college partnerships and reflects on the competing terminology used to describe TVET college partnerships. It also discusses factors driving colleges towards partnerships and analyses the discourse on TVET partnerships in South Africa. It then presents a multi-stakeholder partnership architecture for TVET colleges and then discusses a set of good practice case studies. Finally, the paper makes several recommendations to strengthen and support the notion of partnerships in TVET colleges.

2. TVET COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS IN A DEVELOPMENTAL STATE

Since the democratisation of the South African state, there is a proliferation of policy discourse on forging partnerships within the paradigm of a “developmental state” to overcome the multi-faceted socio-economic problems afflicting our society. For example, the ruling African National Congress (ANC) in its *Congress Strategy and Tactics (2007)*, defines the notion of a developmental state as being an approach premised on people-centred and people-driven change; sustained development based on high growth rates; restructuring of the economy; and social inclusion. Implicit in this understanding is the need to establish partnerships to translate policy goals to programme deliverables for sustainable livelihoods.

Similarly, *The New Growth Path (2010: 28)* comments on the notion of a “developmental state” within the lens of three critical issues - the role of the state; the market and its players; and social mobilisation and dialogue. It labours the point that careful alliances and broad public support are needed for transformation towards a more equitable, decent work-generating and green economy.

Along the same narrative, the *National Development Plan (2012: 24)* presents the notion of a capable state. The nuance in the discourse is a tacit acknowledgement that state institutional capacity and leadership should be strengthened to build an inclusive economy, eliminate poverty, and reduce inequality by 2030. In this instance as well, the promotion of partnerships is *sine qua non* to achieve a capable state.

Hence, any discussion about TVET college sector partnerships in South Africa should therefore be firmly rooted within the paradigm of a developmental state. Indeed, the recently published White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2014) raises the question - how can skills development support the creation of a developmental state? Akoojee (2010: 261) also captures this premise by stating that “success in skills development is intricately linked to the success of the developmental state”.

The common factor running through major policy pronouncements such as the *Reconstruction and Development Plan (1994)*, *Growth, Employment and Redistribution (1996)*, *National Development Plan (2012)*, *New Growth Path (2011)*, *Industrial Policy Action Plan 2 (2011)*, *Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa 2010-2030 (2009)*, *Skills Accord (2010)* and *National Skills Development Strategy III (2010)* is, indeed, the notion of partnerships in a developmental state.

Following the developmental state agenda, the *Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2012)* and the *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2014)* amplify the importance of promoting strong working partnerships between TVET colleges and employers. The underlying rationale is that close partnerships between colleges and employers will assist the colleges to locate opportunities for work-integrated learning and help them to place students when they complete their qualifications.

Key objectives in strengthening colleges also include improving access, throughput rates, management capacity (especially with regard to planning, and financial and human resource management), student support services and student accommodation, as well as developing management information systems, strengthening governance, building partnerships with employers and other stakeholders, increasing the responsiveness of colleges to local labour markets, and creating a mix of programmes and qualifications that will meet the varied needs of students (DHET, 2014).

The *National Development Plan (2012)* underscores the need for a strong relationship between colleges and industry for improving the quality of training in colleges and ensure quick absorption of college graduates into jobs. Through partnerships colleges will also be able to determine what skills are needed in the labour market.

However, the *Green Paper* (DHET, 2012: 50) explicitly cautions that “the possibility of partnerships between public and private institutions should be explored within a clearly defined regulatory framework that sets out the parameters for operation. Thus, the development of TVET college partnerships should not proceed in the absence of a clear set of policy, legislative and regulatory arrangements. Ostensibly this has meant, according to *The Green Paper (2012)*, that opportunities for forging “longer-term developmental partnerships between employers and public education institutions tend to be substituted by short-term contract opportunities”.

A notable omission in *The Green Paper (2012)* is the need for TVET colleges to establish and strengthen partnerships with various government entities (national, regional and local), local communities, social groups, state-owned entities, education institutions and labour market actors, beyond just employers.

In contrast, the *White Paper (2014)* conceptualises partnerships from a broadened perspective. It calls for partnerships with the following: agencies supporting SMMEs, government departments at various levels, SETAs, other post-school institutions, expanded

public works programmes, religious and civic organisations and international bodies, to mention a few.

These partnerships should evolve within a single, coherent, differentiated and highly articulated post-school education and training system in a developmental state.

3. INTERNATIONAL PROTOCOLS AND CONVENTIONS

The partnership discourse in the TVET sector should be located within international protocols and conventions since South Africa is a member state of the United Nations. The two normative instruments concerning TVET, namely, *Convention on Technical and Vocational Education (1989)* and *the Revised Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education (2001)* recommends the member countries should share their experiences in TVET. It goes on to state that “provision should be made at national, regional and international levels for regular exchange, making use of contemporary information, communication technologies, documentation and materials obtained from research and development (UNESCO, 2004: 2).

UNESCO's *Third International Congress Transforming TVET: building skills for work and life* held in Shanghai, Peoples' Republic of China (May, 2012) states that “new forms of partnerships and policy dialogue are needed at all levels to simultaneously transform and expand TVET learning within the wider visions of development”. Key requirements to transform the TVET sector are multi-stakeholder partnerships in TVET systems, capacity development of national stakeholders, a strong knowledge base and a supportive role by the international community (UNESCO, 2012: 6).

UNESCO calls for strengthened partnerships and co-operation at regional and international levels. In concert with our earlier contention, the Shanghai consensus states that much of the policy discourse has been on the state building partnerships with employers and especially the private sector. This is clearly important and must take into account that the private sector itself is diverse, consisting of numerous profit and non-profit organisations ranging in size, location, and economic and social interests (UNESCO, 2012: 6).

Regional and international organisations are important partners in supporting national policy processes and cross-country dialogue in the field of TVET. UNESCO, ILO, OECD and the World Bank, along with continental and regional bodies, are necessary to build institutional and policy capacities (UNESCO, 2012: 26).

It is important that TVET Colleges in our post-school education and training system subscribe to supporting the international mandate.

4. SUCCESSFUL TVET PARTNERSHIPS

There is widespread consensus from all stakeholders of the necessity for TVET Colleges to form partnerships to ensure responsiveness to local community needs both in the South African and international literature (DHET, 2012; National Planning Commission, 2012; UNESCO, 2012).

The most common reason advanced for partnerships is the need to ensure successful labour market outcomes by ensuring quick absorption of graduates into the workplace. Other reasons cited include upgrading machinery and equipment; improving supply of middle level skills; lecturer placements, reducing skill shortages and mismatches; adopting business principles in college management; and improving TVET college responsiveness (Piyasiri *et al.*, 2008: 6). Callan and Ashworth (2004) add that partnerships offers clear opportunities for generating new streams of income for TVET colleges. It also provides opportunities to generate new sets of knowledge and capabilities which add to the competitive positioning of those involved.

According to Njengele (2013), creating a solid partnership platform for TVET Colleges necessitates a paradigm shift from administrative compliance to adaptability innovation.

Innovation and Change: Mitchell and Young (2001) argue that successful partnering is related to the ability to respond to the needs of change, continuous learning and innovation. Carnall (2003) concurs that TVET colleges, like those in other sectors, are being asked to rethink the 'rules of the game'. As Collins (2001) found, the most successful companies develop cultures in which people embrace change as an opportunity well before change becomes an externally driven threat. While 'slow and steady' may no longer win the race, 'fast and steady' can. In addition, such change-adept enterprises especially recognise the strategic importance of their key relationships, partnerships or connections. As Kanter (1999) has remarked in her observations about the growth and decline of businesses today, how well a company chooses its partners and how effectively it integrates their activities will determine survival or extinction. This message is becoming increasingly relevant to TVET colleges and others within the post-school education and training system.

Local partnerships: According to Billett and Seddon (2004) there is a growing consensus on the need to emphasise partnerships with local communities in the catchment area. Local partners have a better understanding of the local labour market, challenges and opportunities

and mutuality of interests. Local TVET colleges and stakeholders (companies, SETAs, business chambers, local authorities, social partners, and social groups) are jointly able to better identify and anticipate skills needs and deliver according to local expectations of both students and firms. Local partnerships would thus boost student internship opportunities and labour market entry, and foster appropriate skilling of the workforce, hence anchoring the attractiveness of VET to both students and employers. Local partnerships have the potential to become a 'hallmark of mature service delivery' (Billett and Seddon, 2004).

The White Paper (2014) is in sync with global thinking on the importance of local labour market responsiveness. It states that one of the key objectives in strengthening TVET colleges is to increase their responsiveness to local labour markets. Colleges should be rooted in their communities, serving community as well as regional and national needs. They should primarily, although not exclusively, provide education and training to members of their own and nearby communities and develop skills for local industry, commerce and public-sector institutions. They should constantly strive to be seen by their communities as providers of skills that offer a route out of poverty and that promote personal or collective advancement. They should also be seen as institutions that can assist communities to meet some of their cultural and social needs.

Industry Driver: Industry is more than a partner in the TVET system; in fact, it is the key driver. Industry plays a major role in the setting of occupational and competency standards; it is the underbelly of the national qualifications framework and quality assurance provisions. Industry is the nuts and bolts of a quality and effective TVET system.

The importance of successful industry partnerships with TVET colleges is recognised throughout the international TVET community. MacDonald, Nink and Duggan (2010) assert that some of the best examples of TVET systems are found in Australia, Canada, Germany, and the United States. Each system has stood the test of time and over the years, often through robust industry engagement, has developed highly responsive TVET systems that have the potential to modernise according to training and technological developments throughout industry. However, the complexities of these countries' TVET systems limit what can be adopted by a developing nation.

