CHAPTER 1

An assessment of ten years of education and training in South Africa

Introduction

This assessment covers government programmes, policies, interventions and strategies in education and training provision since 1994. These include policies, legislation, programmes and strategies aimed at ensuring that all people participate fully in our country’s social and economic life. While it is difficult to measure the impact of interventions, which, by their nature, mostly take place over the medium to long term, it is possible to make preliminary assessments of what has been achieved and what challenges have been encountered in education and training provision.

Chapter 1 of this assessment covers the purpose of the assessment of the implementation of education and training interventions and sets out the approach of the assessment. The assessment is made by comparing the vision in key background documents, such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme policy framework, the White Paper on Education and Training (White Paper 1 of 1995), and the Tirisano Plan of Action.
Chapter 2 examines the context of change in the two halves of the decade since 1994. This chapter provides an overview of the internal and external environment in the education and training system and, to a certain extent, describes the local, national and global context of education reform.

Chapter 3 reflects on the key achievements made in the past decade in the area of large-scale reform, institutional reorganisation, and system development. This chapter deals with progress made in improving participation, equity, quality and democracy in the system. In addition, Chapter 3 examines key interventions in institutional reform, provision of free general education, system stability, human resource development (HRD) and international relations in the light of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

In Chapter 4, gaps and challenges in implementation are frankly highlighted in terms of areas where progress has been limited, effectiveness has been sub-optimal and inefficiencies have set in. In order to move forward, the gaps and challenges discussed in this chapter must be systematically addressed so that there can be sustained human development over the next decade. Some of these challenges persist, but many can be overcome with determined political and administrative leadership and innovation. Hard choices will have to be made to change the pace of implementation; this chapter attempts to confront some of these policy and implementation choices and to offer options for strengthening reform.

The final chapter contains important recommendations for the next decade. Key priorities for education and training provision are highlighted. Administrative and organisational options are also proposed as key levers for accelerating reform for successful development. Together with Chapter 4, Chapter 5 maps out areas for attention in the medium to long term for the achievement of the integrated, coherent education and training system envisaged in White Paper 1 of 1995.
1.1 An assessment of implementation by Government

This assessment deals with governmental implementation of programmes through and by the education and training system since 1994, when a democratic government was established in South Africa. The report deals with the impact of these programmes. It also deals with trends in the impact of the Government, through the administration of education, on the lives of children, young people and adults in the population in the years since the democratic transition.

This assessment will compare the impact of the education and training system with the vision and mission of the Department of Education, which declares: Our vision is of a South Africa in which all our people have equal access to lifelong education and training opportunities, which will contribute towards improving their quality of life and build a peaceful, prosperous and democratic society (DoE 1996).

The assessment will also compare the development and impact of education and training with the vision outlined in the Reconstruction and Development Programme, the blueprint policy framework for development, which states:

Human resource development must address the development of human capabilities, abilities, knowledge and know-how to meet the people's ever-growing needs for goods and services, to improve their standard of living and quality of life. It is a process in which the citizens of a nation acquire and develop the knowledge and skill necessary for occupational tasks and for other social, cultural, intellectual, and political roles that are part and parcel of a vibrant democratic society (3.2.3).

We must develop an integrated system of education and training that provides equal opportunities to all irrespective of race, colour, sex, class, language, age, religion, geographical location, political or other opinion. It must address the development of knowledge and skills that can be used to produce high-quality goods and services in such a way as to enable us to develop our cultures, our society and our economy (3.3.1).

Education must be directed to the full development of the individual and community, and to strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It must promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all South Africans and must advance the principles contained in the Bill of Rights (3.3.2).

The democratic government has the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that our human resources are developed to the full. Education, training and development opportunities must be provided in accordance with national standards. However, civil society must be encouraged to play an active part in the provision of learning opportunities as part of the national human resources development strategy. For example, democratic school governance structures must be set up which involve democratically elected parent and teacher representatives, as well as providing for student participation at a consultative level (3.3.4).

