

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This study was conducted with the purpose of assessing community colleges in order to consider their role in the provision of vocational-technical education to adults and out-of-school youth to make such individuals competent to earn a living or continue with their education. The specific objectives of the study were three-fold, namely,

- To evaluate community colleges in order to consider their contribution to continuing education for the vocational-technical sector.
- To determine the need for the establishment of community colleges in the Eastern Free State.
- To provide a framework for the establishment of community colleges in the Eastern Free State.

The achievement of these objectives was sought through a literature study of the American community college, a case study of St. Petersburg College in the State of Florida in the USA, a literature study of the provision of vocational-technical education in South Africa and an empirical investigation on the need for the establishment of community colleges in the Eastern Free State. The findings of these processes are summarised in the following paragraphs.

Chapter One concerned itself with an orientation to the study. It included a general introduction to the study, its aims, circumstances that led to it, the methodology used to achieve the aims, the structure of the study as well as its limitations.

In Chapter Two an exposition of the concepts of community college and vocational education was made. This was followed by an examination of theories that impact on community colleges. The American community college emerged as an educational institution that seeks to become a centre of learning for the entire community and that gears its programmes and services to the needs and wishes of the people it serves. It then became evident that because of the role that the community college has identified for itself, it will be impacted upon by the community development theory, andragogy, career development theories and systems theory.

In Chapter Three a detailed study of the American community college was undertaken. This included an exploration into its nature and functioning in terms of its governance, administration, financing, student services, human resources and its impact on those associated with it. This study was reinforced by a visit to a typical American community college, namely, St. Petersburg College in the State of Florida. The visit gave the researcher first hand information regarding the functioning of a community college and the role that it plays in community development. From this exploration, it became clear that the American

community college provides educational opportunities to diversified millions of American citizens and that it is highly regarded by the majority of those associated with it. Consequently, in their attempt to redress educational imbalances of the past South Africans can learn many lessons from the American experience.

Chapter Four sought to undertake an assessment of the provision of vocational-technical education to adults and out-of-school youth in South Africa. This was done with the purpose of finding out whether there is a need for the introduction of an alternative type of educational institution in the education system. It was discovered that many South Africans are in need of basic education and training and skills development and that many initiatives are being undertaken to address this problem. Some of the initiatives are still in their infancy stage while others are not functioning at maximum efficiency.

Chapter Five was concerned with an empirical investigation into the need for the establishment of community colleges in the Eastern Free State. It included a description of the procedures followed in the investigation as well as a presentation and analysis of data. The investigation revealed a need for the establishment of community colleges in the Eastern Free State.

Some important conclusions regarding the provision of vocational-technical education in community colleges in the Eastern Free State may be drawn from the study described above. These are elaborated upon in the next section.

6.2. Conclusions

Conclusions that may be drawn from this study revolve around the nature of the American community college, the role it is capable of playing in the provision of continuing education especially in the vocational-technical sector and factors to be taken into consideration when contemplating the introduction of community colleges in South Africa particularly in the Eastern Free State.

It has emerged from the study that for a community college to be successful it needs to have a sound theoretical base. Thus, the knowledge of theories that have been found to have an impact on community colleges, namely, the community development theory, andragogy, career development theories and the systems theory is essential to personnel who are to be involved in the establishment and the operation of community colleges. These include policy makers, FET college administrators and educators.

The study has also revealed that the major reason for the introduction of community colleges in the American education system was to broaden educational opportunities available there. As a result, the American community college has become a doorway to educational opportunities by being plentiful,

nearby, inexpensive, offering a variety of programmes and by adhering to an open-door admission policy that imposes few entry requirements. In this regard Singh (1996: 527) states:

“Community colleges offer a wide array of services. It [sic] allows for the fluidity of class boundaries and provides opportunities for those adults with inadequate schooling to progress to higher education. It [sic] allows graduates to return and receive re-training. It [sic] allows others to upgrade their skills and yet others to pursue leisure courses. In addition, the system presents a fundamental uniqueness in its openness. It affords students with undistinguished academic records multiple chances to succeed and to enter higher education. The preoccupation with equality of opportunity abounds in the system of which community colleges are an integral component. This has had an impact on the social and economic life of Americans. As a result pupils emerging from the secondary schools in America have second, third and fourth chances in a fashion unimaginable in most systems of higher education.”