Value Proposition: There should be a value proposition in the partnership arrangement for all parties. This means that there should be mutual value extracted from the partnership between the TVET college and their partner. If value cannot be derived from the partnership it

will likely render the arrangement a failure over a period. Partnerships cannot be sustained in the long-term on goodwill. Smith (2001) notes, considerable value-adding is realised through high quality education and training, relevant learning programmes informed by industry, adoption of new technology, and employees being able to use new skills across different roles. Case studies in the VET sector have found that return on investment is high, with the principal return for the individual being increased wages in the order of 7–10% for workers who receive employer-sponsored training (Smith, 2001).

According to the FET Roundtable in 2010, the success of the colleges will depend on strong collaborative relationships on a number of axes, including:

- collaboration between colleges and industry;
- stronger relationships among SETAs and between SETAs and colleges;
- close cooperation among the Quality Councils, given the complex nature of current and future qualifications offered at the colleges;
- stronger links between colleges and higher education institutions; and
- closer relationships among all stakeholders to support effective policy formulation and planning.

Establishing successful TVET partnerships is a challenge. The success of a partnership depends on its design, the regulatory framework of the country, and on the capacity of TVET colleges to oversee and enforce its contracts and partnerships. When implemented correctly, partnerships can increase efficiency and choice, and expand access to education services, particularly for households that tend to be poorly served by traditional delivery methods (McLaughlin, 2004: 18).

5. DEFINING PARTNERSHIPS

The term “partnership” is variously referred to as “relationships”, “linkages”, “co-operation”, “networks”, “association” and “collaboration”. These terms tend to be used interchangeably to refer to a “partnership”.

For the purposes of this research paper, a partnership is clearly defined “as a formal relationship with joint rights and responsibilities between two or more parties in co-operation to achieve mutual goals” (writer’s own definition). This definition deliberately introduces formality, obligations, shared risk and purposiveness into the partnership, and is a departure from the current discourse in which any engagement is viewed as a partnership.

This definition is similar to the definition contained in the *Review of FET College Partnerships and Linkages* conducted by Singizi (2011: 7) which refers to a partnership as “one in which the respective roles and contributions include shared risk and take into account the different agendas of the partners”.

Singizi (2011:7) also provides definitions of the different types of partnership such as the following:

*A **private- public sector partnership** is where parties undertake a joint business project, of mutual benefit, constructed around a business plan with various partners contracting to provide services.*

*A **social partnership** is structured around a social agenda with defined benefits and risks and an agreement to work together in a cross-sector manner, to constructively and synergistically solve a problem or provide a service. Such partnerships will have a business dimension in their management and evaluation.*

*An **education partnership** is a partnership developed between an education organisation and a prospective business employer for the purposes of two-way learning about the practical and theoretical dimensions of school and the world of work in order to complement classroom based learning with the intention of learners being better equipped to enter the world of work.*

*A **learning partnership** is where the parties within a partnership commit to a learning agenda within the partnership for their own professional development, for furthering understanding about the focus of the project, and deeper understanding of the practice of partnerships.*

Partnerships are formed at many levels, including macro (policy), meso (sectoral) and micro (enterprise) level. The partnership may be vertical, between TVET college and national institutions, or horizontal, between TVET colleges or local organisations. Partnerships can take the form of representation of stakeholders on TVET national bodies or college councils to providing advice and being consulted on policy, planning and performance evaluation, curriculum development and quality control. At a micro-level partnerships can be developed between individual enterprises, TVET colleges and local governments, community organisations and a range of training providers (Mitchell, 1998: 10).

The forms and modalities of TVET college partnerships vary widely. Partnerships can be college-to-college, college-to-university, college-to-industry, social partnerships and international partnerships; or clustering and alliances between major institutions in the regulatory framework. They may also involve intermediary mechanisms through which enterprises are contracted to deliver training services in accordance with public policy and procedures as a result of the introduction of incentives into the system (Mitchell, 1998: 10).

Kanter (1994) suggests at least three forms of partnerships. Mutual service involves organisations pooling resources to gain access to benefits too expensive to acquire alone. An example in the TVET sector is partners pooling funds to purchase expensive equipment or advanced technology to be used by students. Next, joint ventures enable partners to pursue an opportunity which requires their joint capabilities. The delivery of training programmes through a consortium of providers is an example of this. Thirdly, Kanter lists value-chain partnerships. Here the partners with different but complementary skills link their capabilities to create enhanced value for the customer. In the TVET sector, the on-the-job and off-the-job training arrangement for trainees and apprentices is one example of such value-chain partnering.

6. CHANGE DRIVERS

The renewed interest in TVET college partnerships is driven by a range of developments in the global and local environments. These developments are compelling TVET colleges to establish sustainable partnerships in order to remain relevant to stakeholders.

Increased competition means companies are focused more on their core products and services, contracting out work, trimming down their size and growing co-operation with other companies. Through this process, we see the development of partnerships with TVET colleges. This trend leads to internal changes in organisations, where the role of the traditional hierarchical organisation is pushed to the background. The emphasis shifts towards organisational structures based on a myriad of partnerships (Tansen, 2011: 5).

More recently global competition and technology has enabled companies to form *business ecosystems* or *clusters* supported by a foundation of interacting organisations and individuals. Businesses co-evolve into whatever partnerships are needed at a particular time to succeed, employing competition-cooperation to increase business opportunities. This is the new environment in which TVET colleges are required to operate (TAFE NSW ICVET, 2006: 3).

There are egalitarian pressures on governments across the globe to reduce gross social inequalities and foster inclusive growth. This is manifested by demands for greater access to colleges from workers, the poor, unemployed youth and marginalised communities. Dissemination of democratic values is also promoting participatory policy-making and the involvement of civil society in further education and training. This trend reflects an increasing concern for transparency in policy-making, free expression and accountability (Verma, 1991: 1).

National governments in many parts of the world are facing budgetary cutbacks in public education spending since the global financial crisis of 2008. There is also competition for public funds from other social sectors such as transport, health, housing and welfare, to list a few. Furthermore, with a growing demand for admission, colleges are seeking alternative funding streams to meet demand. Hence, the motivation for partnerships (Ferguson, 2008: 18).

Increasing participation by a diverse range of constituencies is leading to massification of PSET systems. This is exacerbated by mass migration of skilled workers from developing to developed regions. TVET colleges are pressurised to cater for mass training of students.

There is a demand for TVET colleges to respond to the needs of the labour market and win the confidence of industry is also a strong motivator for partnerships. Technological advancements in the modern workplace require technically skilled workers at entry and middle occupational levels. Globalisation is eroding the powers of national governments. It is compelling them to promote sustainable partnerships between TVET Colleges and stakeholders as a means of expanding access, generating additional revenue, upgrading infrastructure, increasing enrolments, creating responsive colleges and improving labour market outcomes (Mitchell and Young 2001).

Local communities also view colleges as a way to break out of poverty, secure decent work and improve living standards. Well-functioning colleges have a significant role to play in improving youth employment and employability by ensuring smooth college to work transitions.

These and other external forces are driving TVET colleges into partnerships with a range of different organisations in the public and private sectors. South African TVET colleges are not immune to these developments.

7. THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

In South Africa there is a tacit acknowledgement that an effective TVET college sector in the post-school education and training system is a critical pillar of any successful economy. It can serve to alleviate poverty, build sustainable livelihoods, reduce inequalities and boost GDP growth (DHET, 2012; DHET, 2013; NPC, 2012).

TVET college partnerships, especially but not exclusively with industry, are mentioned in major policy positions of government. The *National Development Plan* (2012: 321) makes reference to building a strong relationship between the college sector and industry to ensure quick absorption of college graduates into jobs. *The New Growth Path* (2012: 20) gives attention to TVET colleges playing a central role in developing middle level skills of the youth.

The Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2012: 26) is very supportive of fostering TVET college-industry partnerships and acknowledges “the relationship between colleges and industries are, with some exceptions, weak. The White Paper (DHET, 2014) also recognises the importance of partnerships between educational institutions and employers.

The *Human Resource Development Strategy of South Africa (HRD-SA)* makes reference to industry-institutional partnerships. Strategic goal 2.3 states that “*each FET institution has at least one functional and sustainable industry-institution partnership aimed at enhancing the link between formal learning and the world of work and providing opportunities for placements*”. This is intended to improve labour market outcomes of TVET colleges (HRD-SA, 2012: 34).

The discourse of *HRD-SA* is reflective of the literature on TVET partnerships in South Africa. The overriding focus tends to be on the breadth or number of partnerships from a statistical perspective, however defined, rather than the qualitative dimensions, modalities and outcomes of partnerships. For instance, the Department of Education’s *Linkages and Partnerships: audit 2003* is essentially a quantitative description of the relationships developed by TVET colleges with industry, non-government organisations, communities and government.

The Department of Education’s Audit (DoE, 2003) found that a total of 1 852 partnership projects exist between TVET colleges and business, government, other educational institutions and non-government organisations. Almost all TVET colleges are involved in partnership projects. The number of partnership projects, however, differs markedly between colleges and

between provinces with the college mean ranging from 3 to 150 partnership projects. The national mean is 39 partnership projects per college.

The Audit does, however, acknowledge that a number of conceptual challenges surfaced in the study that requires attention. These include the following (DoE, 2003):

- definition of partnerships;
- observed and actual impact and value of partnerships on transformation; and
- different types of partnerships that exist as compared to other forms of relationships, i.e. the development of a typology of FET college partnerships.