Furthermore, the assessment will be done with respect to the vision elaborated in White Paper 1 of 1995 and the Tirisano Programme of Action, 1999. The assessment will seek to answer the following questions in relation to the decade since 1994:
1. Has there been delivery and provision in the way envisaged in White Paper 1 of 1995 and Tirisano?
2. Strategically, what delivery mechanisms and activities have contributed to the broader development and transformation agenda?
3. What are the key challenges in terms of provision and in terms of transformation and reform?
4. Which issues need to be confronted in the next decade to move the transformation and development agenda forward in a more sustained fashion?

An assessment of ten years of education and training in South Africa
1.2 Purpose and structure of the report

The target group for this report will be policy makers, managers, officials and other partners in the education and training system, particularly in the Department of Education. The report is meant to be a tool for reflection and introspection that will help in the evaluation of past efforts in the education and training system. It is also meant to be a resource for crafting and developing interventions, programmes and priorities for the whole education and training system in the next decade.

The emphasis of this report is not on quantitative indicators and statistical trends, although these have been incorporated. It should be noted that the report is of the whole of the education and training system, not only of the Department of Education. It is therefore not the aim of this report to provide detailed programme-related information, or information on particular bands in the education and training system in South Africa. Rather, the report seeks to highlight debates and key areas that education policy makers and decision makers should discuss and resolve, and on which they should reflect. In many respects, the report concerns itself with the broader context of developments and interventions in, and the impact of, the education and training system, rather than with the detail of the programmatic interventions.

Ideally, an assessment of this nature, in order to be as objective as possible, would be the result of the detailed analysis of several pieces of specially commissioned research by different researchers and policy analysts into the key trends in different aspects of the education and training system. These research pieces would then be summarised and combined into a report on developments in the various aspects of the system over an extended period of time. It is hoped, however, that this limited assessment will inform such a detailed process for the next 10 years. Nonetheless, an effort has been made to incorporate information and research findings from various sources into this report in order to provide evidence for the conclusions drawn. In addition, information from interviews with key players in the education and training system has been incorporated into the document, particularly in the assessment of the context of change and developments in the system in the past decade.

1.3 Shifts in the context of government implementation

The democratic State in 1994 inherited a country isolated economically, socially and culturally, with few globally competitive companies or organisations. In the decade before 1994, economic growth had declined to below one per cent per annum, with a virtually static economy in the first half of the 1990s. Before 1994, the State depended on extra-judicial measures to sustain itself and its policies, and national security (and not common law of the Constitution) governed activities in the administration and governance of State agencies and the public sector. Most human and civil laws were violated in the efforts to defend apartheid, and international isolation and exclusion were entrenched.

In the decade since then, there have been large shifts in the social, demographic, economic and democratic profile of the country. There has also been a change in the role and nature of the State: it now mobilises and facilitates change through a variety of means and partnerships, and is also a direct change agent in and of itself. Over the past decade, it has become clear that, in order to cement these shifts, and indeed to secure the fruits of these shifts, the State would need to lead this change in the social, political and economic profile of the country - not only as one of the actors in delivery, but as a lead player.

This has implications for the assessment of changes and developments in the education and training system in general, and in the Department of Education in particular. The dual role of the national sphere in leading and facilitating delivery (through the development of policy...
and legislation) has been difficult to balance in the past decade and it is necessary, in this assessment, to examine the track record of provision since 1994 to strengthen delivery in the next 10 years. Also, the role of the national Education Department has been determined to be one of policy development, monitoring and evaluation, setting norms and standards, and facilitating implementation, while the role of provincial education departments is one of implementation with an essentially cooperative arrangement governing the provision of general (basic) and further education and training in the country.

This is particularly important, because the challenges of balancing these dual roles have been a result of the wider (social, economic, and political) dynamic context of change, and of system readiness in terms of capacity (resources, system maturity, or readiness for reform). It must be stated that much of the change in the education and training system has not been simply a matter of grafting a new system, policy or law onto a stable system, but of grafting new policies and legislation onto a system which, itself, is in flux and undergoing the most fundamental reform in terms of the reconstruction and redevelopment of systems, structures (including institutions), curriculum and capacity, in preparation for a full-scale refocusing of programmes and provisioning.