Access to services offered by American community colleges has further been expanded through the use of multiple delivery modes. In addition to contact tuition many community colleges also use other modes of delivery such as distance, television and online tuition. Thus, community colleges have the

capacity to provide education and training to masses of people with different educational needs. This is made possible by their flexibility and the comprehensive nature of their programmes.

Another significant observation emanating from this study is that the American community college came into existence in response to calls by different sectors of the American population. These included politicians, high school graduates, business and industry, local communities, parents of prospective students, government and university officials. As a result, the community college became a unifying factor among these sectors adding to its success and popularity. The community college's ability to unify different sectors of communities and to be of service to people whose opportunities have been limited by a variety of factors is aptly captured by Dougherty (1994:6) who states that:

“For them, the community college is the most effective democratizing agent in higher education. It has opened college opportunities to those who would otherwise be unable to attend, either because of poverty, poor high school records or vocational interests. This commendably egalitarian impact stems from the community college's virtuously democratic origins. It is the product of ‘a grass roots, organized-at-home coalition’ uniting would-be-college students, their parents, business and labor, and political officials responsive to their constituents’ interests.”

This observation also suggests that community colleges are open-systems that are affected by political, economic and social factors originating from their surrounding environments. Thus, the survival of community colleges is highly dependent on their responsiveness towards the needs of the communities they serve. There is no doubt that this responsiveness of the community college to the needs of the community it serves is exactly what will be suitable in the South African situation. This emanates from the fact that in the past educational institutions of the country were more interested in the needs of the state, which were not necessarily shared by some of the communities.

Community colleges have been found to have a positive impact on the majority of those associated with them. These comprise students, commerce and industry, universities and society in general. It is because of this impact that these institutions are highly esteemed by the majority of Americans. The positive impact is enhanced by among others, systems that are in place to ensure students' success such as highly sophisticated student services, careful selection of teaching personnel, effective staff development programmes, quality assurance measures, attractive personnel remuneration packages and so forth.

The assessment of the South African situation relating to the provision of vocational-technical education conducted in Chapter Four has shown that educational opportunities for many citizens of the country have been limited as a

result of policies of the government in power prior to 1994. This limitation of opportunities has led to many South Africans, especially women and Blacks, being uneducated or undereducated, unskilled, unemployed and living in poverty. This situation is likely to worsen unless urgent measures are put in place to bring about an improvement. Obviously, the establishment of community colleges will go a long way in alleviating poverty and unemployment especially in the Eastern Free State.

A variety of initiatives are being undertaken to remedy the sad state of affairs described above. These include the passing and the implementation of legislation relating to the provision of adult education and training as well as skills development. Some of these initiatives such as FET and Skills Development Programmes are still in their early stages of development and need to be accelerated, whereas others such as ABET, particularly in the Eastern Free State, are not maximally effective and need to be improved.

Potential participants in the above mentioned programmes include persons who:

- Seek alternate access to paths to tertiary education.
- Have incomplete secondary education.
- Are in need of adult basic education.
- Wish to enter vocational education.
- Are employed and want to improve their skills.
- Are unemployed and need to be equipped with marketable skills.

- Seek new skills after being retrenched.
- Have completed general education and wish to study further.
- Have obtained the grade 12 certificate and have not gained entry into technikons and universities.

It is important for all these categories of potential students to be catered for. Otherwise the unacceptable state of affairs regarding skills development, unemployment and poverty levels described in Chapter Four will remain unchanged. In this regard the role of community colleges cannot be overemphasised.

It has also surfaced from the study that South African educational institutions comparable to American community colleges in terms of the type of students being served and services being rendered are FET colleges. A comparison of the vision, mission and purposes of FET as formulated by the NCFE and presented in Chapter Four and the comprehensive focus of the mission as well as the objectives of American community colleges discussed in Chapter Two show striking similarities between the two types of educational institutions. Therefore there is a clear indication that these institutions were founded upon similar principles and serve the same purpose.