Similarly, the *Review of FET College Partnerships and Linkages* conducted under the banner of the Swiss-South African Co-operation Initiative (Singizi, 2011) discusses TVET partnerships primarily in terms of biographical information such as numbers, levels and types of partnerships (Singizi, 2011).

Quantitative targets are also the unit for measuring SETA involvement with TVET colleges. The DHET expects SETAs to have a certain number of partnerships with TVET colleges in their performance targets and business plans (DHET, 2012).

It is the contention of this research that current thinking appears to be predicated on the assumption that there is a positive correlation between the number of partnerships and TVET college responsiveness. **This begs the question: if TVET colleges are enmeshed in partnerships as it appears in the literature, why are they struggling to win the confidence of students, parents and industry?**

Arguably the weakness of this approach, as mentioned earlier, is that it often creates the misleading impression that partnerships in the TVET college sector are widespread. Gewer (2010: 16) is of the view that pressure on colleges to create partnerships is of limited success. He states that although there is an absence of data on college-industry linkages, there is an indication that pockets of good practice exists.

According to Gewer (2010: 16), the general perception is that the NC(V) qualification has disrupted attempts to forge relationships with industry. The suggestion is that the continued reliance in industry of the NATED programmes, distrust for the NC(V), and the constriction of supply created through the first three years of NC(V) implementation, has caused industry to turn to other sources, including taking on Grade 12 school leavers. This implies that, in terms of Gewer's (2010) assertion, TVET colleges are facing a credibility crisis with industry to the extent that employees are better off trained in the workplace than in TVET colleges.

Industry has demonstrated some commitment to working with colleges and there are examples of partnership projects emerging, such as the *Technical Skills Business Partnership and the College-Industry Partnership* (National Business Initiative, 2009). However, for the moment, these remain projects and do not permeate the core operations of colleges. In addition, there is concern that while industry is prepared to invest in supporting colleges, there should be a reciprocal commitment to quality delivery of learning outputs (Gewer, 2010: 17).

Recently the DHET (2013: 25) developed the *Draft FET Turnaround Strategy. Programme 7* of the strategy makes direct reference to partnerships, relationships and linkages at various levels: industry and employer liaison and partnership development; building relationships with national, provincial and local government agencies; building partnerships with national and international development agencies; targeted liaison with specific economic sectors and/or industry bodies; and building partnerships with community, academic and social organisations.

The DHET's (2013: 25) *Draft FET Turnaround Strategy* is based on a multi-stakeholder architecture involving the following:

Sub-programme	Component	Criterion for Optimal Functionality
Industry and employer liaison and partnership development	Liaison and communication with specific industries and employer groups	College has established and is managing linkages with local industries and employer groups which enables college to generate additional revenue through training opportunities and place lecturers and students for workplace learning
	Building and developing specific partnerships with industry and employer groups	
Building relationships with national, provincial and local government agencies	Liaison, communication and partnership development with national government departments and agencies	College has established and is managing linkages with government departments at various levels which enables college to generate additional revenue through training opportunities and place lecturers and students for workplace learning
	Liaison, communication and partnership development with provincial government departments and agencies	
	Liaison, communication and partnership development with municipality and district government departments and agencies	
Building partnerships with national and international donors and development agencies	Building partnerships with national donors and development agencies	College has established and is managing linkages with donors and development agencies which results in the implementation of innovative programmes for college development and training of students
	Building partnerships with international donors and development agencies	
Targeted liaison with specific economic sectors and/or industry bodies	Targeted liaison with specific economic sectors and/or industry bodies (e.g SETAs)	College has established and is managing linkages employer bodies and SETAs which enables college to generate additional revenue through training opportunities and place lecturers and students for workplace learning
Building partnerships with community, academic and social organisations and agencies	Building strategic partnerships to increase capacity	College has established and is managing appropriate linkages with various local organisations and agencies for the purpose of strengthening capacity to deliver programmes and creating opportunities for articulation
	Building strategic partnerships for articulation and programme collaboration	

Table 1: DHET FET Turnaround Strategy

The DHET's Partnership Framework (2013) has major implications for TVET colleges and the DHET itself. The establishment of an effective partnership regime would depend on the extent to which the DHET is willing to delegate authority and responsibility to TVET colleges to pursue partnerships. Equally important is the extent to which partners are willing and able to assume authority and responsibility, which clearly depends greatly on the strength and capability of these partners.

The department would be required to formulate policies, laws and regulations to regulate partnerships system-wide. It would further necessitate an assessment of DHET's appropriate role; a cost-benefit analysis of fostering partnerships system-wide; a realistic understanding of the department's strengths and limitations to manage partnerships systemically; and a comprehensive "game plan". Other considerations include:

- creating an incentive schemes to promote partnerships;
- developing performance and reporting frameworks within colleges;
- systemic capacity-building; and
- monitoring and evaluation of partnerships.

Expressing the necessity of partnerships in public policy is one thing, creating an enabling environment to support partnership is quite another.

8. THE PARTNERSHIP ENVIRONMENT

Colleges tend to exist in multi-stakeholder partnership environment. Partnerships tend to be forged at faculty level with specific industries that require training support. This often results in a number of partnerships with a single college (Atchoarena, 1999: 1).

Diagrammatically a typical multi-stakeholder partnership environment is reflected as follows:

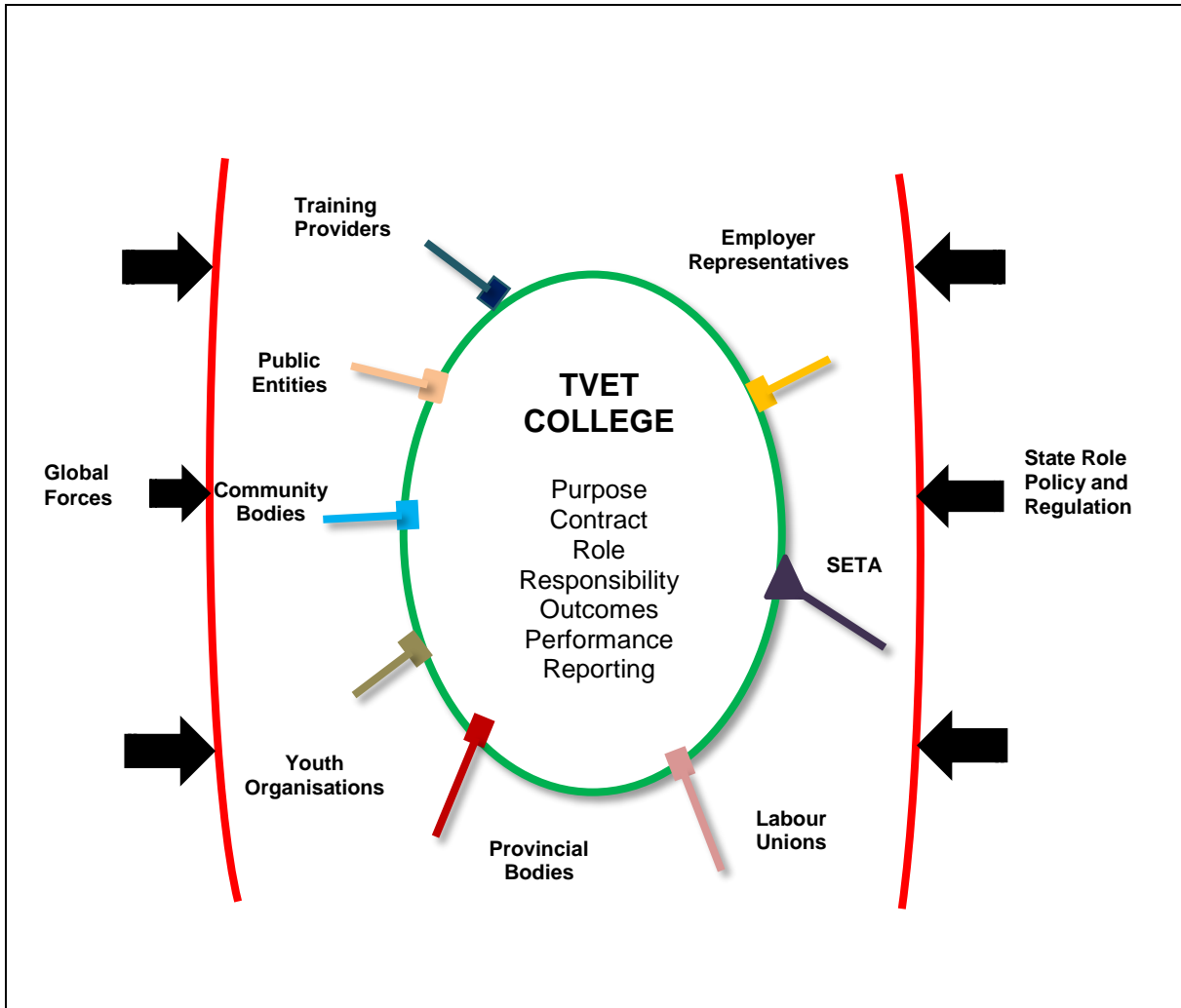


Figure 1: Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships

The following is a list of partners and their motives (Mitchell 1998:31):

STAKEHOLDERS	MOTIVES
Government: National / Regional / Local	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ministries concerned with Employment, Education and Training ▪ Economic departments and agencies ▪ Agencies concerned with Employment, Economic Development Education, Training and Planning 	Economic development, national competitiveness and growth, and social equity
Employers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National employer organisations ▪ Sectoral employer organisations ▪ Industry-based employers organisations ▪ Employers at enterprise level ▪ Business chambers 	Enterprise competitiveness, productivity and profits
Labour	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Trade Union Federations ▪ Trade Unions 	Improved pay and benefits for workers, job mobility and organisation security
Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NGOs, CBOs, NPOs ▪ Religious organisations ▪ Sports organisations 	Social equity, access, community development, better living standards, participation, life skills
Training Providers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Private Training providers ▪ Public universities, other colleges ▪ Parastatals training centres 	Training services
Individuals	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students ▪ Parents 	Employability, mobility, job security, career prospects, improved incomes

8.1. TYPOLOGY OF PARTNERSHIPS

There are no specific models to adopt directly when establishing partnerships. Varying national, historical, political, ideological, cultural and socio-economic contexts of different TVET systems make it impossible to find turnkey solutions. What works in one context may fail in another.

