Executive summary

Summative evaluation of the West Coast College

Date completed: March 2009

1   Key words

Further education; Further Education Colleges; technical training; engineering training at colleges; interventions in further education; Further Education and Training (FET); FET enrolment; FET college infrastructure and facilities; college assessment

2   Commissioned and supported by

It appears that the evaluation was commissioned by the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) and the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) to conduct a summative evaluation of the West Coast College (FET), following a second phase of interventions in the College since 2007 funded by DANIDA [SESD II]. In 2007 a baseline study was completed, which was used in the 2009 summative evaluation to gauge progress. A team of 3 HSRC evaluators carried out the evaluation, authored the report, and drew on experienced colleagues in the HSRC to advise on the design of the evaluation and its methodology. West Coast College (WCC) personnel were used to conduct a quantitative profile of the institution.

3   Conducted by

The evaluation was conducted by Carel Garish, Vanessa Taylor and Tshilidzi Netshitangani from the HSRC. Glenda Kruss acted as Project Manager for the evaluation. This was done under the HSRC's Education, Science and Skills Development Unit.

4   Background to evaluation

The evaluation was undertaken as part of the roll out of DANIDA's support of the Education and Skills Development, Phase II (SESD II). The SESD programme aimed to support transformation in the FET college sector nationally in participating colleges in 3 targeted provinces [KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), North West Province (NW) and the Western Cape (WC)]. More specifically, the developmental objective of the SESD intervention/ programme was "…to increase the employability of male and female youth and adults, through supporting the delivery of practical and labour market oriented education and skills training within the FET band." An incremental M&E evaluation system was put in place by the HSRC to measure transformation in the programme. It took the form of a baseline study at each participating college, and followed by formative assessments at approximately 6 monthly intervals. The summative evaluation of the WCC followed at the end of the 3 year phase in this intervention.

5   Overall purpose of the evaluation

The overall aim of the evaluation is not explicitly stated in the report. The overall aim appears to be to gauge the impact of the SESD II intervention in the WCC by matching data gathered in 2009 against a baseline study conducted in 2007.

6   Scope of the evaluation

The scope of the study appears to trace the historical development of the WCC to establish what it comprises as a college in 2009. Thereafter, it was to show the changing profile of the college in terms of students and college facilities, and gauge the adequacy of college facilities for course delivery. "Dimensions" and "characteristics" of the WCC are both reviewed in 2009 and compared with the baseline. This was done in order to establish progress in the college since 2007 and reflect on its strengths and weaknesses from the perspective of the FET Directorate, WC. The scope also included drawing conclusions and making recommendations.

7   Evaluation questions

While not explicit in the report, the questions and issues that seem to have guided the evaluation are as follows:

- What is the historical profile of the WCC in 2009 since amalgamation in 1999, and the socio-economic context it serves?

- What comprises the infra-structure and facilities of the WCC, and their adequacy for teaching and learning from the perspective of campus managers?

- How adequate is the WCC on "dimensions" and "characteristics" in 2009 following SESD II, when compared with ratings in a baseline study of the same in 2007. Second, what are shown as strengthens and weaknesses of WCC to deliver on its mandate?

- What conclusions can be drawn on the WCC since 2007?

- And finally, what recommendations can be made to strengthen delivery at the WCC?

8   Evaluation methodology

8.1   Type of evaluation

In the Report the word "summative" is used to describe this evaluation of the WCC. The evaluation comes after an intervention implemented since 2007, to find out the changes and effects, as well as strengths and weakness of the College. The evaluation appears to be an impact evaluation and is better described as such.

8.2   Methodology

The evaluation team used qualitative methods that included: focus groups; rating instruments with justifications for ratings given; documentary evidence; and, relied on individual perspectives. Quantitative data from College records were used to establish the student population profile, ratings in a baseline study, as well as

expert experience of the evaluator scrutinizing the range of documents available to him/ her to rate the College.

All campuses of the WCC were included in the study, thus sampling for the purpose of generalising to a population was not necessary.

8.3   Data collection

A baseline study conducted in 2007 provided evidence for comparing data collected in 2009, to gauge progress and note strengths and weaknesses. Documentary materials, such as College documents and records, were used to develop a profile of the WCC, its students and facilities, and changes to them till 2009. Rating instruments were used: to rate the adequacy of college facilities from the perspective of campus managers; to rate the College on "dimensions" from the perspective of the FET Directorate of the Western Cape; and, to rate the College on 26 "characteristics" from the perspective of college management, campus management, lecturers and students (with justifications). "Concurrence" of perspectives increased confidence in areas in which improvement had occurred, as well as the reliability of the data.

9   Findings

In general, the WCC records show that student numbers have grown since 2007 and that its facilities are not ideal and not likely to be able to cope with the rate of increase in student numbers in the future.

The FET Directorate found that there are areas in which the College has progressed, noted areas of weakness and concern, and that further development is still needed for the College to achieve the standard of delivery being sought in the sector.