Finally, the results of the empirical study on the need for the establishment of community colleges in the Eastern Free State have shown that there are

insufficient educational opportunities available to adults and out-of-school youth in the Eastern Free State and that there is a need for them to be broadened. The community college has come out as one way through which this could be done.

The community college that is most desired is one that:

- Develops the skills of its students thereby opening doors of employment.
- Upgrades the residents' educational levels.
- Is easily accessible physically in terms of scheduling, fees and other admission requirements.
- Prepares students for entry into institutions of higher learning.
- Caters for the residents' personal interest needs.
- Is accredited by recognised bodies to ensure maintenance of standards.

The above-mentioned wishes of the residents of the area concerned will have to be taken into consideration when community colleges are being established. This will ensure strong links between the institutions and the communities they serve.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions discussed above as well as on the study as a whole, some recommendations are being made which will hopefully be of assistance to those who are contemplating establishing community colleges in South Africa, particularly in the Eastern Free State. These recommendations relate to the necessity for the establishment of community colleges in the Eastern

Free State as well as on how the factors that contributed to the success of the American community college may be applied within the South African context.

6.3.1 The Establishment of Community Colleges in the Eastern Free State

It has become clear from the conclusions of the study summarised above that there is a need for the establishment of community colleges in the Eastern Free State. Furthermore, it has also been observed that a public multi-campus FET college exists in the Eastern Free State. Since the FET college has been established in accordance with the FET Act No. 98 of 1998, it follows that its functioning will be regulated by the Act as well as by the requisites of the NCFE. This means that as explained earlier, the FET college will serve purposes similar to those being served by American community colleges.

In the light of the above, it is recommended that there be no introduction of new community colleges alongside the FET college already in existence in the Eastern Free State. Instead, some of the features of the American community college which contributed to its success should be adopted, adapted where necessary and be incorporated into the FET college already existing in the Eastern Free State. Some of these features will be elaborated upon in the next paragraphs.

6.3.1.1 Theoretical Base

As stated previously, the Maluti FET College in the Eastern Free State was declared a FET college in terms of the FET Act No. 98 of 1998 in 2001. It is therefore still in its early stages of development. Its capacity to serve the purpose for which it was established will be greatly enhanced if those involved in its development could be well informed with regard to the principles underlying the functioning of this type of institution. These include the FET Act; the vision, mission, purposes and objectives of FET; community development theory, career development theories, andragogy and systems theories.

A thorough knowledge of the principles mentioned above is not only essential for policy makers and administrators but for educators as well. Following the example set by SPC and the impact thereof, namely, that all its academic staff members are required to complete a university course entitled “The American Community College” before being permanently employed, it is recommended that a similar course dealing with principles underlying Further Education and Training in South Africa be designed and be made one of the conditions for permanent employment at the Maluti FET College. In support of this notion, Venter (1996: 8) contends that community colleges (FET colleges as well) will not be successful if they are developed in a vacuum. She feels that:

"The process will require a new approach to education with the development of new kinds of skills. Re-orientation courses for officials and teachers should be pursued so that a total paradigm shift and a change of mind-sets can be achieved. This is crucial for the success of the colleges, for the radical improvement in the status of South Africa's human resources and for the empowerment necessary to the realisation of participatory democracy."

This knowledge will not only ensure that those involved in the establishment and operation of the institutions are in the right frame of mind. It will also ascertain that they deal with the students scientifically and are sensitive to their needs and those of the communities of which they are a part.

6.3.1.2 Relationship with the Community

One of the distinguishing features of the American community college that has contributed immensely to its success is its intimate relationship with the community it serves. It is recommended that this attribute also be made a prominent characteristic of the Maluti FET College. As Zuma (2000: 79) clearly points out, the FET college must guarantee ownership and real participation by the communities they serve. The Maluti FET College will therefore in addition to including representatives of various sectors of community members in its governing council as stipulated by the FET Act, also have to devise other means of keeping abreast of the needs of the community. These may include periodic

needs assessment exercises by the college staff as well as devising means of encouraging community members to articulate their needs to college staff.