For instance, the German Dual System is often cited as a best practice example of vocational education partnerships. But this system has a long history dating back to medieval times. This explains the positive attitude of industry and schools that co-operate in the system. The Germans themselves are hesitant to propagate adopting the German vocational training system in its entirety. Euhler (2013: 4) states that *“experience shows that Germany’s dual system is suitable as a model but not as a blueprint. Any country wishing to import a foreign system of vocational training must take existing framework conditions into consideration and implement the dual vocational training in line with the country’s own educational, social and economic objectives. Thus, the objective should be to prudently import adapted elements of another country’s system, but not an exact copy of it”*.

The level of development in a given country exerts great influence on the development of partnerships in TVET. There is also a high level of diversity within the private sector in a given country depending on its size and strengths of the various industries. Differences can be identified between least developed, developing and industrialised countries. The policies to promote partnerships have to take into account specific characteristic of the country (Mitchell, 1998: 11).

There are different types of TVET partnerships. The most popular type is public-private-partnerships. This partnership exists when a public TVET college joins with the private sector enterprise(s) to attain shared goals. Another type of partnership is between a public college and other public entities. It might be a partnership between colleges, or between colleges and universities, and so on. Social partnerships involve linkages between TVET colleges and NGOs, CBOs, civic groups or philanthropies, whilst personal partnerships may involve linkages with people directly. This section looks at case studies of good practice partnerships that are working in the TVET environment.

9. PARTNERSHIP PROTOTYPES

In this section, we describe three partnership prototypes. Case Study 1 is a multi-stakeholder partnership between a TVET college, Merseta, the Department of Trade and Industry and an industry association.

9.1. Case Study 1: KZN National Tooling Initiative (KZNTI)

South Africa is currently experiencing a critical shortage of technically skilled people in the tool, die and mould-making (TDM) industry. This has impacted adversely on the industry. The National Tool-Making Initiative is an excellent example of TVET college can forge sustainable partnerships with a range of training providers in the public and private sectors (Rasool, 2013: 50-57).

The Tool-Makers Association of SA (TASA), a central body, has taken deliberate steps to address this problem. It launched the National Tooling Initiative (NTI) to put the industry on a new growth trajectory. Under the NTI, a number of programmes have been identified - such as recapitalisation, skills development, capacity development, competitiveness and support structures in the TDM industry. This is a national initiative, fully supported by the government with direct interaction with the Department of Trade and Industry (the dti).

A **FRIDGE STUDY** done in 2006 confirmed the status of the South-African TDM industry as a key support component of the manufacturing sector. This study confirmed the need for a national intervention programme to address the steady decline of this support sector to the manufacturing industry over the past 15 to 20 years. The study also found a decline of the TVET college capacity and identified the following as some of the factors:

- Relevant curriculum aligned to sector specific needs;
- Teacher capacity, -training, -skills;
- Lack of relevant equipment and machinery;
- Lack of substantial practical training capacity;
- Lack of articulation in TDM Industry qualifications among schools, TVET colleges, universities of technology, and academic universities; and
- Large-scale loss of the State-Owned Enterprises Apprentice Training Centres.

Although this case study (KZN National Tooling Initiative - KZNTI) focuses exclusively on KwaZulu-Natal, similar efforts have been launched in the Western Cape and Gauteng. In

KwaZulu-Natal a robust TDM industry is critical to underpin overall manufacturing growth, skills formation and job creation. The KwaZulu-Natal Tooling Initiative (KZNTI) is a public-private partnership with the Department of Economic Development & Tourism (KZN), Tooling Association of South Africa (TASA) and eThekweni Municipality, initiated by TASA to tackle the shortage of tooling skills in the province.

The mandate of the KZNTI is to support the tooling industry in the following manner:

- Support training of new entrants and existing participants in the tooling industry;
- Assist in developing guidelines with respect to appropriate curricula and content for training programmes and courses;
- Support technology and quality of tool rooms; and
- Support the recapitalisation of tool rooms - by sourcing funding for BEE partnerships and investment in tools, equipment and in consulting assistance of current tool rooms.

The KZNTI, a Section 21 Company, has a Board of Directors that is represented by TASA and other stakeholders in the province. The General Manager of the Trade and Sector Development in the Department of Economic Development (KZN) is the founding Chairperson of the KwaZulu-Natal Tooling Initiative. She is also the Head of TASA (KwaZulu-Natal) and the Deputy Chairperson.

The Directors oversee the running of the company. The purpose of this company is to revitalise the TDM Industry in the province to support localisation within the manufacturing industry.

The TDM Industry identified the Umbilo Campus of the Coastal KZN TVET College and Umgungundlovu FET College in Pietermaritzburg to establish Centres of Excellence. A state-of-the-art Tooling Centre of Excellence (TCoE) for tool-making, fitting and machining has been constructed and is making good progress. All funding for the establishment of the TCoE's was provided by national and provincial departments mentioned above, the MERSETA and the TDM industry.

The diagrammatic representation of the KZN National Tooling Initiative (KZNTI) is as follows:

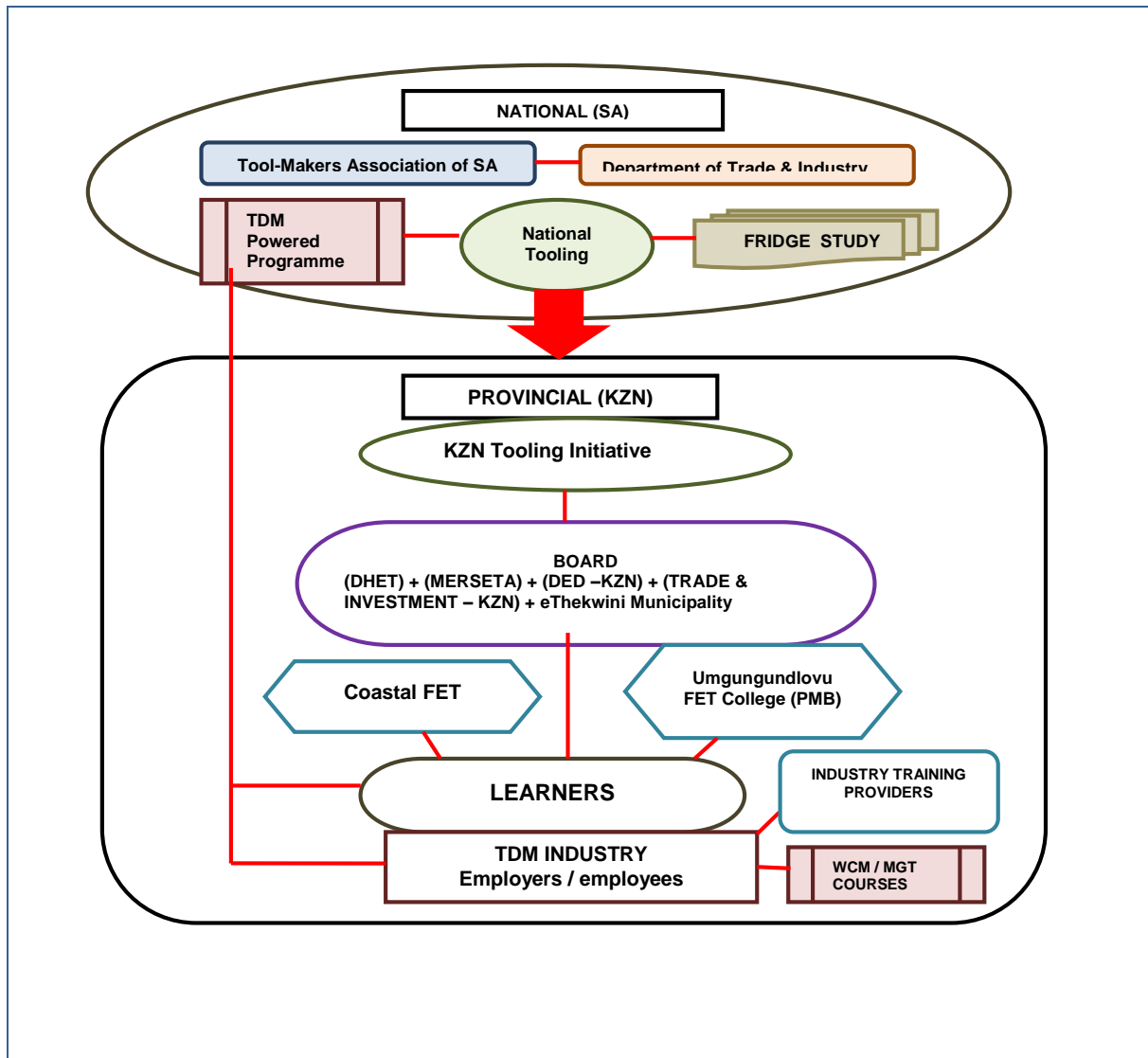


Figure 2: KZNTI Architecture

FET students are enrolled on a three year apprenticeship programme called the **TDM Powered Programme**. The programme was imported from the USA and adapted to local conditions. It was accredited by Merseta.