Generally speaking, ratings by the different constituencies show a relatively high degree of concurrence. In cases where obvious divergence of perspectives did occur, attempts were made as far as possible to convey a sense of the underlying reasons provided, in the discussion of this data. An overall rating of 4.7 places WCC's performance across the 26 "characteristics" in February 2009 in the "mid-emerging" category, which compares favourably with the 3.7 rating attained during the baseline study in July 2007.

Weighted responsiveness ratings of "local and regional skill needs" shows a favourable rating of 5 compared to 4.3 in 2007. Weighted ratings of the College responsiveness in relation to "equity and access" remains lopsided in favour of enrolling disadvantaged learners, rather than providing demand-driven training aligned to employment opportunities, as was the case in 2007.

Strengths and weaknesses were identified with responsiveness to partnership development being viewed as the most important to attend to.

10 Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Conclusions identify strengths of the WCC, which were as follows:

- *A strong and effective governing council* is in place which fulfils a critical guidance and support role in college management.

- *A consolidation and strengthening campus management* corps through having the 'right people in the right places' and providing support to campus managers in the form of newly-appointed senior lecturers and campus-based HoDs.

- *The portfolio management corps*, which is in the process of being consolidated. All coordinator posts have now been filled (except that of ICT coordinator). However, time will be required for coordinators to settle into their roles, especially because many of them are from outside the FET college sector.

- *The college's strategic focus, objectives and positioning are all in-line with the strategic frameworks of the Department of Education (DoE) and the Western Cape Department of Education (WCDE).*

- *The high level of engagement with campus managers on the part of academic senior management* in support of sustained guidance and problem-solving.

- *The student support services function which has been gaining in strength* as a result of a highly competent and committed team having been put in place, with commensurate impact tangibly in evidence.

- *Enhanced standardisation of academic-related practices,* for example, moderation, as a result of the impact of provincial and internal curriculum/ subject-driven forums. Apart from the quality and effectiveness of performance and outputs having been enhanced, these measures also constitute a critical catalyst in promoting lecturer confidence.

Recommendations

Shortcomings and challenges inhibiting institutional development are presented as recommendations, and are divided into 2 categories (as below):

- **Suggestions that need DoE/WECD engagement or intervention**

  Substantial increases in student enrolments make it imperative that Department support continues to develop WCC in respect of its *infrastructure* and facilities.

  The *supportive relationship* developed between the WCDE officials and the college and its campuses need to be sustained, as these have become a critical resource for academic personnel in respect of NC(V)–related implementation challenges and have helped to build confidence among staff.

- **Suggestions that need College engagement/ intervention (4 of 12 are described below)**

  Given the fluid nature of the portfolio management corps until fairly recently, it is deemed *of critical importance that these function units are consolidated as a matter of highest priority.* This would involve both induction and capacity development of newly appointed incumbents that clarifies their roles and responsibilities and enables them to perform these. In addition, they need to be provided with support in the form of budgets, infrastructure and support staff.

  Within the context of institutional development, and with particular reference to the massive growth in student numbers since 2008, *it is imperative that a systematic process of college consolidation be instituted*. This should include investing in management and staff development and, most importantly, instituting deliberate measures towards creating a culture of reassurance and support or, as one campus manager put it, 'To make people feel at ease and for them to know that support is available on tap as and when needed'.

Obtaining and retaining appropriately qualified staff is a significant challenge faced by WCC. *Staff recruitment, induction and development need to be a continuing area of focus for the college and a strategy needs to be developed on how to retain skills in key function areas.*

The college needs a continuous *focus on building a strong culture of teaching and learning in the college*, particularly, amongst lecturers who mare central to the way students approach their studies and behave.

11 Evidence of use

As this is a summative evaluation of a second cycle in a 3 year funded developmental programme, which is also evaluated 6 monthly giving feedback to strengthening the WCC, there is evidence in the report suggesting quite strongly that findings are/ have been used.

12 Note on quality of report

The evaluation report received a rating of 3.19 applying the Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool [EQAT]. As an evaluation conducted in what appears to be a short time period, it appropriately fits the need of a second phase developmental programme for evaluation, for inputs aimed at strengthening the college and inputs addressing its most urgent challenges/ weaknesses. The data gives a sense of urgency given the rapid increase in enrolment, consequent pressure on facilities, as well as a favourable rating in 2009 (in the 'mid-emerging' category) when compared with baseline data collected in 2007, by the WCDE and managers and others internal to the college.

However, the evaluation report lacks explicit statements of aims, questions, methods, and the like, and references are not cited in the text. The glossary is also incomplete.

Conclusions follow from the data and represent its strengths and recommendations are made in response to the weaknesses identified. Both conclusions and recommendations were clearly articulated with recommendations also capturing the urgency of tasks needing attention, the extent of strengthening which is needed, as well as giving a comprehensive set of issues to deal with to assist the college in *next steps.*

In summary, locating this summative evaluation within its historical context and at the end of a second phase intervention, suggests the evaluation findings are likely to be used by the college, as it attempts to refine its systems and deliver on its mandate to the community.