6.3.1.3 Delivery Sites

This study has revealed that the Maluti FET College is presently the only one in the Eastern Free State that has been declared a FET college in line with the FET Act No. 98 of 1998 and that it is a multi-campus college with six delivery sites. It has also come to light that five of these delivery sites are situated in Qwaqwa and are far from most of the other towns in the region. Thus, the FET college is easily accessible only to a limited number of residents in the region.

In the light of the above observations, it is recommended that in order to broaden educational opportunities available to residents of the region, the college be made accessible to more residents by re-locating one or more of the five delivery sites to an area where they will be accessible to residents residing in towns far from Qwaqwa such as Marquard and Vrede. In order to broaden educational opportunities even further, the establishment of structures similar to Community Learning Centres (CLCs) at strategic points in the region may be considered. Community Learning Centres are sites where education and training programmes are offered by a community college. Depending on the needs of the residents the CLCs may be single-purpose CLCs offering a single programme or multi-purpose CLCs offering a number of separate programmes or activities.

6.3.1.4 Multiple Delivery Modes

Access to programmes of the Maluti FET College may further be broadened by the use of multiple delivery modes such as those used at SPC. As the Maluti FET College develops with time, the number of students increases and funds become more abundant it would be worthwhile to consider the introduction of delivery modes other than contact tuition. These include distance, television and online tuition.

6.3.1.5 Programmes

This study has revealed that South Africans differ in their education and training needs. Some have very low educational qualifications and are in need of basic education and training, whereas others have higher education qualifications and are in need of Further Education and Training, still, many have skills that need to be upgraded and furthermore, others have no marketable skills and need to be equipped with such skills. This finding suggests that in order for the Maluti FET College to succeed in its endeavour to educate and train the residents of the Eastern Free State, it should design programmes that will cater for the needs of as many people as possible.

The NCFE formulated the mission of FET as follows:

- To foster mid-level skills.
- To lay the foundation for Higher Education.
- To facilitate the transition from school to the world of work.

- To develop well-educated, autonomous citizens.
- To provide opportunities for continuous learning through the articulation of education and training programmes.

(DoE, 1997(a): 4-5)

The realisation of this mission as well as the consequent satisfaction of the diverse needs of the potential students of the Maluti FET College may be greatly enhanced if the college could operate like a comprehensive American community college offering programmes classified into the following five broad categories:

Vocational Education, which is education designed to develop skills, abilities, understandings, attitudes, work habits and appreciations needed by workers to enter and make progress in employment on a useful and productive basis.

General Education, which may be seen as a process of developing a framework on which to place knowledge stemming from various sources, of learning to think critically, developing values, understanding traditions, respecting diverse cultures and opinions and most important, putting that knowledge to use.

Transfer Education, through which the community college provides the students with education that earns them credits at a university thus preparing them to transfer to a university after completion. Arrangements may also be made with technikons to enable students who wish to transfer to technikons to do so. In

order to be of maximum benefit to participants, programmes in this category must be designed in such a way that they will still be useful to students who choose not to transfer to a university or technikon after completion at the college.

Developmental education, which may be construed as a sub-discipline of the field of education concerned with improving the performance of under-prepared students preparing them for participation in tertiary education programmes. Thus, learners who do not qualify for entry at universities and technikons because of poor grade 12 results may be admitted into this programme.

Community Service/Education, which consists of educational, cultural and recreational services, which an educational institution may provide for its community in addition to its regularly scheduled day and evening classes. Programmes in this category have to be designed in such a way that they will attract students from all sectors of the community. Programmes designed for this category by SPC may serve as a useful guide for the Maluti FET College.