The TCoEs, programme and student fees are sponsored by Merseta and the TDM industry. The funding covers the establishment and maintenance of the TCoEs, cost of lecturers, development of curricula, learner fees and consumables. It is envisaged that once the programme acquires critical mass, it will become part of the TVET college’s programme offerings and will work on a fee-for-service basis. In this way, the TCoE becomes sustainable over the long-term and provides a ready pool of qualified tool-makers to the local economy.

The KZNTI has entered the next phase of the process and is currently rolling out the TDM Apprenticeship Programme to other TVET colleges in the province. In addition, TASA has

arranged for a range of short skills programmes for companies in the industry. Its flagship skills programme is Lean Manufacturing, which is offered to all companies in the industry. These programmes are offered by industry experts rather than public institutions.

The TDM Industry’s delivery structure is as follows:

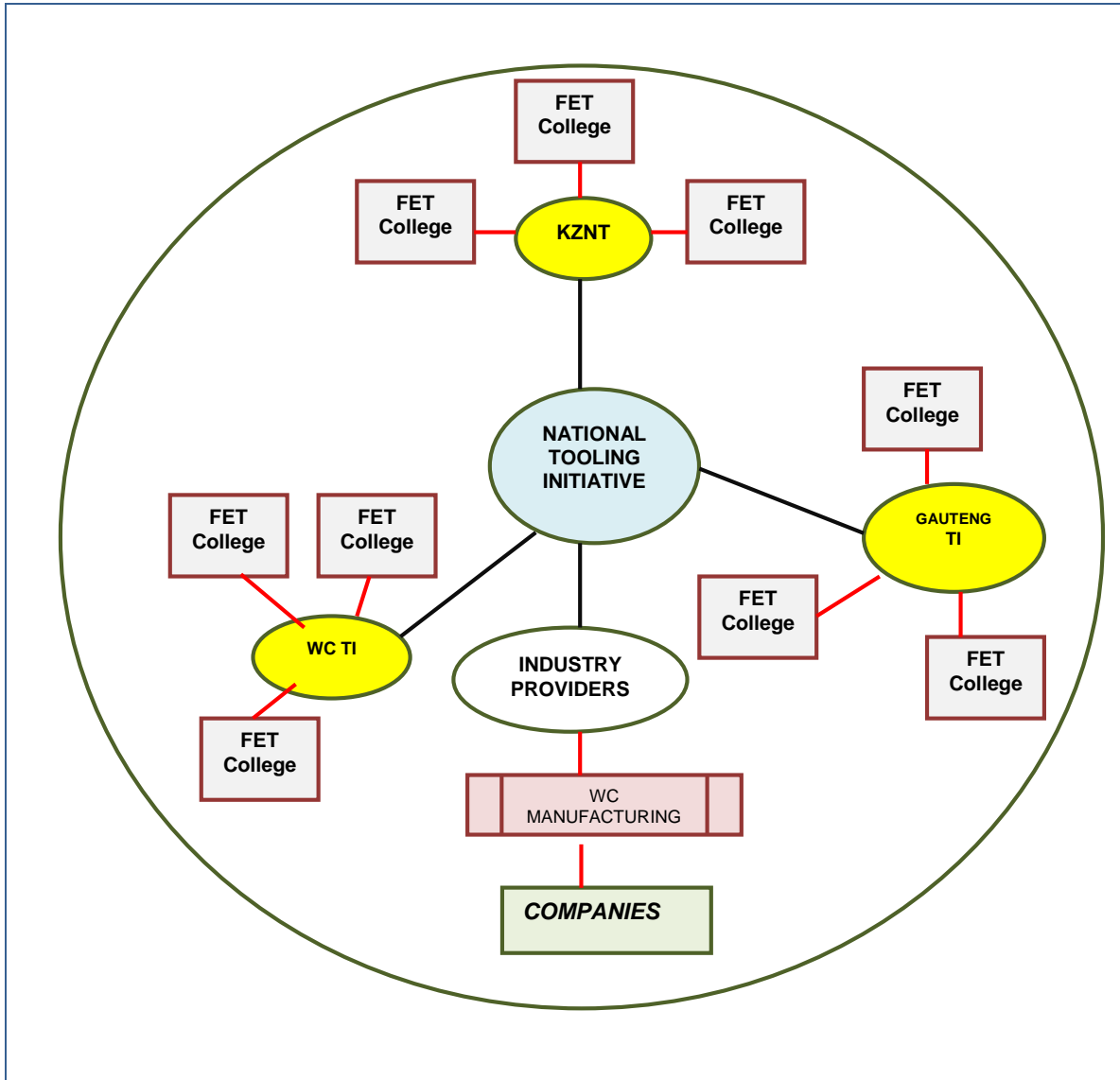


Figure 3: KZNTI Delivery Structure

The National Tooling Initiative is the central hub with “spokes’ leading to regional tooling initiatives in KwaZulu-Natal, the Western Cape and Gauteng. Each regional tooling initiative is responsible for partnering with local TVET colleges for delivery of the three years Apprenticeship Programme. Industry Training Providers offer a range of short skills programmes in Lean Manufacturing, Production Management, Supervisory Management, and so on. The Tool-Making industry is the foundation on which any country builds its

manufacturing base. Therefore the industry must grow if the province wants to grow its manufacturing sector.

9.2. Case Study 2: Consortium Model

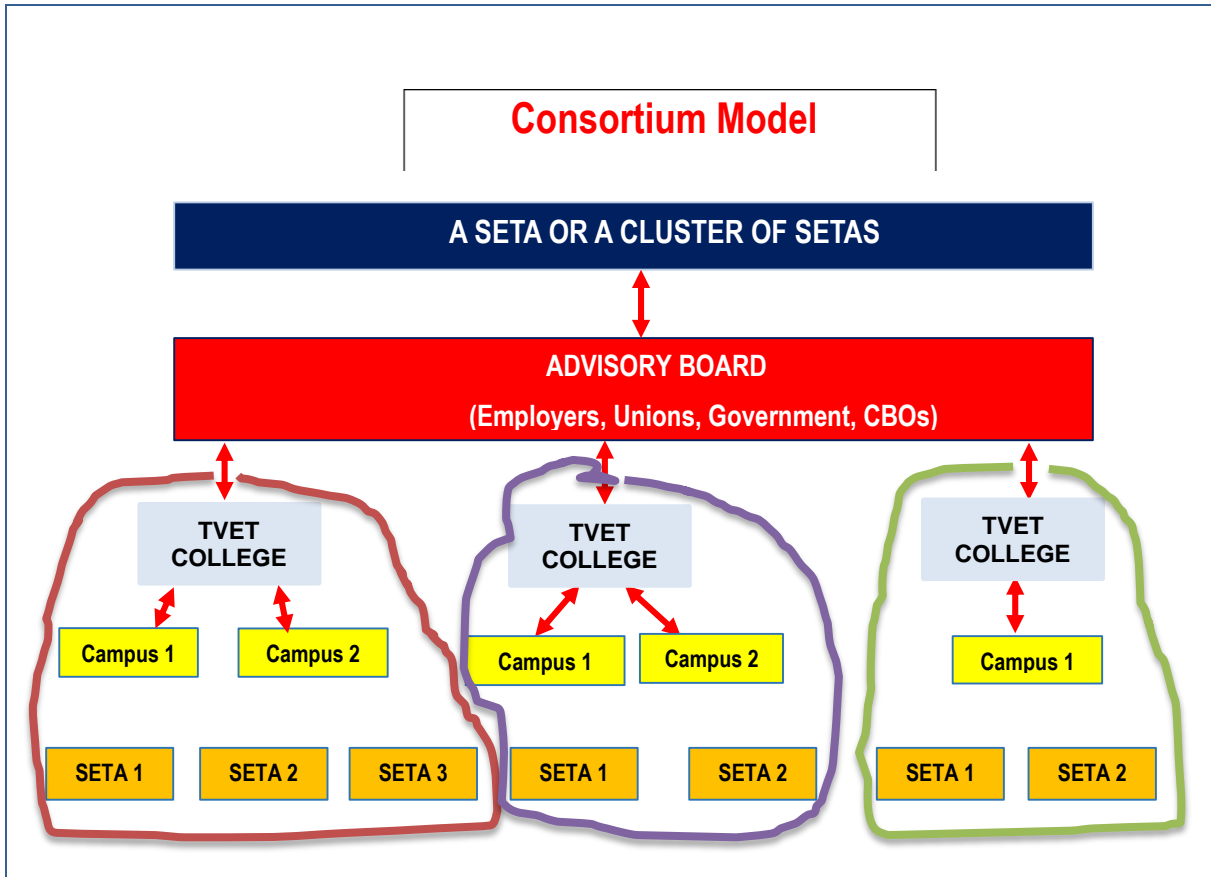


Figure 4: Consortium Model

The Consortium Model is a feasible prototype for bringing a number of TVET colleges and SETAs (employers, employees) into a working partnership in a specific area. This partnership can operate locally, regionally, sectorally and cross-sectorally.

At a local level it is possible to use the Consortium Model in large municipalities to acquire economies of scale in the provision of training services. The Consortium Model can also be geared to a particular region (however defined). The model can be used to offer training services in a specific sector or across several sectors.

For instance, the DHET is very committed to partner SETAs with TVET colleges in a working relationship that should serve new entrants to the labour market and existing employees. The Consortium Model lends itself to addressing this priority.

SETAs and TVET colleges join together in a particular geographic area or sector(s) to form a partnership. Local government organisations should also be eligible to join the consortium, as indeed, community-based organisations, depending on need and focus. These stakeholder should organise themselves into a structure which we refer to as an Advisory Board. The purpose of the Advisory Board is to undertake the following:

- strategic advice to the partnerships;
- promote the partnership by introducing colleges to employers;
- determine objectives and set targets;
- identify priority areas of intervention,
- set performance criteria;
- source equipment, technology and experts for the partnership; and
- assist curricula, capacity-building, placement, facilities, assessment, etc.

The Advisory Board should establish technical working committees to assist with their work. The Advisory Board should serve as a co-ordinating mechanism for the delivery of training and other services. The scope of work of the consortium should vary from one type of service to the other. A co-ordinated approach to delivery brings together all the Consortium's offerings into an overall delivery portfolio for students to the college(s).

On the ground, TVET colleges in the partnership would work with local firms, government entities and CBOs to meet the delivery objectives of the partnerships. This healthy exchange would enable each party to bring their strengths to the partnerships.

Below are examples of some of the services offerings that the consortium should offer. These may be offered by one or more college, firms that have technical "know how" in a particular process, or a team of colleges and firms working together to address different learning needs.

Some of the services that TVET colleges should possibly offer in partnership with SETAs and firms include: formal learning programmes; delivery of training projects; world-class manufacturing (in partnership with firms as training providers); performance management; advisory services; consulting; benchmarking; short course offerings; and applied research and product development. The idea is to get colleges, firms, local government organisations and CBOs working together to deliver real solutions in their localities.

The diagram that follows offers an illustration of what can be achieved:

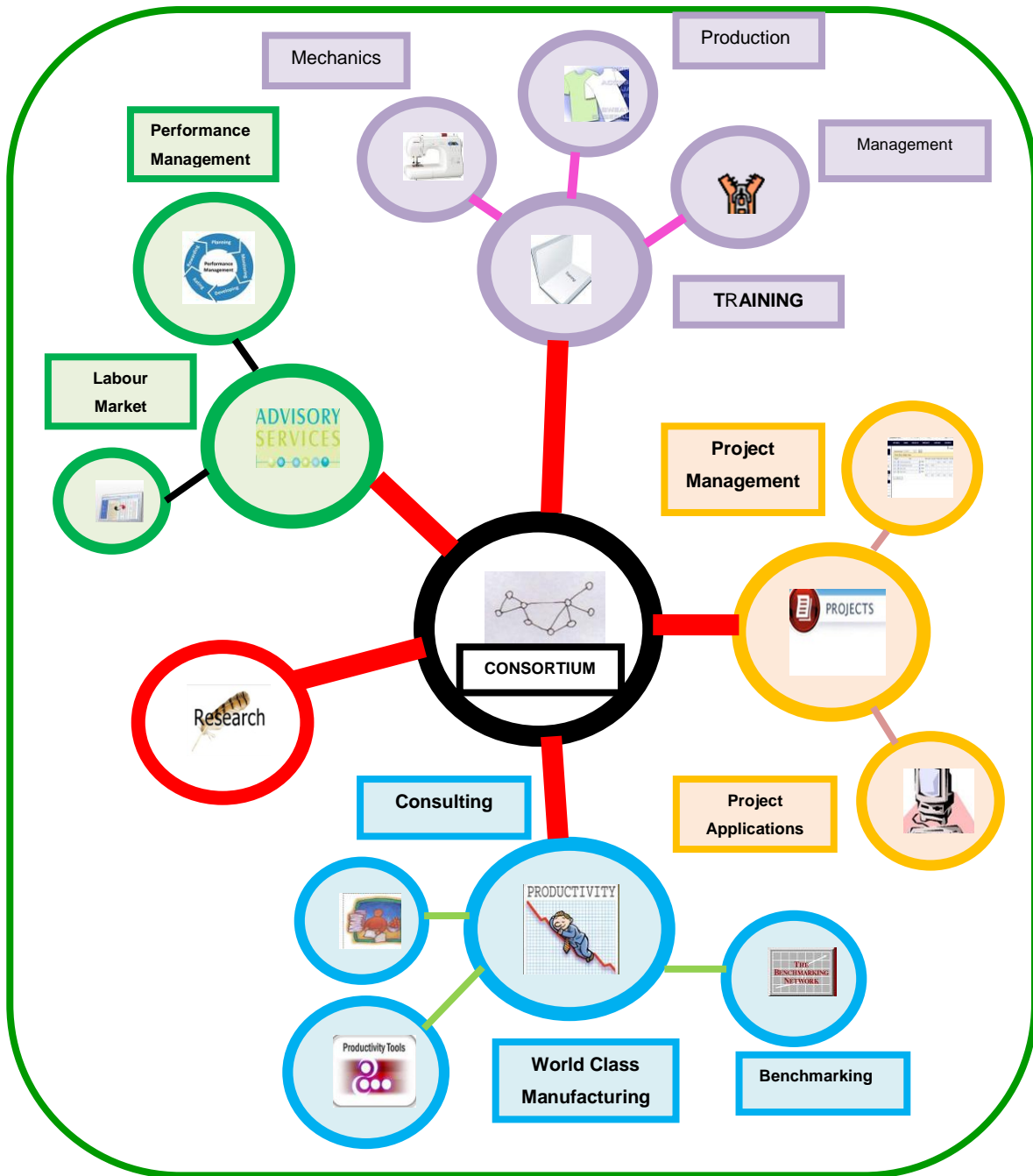


Figure 5: Consortium Model Offerings

The problem with existing partnerships in many instances is that they are loose arrangements, as discussed in earlier sections of the paper. They exist more in form than substance.

The Advisory Board should establish a performance management framework based on the balanced scorecard approach. The balance scorecard is used as a strategic planning and management technique to ensure the partnership delivers results. This is widely used in many

organisations, regardless of their scale, to align the organisation's performance to its vision and objectives.

Some of the reasons for implementing a balanced scorecard are the following:

- it is client-focused (student);
- increases the focus on tangible outcomes;
- leads to improved performance through measurement;
- align workforce needs to training needs;
- improves the level of communication of partners; and
- helps to prioritise projects according to the time-frame and resources.

The criteria for each framework dimension are the standards against which the Consortium will be judged as achieving the level of excellence required by stakeholders in each dimension of the framework. The criteria should be written to ensure they are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART). These are depicted below.

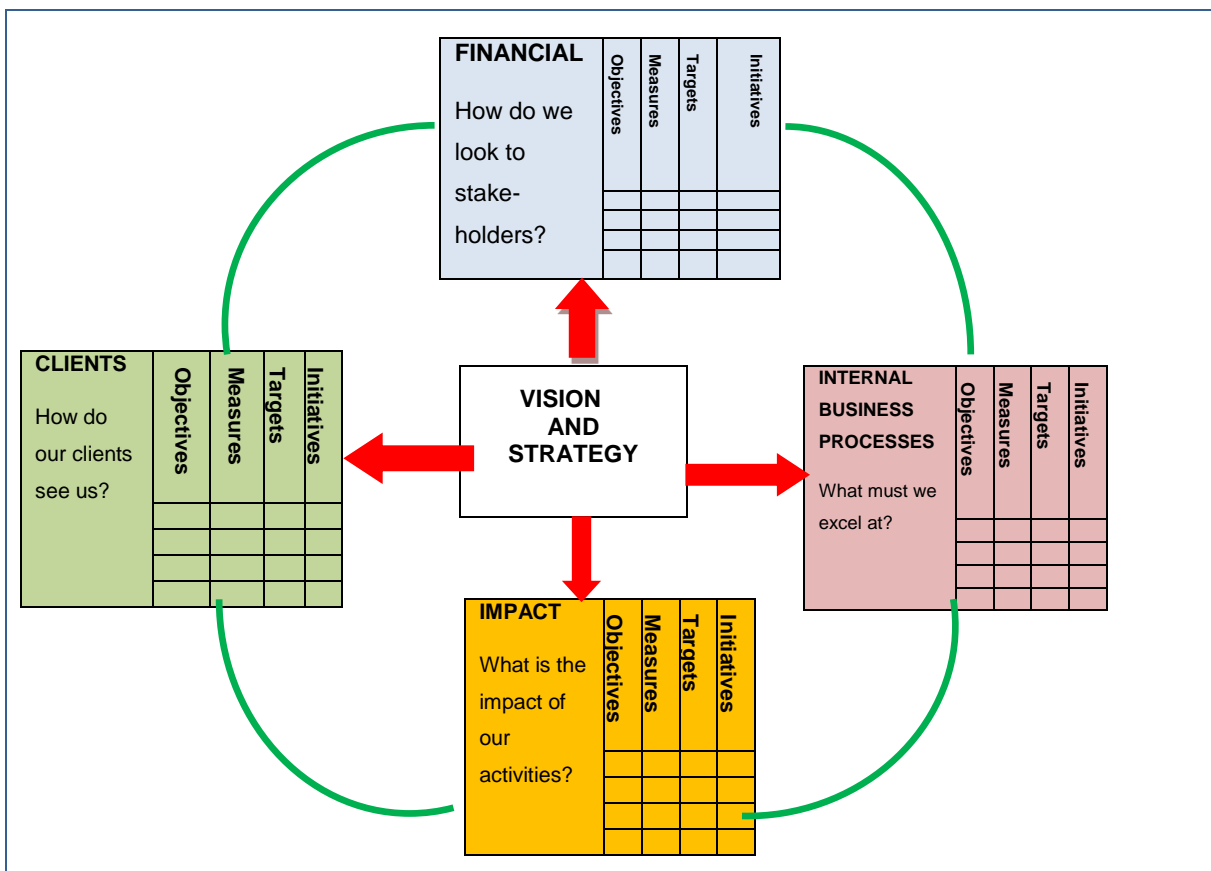


Figure 6: Balance Scorecard

The Consortium Model is agile, dynamic and adaptable to changes at any point in the partnership. It is a radical departure from many existing education-industry partnerships

because it is goal-directed and performance-driven. It enables TVET colleges to get involved in areas such as world-class manufacturing through linkages with firms engaged in these production processes. It will lead to significant knowledge, technology and hardware transfer because firms require world-class training.