In addition to the above-mentioned five categories of programmes, it is also recommended that **Adult Basic Education and Training** programmes being offered in the Thabo Mofutsanyana Education District be placed under the supervision of the Maluti FET College. This recommendation is based on the fact that it was pointed out in Chapter Four that there are problems with the current provision of ABET in the region. When ABET programmes are placed under an

FET college students will have an opportunity of being taught by permanently employed and well-trained educators. The provision at a FET college of programmes outside NQF levels 2-4 such as ABET programmes, is permissible provided that such programmes do not exceed 40% of programmes offered by the college (Zuma, 2000: 79).

6.3.1.6 Admission Requirements

It is recommended that Maluti FET College be an open-access educational institution. This means that accommodation permitting, all applicants beyond the compulsory school-going age should be admitted and that emphasis should be placed on the acknowledgement of success at the exit level instead of on lack of competence at the entry level (Venter, 1996: 13). Fonte (1997: 44) sees open-access as a systematic use of academic standards linked with additional approaches, such as the offering of developmental education in an environment that supports student success, the organisation of activities that enable students to get to know others on campus, supporting efforts including child care, financial aid, counselling and so on.

6.3.1.7 Learner Fees

Through this study, poverty has been identified as one of the major impediments to education. It is one of the factors that led to many young people exiting the education system before attaining the educational levels they desired. Thus, it is recommended that in order to prevent a recurrence of this state of affairs the

Maluti FET College charge low fees compared to universities and technikons. Furthermore, financial assistance should be made readily available to as many needy potential students as possible. This can be made possible by among others, fundraising, the accessing of government funds such as FET funds, funds from the Skills Development Fund and so forth as well as the judicious use thereof.

6.3.1.8 Student Services

The study has shown that well designed student services enhance students' chances of success in community colleges. It is therefore strongly recommended that a thorough assessment of students' needs at the Maluti FET College be conducted and appropriate student services be established. The following types of services being rendered in most American community colleges are worth considering:

- *Orientation*: encompassing pre-college information, student induction, group orientation and career information.
- *Appraisal*: including personnel records, educational testing, applicant appraisal and health appraisal.
- *Consultation*: involving student counselling, student advisement and applicant counselling.
- *Participation*: embracing co-curricular activities and student self- government.
- *Regulation*: comprising student registration, academic regulation and social regulation.

- *Service*: consisting of financial aid and placement.
- *Organisational*: subsuming programme articulation, in-service education and programme evaluation.

(Cohen and Brawer 1989: 178; see also, Matson 1994: 487)

6.3.1.9 Scheduling

Potential students of the Maluti FET College are likely to be a combination of employed and unemployed persons. In order to accommodate the needs of all its students, it is recommended that the Maluti FET College have a flexible class schedule operating during the day for unemployed persons and in the evenings and during weekends for employed persons.

6.4 Suggestion for Further Research

The recommendations outlined above were based on the results of an investigation conducted on American community colleges as well as on the views of the residents of the Eastern Free State. It is obvious that the findings of the investigation are not exhaustive of knowledge on Further Education and Training. For this reason, it is recommended that for more expansion of knowledge in this field, the following studies be conducted:

- An investigation into Further Education and Training in countries other than the United States of America.
- An empirical investigation similar to the one conducted in this study be undertaken in other parts of South Africa.

6.5 Conclusion

This study has evaluated the role of American community colleges in the provision of education in the vocational-technical sector and has found that these educational institutions play an extremely significant role in workforce training and in community development. They have contributed tremendously in the economic, technical and social development of the USA.

The study has also evaluated the South African situation relating to the provision of vocational-technical education and has found that an unacceptably high number of the residents of the country are poorly educated, unskilled and living in poverty. It has also been found that a lot of work is already in process to remedy the situation. The establishment of community colleges similar to those operating in America have been found to be one of the ways through which the situation in South Africa could be improved. Nonetheless, it has also come to light that FET colleges already operating in South Africa are serving purposes similar to those being served by American community colleges. For this reason it was found that the establishment of new community colleges alongside FET colleges would result in unnecessary duplication. Instead it was recommended that the features that resulted in the success of American community colleges be integrated into FET colleges.

The South African situation, which is so much cause for concern has not developed overnight. It is a product of many years. It is encouraging to note that

slowly and steadily progress is being made towards its normalisation. **May this study contribute towards this progress.**