In conclusion, irrespective of what model is applied there are several factors that contribute to successful partnerships. These include leadership, commitment, trust and openness, flexibility in course delivery, quality training services, client relationship management, qualified and experienced staff, links with industry and social groups, and responsive courses. Partnerships can greatly enhance the offerings of the state, but they need to be done in partnership with the state. There should be clearly delineated roles and responsibilities for all parties and recognition of each other's strengths.

Successful partnering is related to the ability to respond to the needs of change, continuous learning and innovation. In describing the formation and nature of partnerships, there is typically a mix of inter-organisational (environment, structure, level of competition and change) and interpersonal factors (trust, friendships, senior executive support) at work.

Lendrum (2003) states that training partnerships are formed by a scope of environmental factors and readiness to adjust and alter the training approach. He also argues that principal to the success of all collaborations is the attitude of people and the interactions amongst them in three domains: environmental influences upon partnerships; changes to the training model (process); and the role of people and relationships.

Establishing successful TVET partnerships is a challenge. The success of a partnership depends on its design, the regulatory framework of the country, and on the capacity of TVET colleges to oversee and enforce its contracts and partnerships. When implemented correctly, partnerships can increase efficiency and choice, and expand access to education services, particularly for communities that tend to be poorly served by traditional delivery methods.

In a partnership framework government should use the policy and legislative instruments at its disposal to steer colleges in particular directions. Priorities for government should include developing policies and standards collaboratively with social partners; maintaining labour market information systems, financing disadvantaged groups, performance monitoring, promoting quality assurance, regulating private provision, capacity-building, providing incentives and addressing equity.

9.3. Case Study 3: Leadership Exchange Programme (LEP)

The Department of Higher Education and the British Council, as part of a multi-stakeholder arrangement, have established an international partnership to build leadership capacity, foster innovation, build new partnerships, identify and develop new markets and commercial opportunities for TVET Colleges in South Africa (British Council, 2013).

The Leadership Exchange Programme (LEP) falls under the British Council's Skills for Employability (SfE) and is co-funded by the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Sector Education and Training Authority (Merseta). LEP is designed to enhance the employability of young people through strengthening leadership and management skills of TVET college staff. LEP achieves this through an exchange programme between Senior Managers and Principals of TVET colleges in South Africa and the UK. The programme will facilitate sharing of knowledge, ideas and best practice between the two countries. Through the programme, leaders will be empowered to be more critical, and innovative around the holistic development of their institutions.

The exchange programme aligns with existing policies, strategies and initiatives led by the Department for Higher Education and Training (DHET). At the launch of the Association of Colleges South Africa (AoCSA) in April 2013, the British High Commissioner and Minister Nzimande expressed interest in exchange programmes as one of the ways to continue collaboration between the UK and South Africa. Drawing upon the premise of the British Council's Skills for Employability programme to enhance employability; the exchange programme realises that the success of TVET colleges is largely dependent on effective and quality leadership. It further acknowledges that, although South Africa has made great strides in promoting gender equality, there is still more work to be done at the Senior Management level. In view of this, the exchange programme seeks to attract females in leadership, over and above the existing leadership structures in TVET colleges. All public TVET colleges in South Africa are eligible to apply for this programme.

The programme begins with a two weeks exchange visit between participants from TVET colleges in South Africa and the UK. The exchange focuses on introducing participants to UK and South African education sectors. This is followed by development and implementation of lessons learnt after the exchange visit spread over an initial one year period. South African colleges then share lessons learnt with the wider TVET college sector with a view to enhance leadership development.

The outcomes of the LED are the following (British Council 2013):

- purpose-driven, adaptive, accountable and effective leaders;
- internationally benchmark South African TVET colleges, with respect to quality leadership;
- exchange of best practice amongst Senior TVET college Managers and Principals in UK and in South Africa;
- development of long lasting partnerships between institutions in South Africa and the UK;
- sustainability of efficient and effective college management, drawing on UK and South African experience;
- enhanced capacity of Senior TVET college Managers and Principals to negotiate partnerships with critical stakeholders in the education sector;
- exposure to opportunities for college staff and student exchange programmes; and
- exploration of enterprise and innovation between the South Africa and UK colleges leading to potential commercial opportunities for educational technologies service providers.

In addition the British Council has five (5) partnerships that have been running since 2013. This indicates that a single partnership project can lead to others as in the case of the LEP. The current initiatives involve the following (British Council, 2013):

Gert Sibande/Highbury Partnership: The partnership aims to develop and utilize appropriate information technology systems for both learning and management performance monitoring, which builds on a system already developed by the college to monitor teaching and learning practices.

Northlink and Gwent College Partnership: The partnership aims to develop skills relating to Renewable Energy technologies by developing relevant curriculum, delivery methodology and resource capability. The focus will be on awareness of renewable energy, solar heating and Gas. The college has undertaken exploratory discussions with industry players that are going to be involved in the project. In addition the college is linking up with some of the already existing projects on renewable energy with organizations such as Khaya Gas, GIZ and Tech Africa. Northlink has already travelled to the UK for the exchange visit in September 2013. This particular project is of great significance to South Africa, Africa and the rest of the world because renewable energy is currently one of the most significant areas with increasing

environmentally friendly technology demands. Developing a curriculum will be important in giving learners who are interested to get strong foundation background in renewable energy.

Orbit College/Harrow College Partnership: The partnership aims to focus on curriculum design; lecturer development; employer engagement and quality assurance in the automotive sector. The college is in the process of developing a service level agreement with BMW and Ford. Plans are afoot to approach Nissan as well to provide opportunities for lecturer and student placements. Orbit has already travelled for the exchange visit to the UK in early October 2013. Student and lecture placement speaks to outcome 2 of the National Skills Accord and this is of great importance as it will give the learners the required experience in order to be employable. This model is also important in that the college works closely with industry players and that goes a long way in preparing learners for work readiness as well as exposing lecturers to industry. Lecturers have to stay in touch with industry developments because that knowledge of current trends is important in influencing curriculum developments.

East Cape Midlands (ECM) and Walsaw College: The partnership aims to develop a Bridging Programme' to increase the progression of learners from level 2 to level 3 NC(V) and to support the development of East Cape Midland College's 'Learning Company' model. The East Cape Midlands has been progressing well as they have been pursuing a Memorandum of Understanding with Transnet and a Service Level agreement with the Energy and Water SETA. They already have a working relationship with VW who will be involved in this project. Walsall College visited EMC from the 24th to the 31st August 2013 to discuss the Learning Company Model and scope the Bridging Programme. They have already started working on the abridging course and they will explore the Learning Company Model when EMC visits the UK. They are looking at implementing the bridging pilot course in January 2014.

Sedibeng College/Harrow College: The partnership focuses on curriculum design; lecturer development; employer engagement and quality assurance in the automotive sector only. Sedibeng College is developing a Memorandum of Understanding with Imperial Automotive Retailers. Sedibeng College has already visited its UK partners in September 2013. They are also exploring relationships with Toyota SA, Mercedes Benz and BMW who are located close to them. Developing strong relationships with industry players is important for this college as it enables learner readiness for work. The development of lecturers is also important because the quality of lecturers has a strong influence on the quality of students produced.

10. FINDINGS

The need to create working partnerships between TVET colleges and stakeholders, particularly industry, is borne out of the intention to make TVET colleges responsive to the needs of stakeholders, especially, but not exclusively, the labour market. As government reconfigures the PSET sector, it is necessary to ensure that TVET colleges make a meaningful contribution to addressing national socio-economic goals. As institutions designed to address the artisanal skills development in the intermediate occupational level, it will be difficult to pursue the state's grand plans of infrastructural development such as SIPs without this set of institutions.

It is evident from the literature that partnerships are increasingly being studied by policy makers because of the significant benefits to participating organisations especially in the areas of knowledge and technology transfers. Organisations involved in partnerships are able to undertake activities that individually would be beyond their capacity. Partners are exposed to best practice and to new methods of doing things. Partnerships also facilitate the sharing of knowledge among members. The formation of college-to-college partnerships can bring advantages of critical mass and offer industry a "one-stop shop" for the provision of learning offerings.

Global pressures are also having the effect of forcing TVET colleges into partnerships. The complexity of the economic environment, the speed of business, demand of skilled people and relevant programme offerings mean that TVET colleges cannot "continue with business as usual", whilst tertiary institutions are forming partnerships with companies, acquiring third stream incomes and responding to the needs of the labour market.

The literature in South Africa gives the impression that partnerships are widespread in TVET colleges and SETAs. But on closer examination, it is revealing that the term "partnership" is very loosely used. The focus is predominantly on the quantitative dimension of partnerships – number of partnerships – rather than outputs.

A key factor for inculcating a partnership culture is to establish an enabling regulatory framework with appropriate incentive schemes and support mechanisms for TVET colleges. The establishment of College Councils to make decisions is by no means sufficient. A key consideration is the role of the state in this equation.

There are tremendous opportunities for private sector investment in the public TVET college sector through public-private partnerships which is gaining prominence globally in the face of

TVET funding cutbacks in many countries. The key question is how we bring in the private sector to expand provision, share risks, unlock value and transfer technology and knowledge to TVET Colleges that have historically acquired the reputation of laggards. This requires a fundamental policy and ideological shift without which the formation of genuine partnerships will be more rhetoric than reality.

A key impediment to partnership formation is the lack of funding to recruit the necessary expertise to transform this awareness into working arrangements. TVET colleges may not be well-placed to identify the opportunities for partnership formation and, even where they do, they may lack the resources or skills to facilitate the actual development of the partnership. There is a role for the department to build institutional capacity for managing collaboration between TVET colleges and companies.

There is no doubt that the partnership development system-wide would require capacity and capability from the DHET to steer the process, establish an appropriate framework and empower TVET colleges to engage confidently in partnerships. Though partnerships can bring significant benefits to companies and colleges, it should not be regarded as a panacea. The establishment of a partnership can be a difficult and time-consuming process without any guarantee of success.

Partnerships are rarely static; they grow, mature and decline. It should be recognised that partnership development takes time and patience. One of the fundamental conclusions of this study is that the key to the formation of successful and sustainable partnerships is the process or, the 'how' factor by which the partnership is established and developed.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

Developing a partnership culture in TVET colleges is complex but necessary. These institutions are faced with considerable institutional capacity constraints, role confusion, scope creep, funding deficits, regulatory burdens, labour market information gaps and dependence on the state for virtually everything. The following recommendations are offered:

11.1. The Development of Partnership Guidelines and Framework

Some of the blockages in developing sustainable partnerships within the TVET college sector are poor leadership, weak management, governance and administrative systems which lead to colleges entering partnerships on the “back foot” against savvy private sector organisations. Such partnerships are unsustainable. Moreover, partners to TVET colleges should be convinced through a value proposition. Altruistic reasons for partnering with TVET colleges are unsustainable events. In a nutshell, partners are looking for TVET colleges that can unlock value and therefore colleges must be capacitated to enter partnerships empowered, informed and with a value proposition to enter into those partnerships.

The Green Paper (DHET, 2012: 50) makes the point that the “the possibility of partnerships between public and private institutions should be explored within a clearly defined regulatory framework that sets out the parameters for operation”.

It is therefore recommended that:

- the DHET in consultation with SAIVCET develop TVET partnership guidelines and policy framework;
- the policy document should include a set of good practice guidelines and code of conduct to assist TVET colleges and stakeholders with establishing partnerships;
- the partnership framework should provide a sound theoretical and conceptual basis for mainstreaming partnerships. Appropriate policies and procedures should be established based on the framework to guide partnership formation;
- the guidelines should offer directives and guidelines on how to implement and structure partnerships, primarily in areas such as finance, access, equity, social dialogue and procurement. The regulatory framework should be developed with the full participation of all principal actors concerned;
- government should state the degree to which it is prepared to delegate authority and responsibility to stakeholders and TVET colleges and the degree of control it wants to retain.

- However, government should not over-regulate partnerships because it will discourage partners entering the relationship.

11.2. Build the Capacity of TVET College and DHET Staff

The NDP (2012: 50) states that the TVET sector is not effective. It is too small and output quality is poor. Continuous quality improvement is needed as the system expands. The Green Paper (2012: 9) mentions that one of the main problems of the post-school sector is its lack of diversity and the weaknesses of many of its institutions. Inadequate quality, quantity and diversity of provision characterise the post-school education sector as a whole. Sustainable partnerships require fully-capacitated TVET college personnel to engage from an informed point of view with stakeholders.

At another level it is also necessary to develop DHET staff responsible for promoting and supporting TVET college partnerships. Strengthening the DHET's capacity to provide mechanisms and oversight for partnership development, monitoring and evaluation is a necessity. It is recommended that:

- TVET college managers should be equipped with resources, information and skills to design, develop, implement and manage partnership agreements;
- Other areas for capacity-building should include contract management, project management, cost-benefit analysis, stakeholder management, human resources, marketing, strategy, negotiation, financial planning and performance management;
- Capacity should be developed in DHET managers to manage the partnership framework. Managers should be able to devise good practice guidelines, manuals, checklists, toolkits, and standardised contracts;
- Other responsibilities should include formulation and co-ordination, technical assistance, quality control, the standardisation and dissemination of information and the promotion and marketing of partnerships;
- A strong unit within the DHET should be established to drive the partnership agenda. This unit should adopt a "bottom up" approach that is flexible enough to allow for institutional creativity within pre-determined accountability and reporting frameworks; and
- The DHET should support an independent research body at a university such as a TVET Unit, in collaboration with SAIVCET and AoCSA, to serve as a repository of best practice in college partnerships. The unit should bring together different interest groups and provide guidance to DHET as well as providing a forum for promoting partnerships.

11.3. Implement a Performance Management Regime

It is generally recognised that many TVET colleges are weak and underperforming both in terms of student and institutional outputs (NDA, 2012; DHET, 2012; Gewer, 2010). Underperforming TVET colleges are unlikely to develop sustainable partnerships. Successful partnerships are based on a value proposition for partners. Stakeholders especially are unlikely to want to engage with under-performing TVET colleges, except for perhaps altruistic reasons. The following is recommended:

- There is a need to establish a performance management system with clear cut accountability regime for partnership arrangements;
- Performance measures and incentives for performance in partnership contracts should be established;
- Partnership development should be formalised into the performance management system of TVET colleges; and
- There should be a clearly defined appraisal system to monitor and evaluate partnership performance.

11.4. Strengthening SETA and TVET College Linkages

Although the DHET is working hard in ensuring stronger linkages between SETAs and TVET colleges, those relationships still appear to be distant. For instance, The Green Paper (DHET, 2012: 65) asserts that another of the unintended consequences is that public providers (TVET colleges and universities) have been largely excluded from the provision of training funded by SETAs and the NSF. If a TVET college or university wants to participate in such training they must set up special units to monitor tenders and operate like a private company in the “education and training market”. This is not something that they are geared to do, and can detract them from their main immediate task which is that of strengthening their capacity to provide quality education to an increasing number of learners. This has meant that the opportunities that used to exist for longer-term developmental partnerships between employers and public education institutions have been replaced by short-term contract opportunities.

The Green Paper further states that “under no circumstances should SETAs accede to a situation where public colleges are reduced to mere agents in an arrangement where the actual training is provided by the private partner while the public college only earns a fee as a middle-man”. The following is recommended:

- Further strengthening and reform of regulation to ensure that SETAs engage with public TVET colleges;

- Aligning SETA service level agreements with TVET college operations;
- Establishing a performance monitoring and evaluation framework to monitor SETA-TVET college partnerships; and
- Stronger legislation is needed to weed out “fly-by-night private training providers” operating from a “suitcase” who are currently the beneficiaries of SETA endowments.

11.5. Strengthening International and Regional Partnerships

According to the Shanghai Consensus (2012: 26), transforming TVET requires national ownership that is driven by broad partnerships. While partnerships at a national level are considered to have a central role in the future transformation and expansion of TVET, it also calls for strengthened partnerships and co-operation at regional and international levels.

Regional and international organisations such as UNESCO, ILO, OECD, ETF and the World Bank have an important role to play in supporting national processes and cross-country dialogue in the field of TVET.

The Green Paper (DHET 2012: 65) states the internationalisation of higher education could be used strategically to foster and strengthen both economic and political relations between South Africa and other countries. The same applies to further education and training. The following is recommended:

- More active participation of DHET staff in international forums, conferences and seminars;
- TVET college and DHET staff should be sent on Skills Academies to organisations such as ILO, CEDEFOP and ETF; and
- Closer linkages between the DHET and international organisations should be fostered and those that currently exist, strengthened.

11.6. HRDC Investigation

The DoE (2003: 70) mentions that there are a number of conceptual challenges regarding partnerships and linkages. These include: the definition of partnerships; observed and actual impact and value of partnerships on educational transformation; and the different types of partnerships that exist as compared to other forms of relationships, i.e. the development of a typology of TVET college partnerships.

The DHET (2012: ix) is looking into the establishment of a new institutional type, provisionally called Community Education and Training Centres (CETCs), to address the needs of out-of-school youth and adults. Their role in the partnership debate should also be clarified.

A comprehensive investigation should be conducted by the HRDC to determine the following:

- an assessment of current TVET college partnerships to determine what is working and not working;
- identify and assess local and international examples of TVET partnerships;
- develop best practice case studies;
- develop an evaluation framework to make a determination of existing partnerships;
- build awareness of partnership models; and
- explore and discuss emerging and existing policy options and accelerate progress towards partnership formation.

12. CONCLUSION

In the final analysis TVET college partnerships with stakeholders, especially industry should be based on mutual benefits. Stakeholders will willingly invest in partnerships if they see the potential benefits. This means from the perspective of industry, TVET colleges should provide employed and unemployed learners with high quality learning that will accommodate the needs of industry.

Currently the quality of TVET colleges in South Africa is a well-acknowledged problem. The image of TVET colleges in the eyes of the public is also a matter of concern. Unless colleges offer their stakeholders a value proposition and run themselves on good practice principles, sustainable partnerships will continue to elude them.

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