ADVANCED CERTIFICATE FOR YOUTH IN DEVELOPMENT WORKERS:

The UNISA experience of collaboration with the Commonwealth Youth Programme

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BACKGROUND

Intra-institutional and inter-institutional collaborative initiatives, within and among higher education institutions, are strongly recommended by the South African Ministry of Education (NCHE Discussion Document, 1996; Government Gazette No. 17944, 1997; Government Gazette, No. 18515, 1997). In fact collaboration with bodies, other than other higher education institutions, have also been suggested as

reflected in the statement that,

... the ministry seeks to encourage the development of regional consortia and partnerships involving a range of institutions in the development and delivery of programmes that have emerged recently. (Government Gazette No. 17944, 1997:18)

This is in line with the proposition put forward by the National Commission on Higher Education, to increase co-operation and partnerships among higher education institutions, and thereby move "...away from academic insularity with reference to both governance structures and day-to-day operations" (NCHE Discussion Document, 1996:45). This view culminated in the promulgation of the Higher Education Act No. 101 of 1997 in which Section 38 reads as follows:

(1) Public higher education institutions may co-operate with each other in any manner to achieve the optimal utilisation of resources and the performance of their functions.

(2) Public higher education institutions may establish regional or national structures to assist and facilitate the co-operation contemplated in subsection (1).

(3) The Minister may provide financial incentives to such structures and to public higher education institutions participating in such structures to achieve the aims of such co-operation.

The UNISA's experience of collaboration with the Commonwealth Youth Programme is but one

example of how the above policy imperatives can be implemented. The case study presented here is an example of collaboration that went beyond the national boundaries. It is both national and international collaboration that involves institutions both inside and outside South Africa. It also applied collaborative arrangements within the University of South Africa (UNISA) itself (intra-institutional).

THE COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PROGRAMME IN HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE

For the over 21 years (1975 - 1998), the Commonwealth has been running residential face-to-face training programmes for youth in development workers, in its four Regional Centres, namely: *Africa, Asia, Caribbean and South Pacific*. The limited numbers of learners reached through such a delivery mode (±1700 learners) was one reason for the Commonwealth's decision to forge collaboration with distance education institutions in order to make the youth in development programme accessible to a wide range of learners. This consideration came at an opportune time for UNISA, when South Africa had been re-admitted to the Commonwealth. As an internationally recognised distance learning institution, Unisa was invited to participate in this venture alongside other distance learning institutions within the African region.

Presently, the Commonwealth youth in development programme is an accredited Diploma or Advanced Certificate offered by 16 partner higher education institutions throughout the Commonwealth. The collaboration that has emerged from this programme is international in outreach, complex in development and implementation, and with a three-tiered organisational structure that can be represented as follows:

Figure 1: Three-tiered Collaborative Organisation

PAN COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Univ. of Huddersfield - Quality Assurance Agent

REGIONAL CENTRES

16 Partner institutions in 4 regions: AFRICA← CARRIBEAN ← SOUTH PACIFIC ←ASIA

NATIONAL LEVEL - SOUTH AFRICA

UNISA & Consortium for Youth Workers: HEIs(UNISA; T/SA; UPE; Hug. Col.←Government (NYC)←NGOs

KEY: HEIS: Higher Education Institutions

T/SA: Technikon South Africa
UPE: University of Port Elizabeth

Hug/Col.: Huguenot College

NYC: National Youth Commission
NGOs: Non-governmental Organisations

PAN-COMMONWEALTH LEVEL - International inter-institutional and intergovernmental collaboration

The roles and responsibilities of the Pan-Commonwealth Office (PCO) cover five areas:

advocacy role with governments and institutions

 develop the curriculum and coordinate its implementation throughout the Commonwealth and provide materials for modules during the pilot stage

• ensure coherence and consistency across the regions

· coordinate and monitor quality assurance

· oversee the legal and regulatory collaboration frameworks.

In its advocacy and oversight of legal and regulatory frameworks roles the PCO negotiates with governments and institutions on issues of recognition of the curriculum, delivery and funding.

The PCO identified the University of Huddersfield as the Pan-Commonwealth institution that will assist it to discharge the curriculum and quality assurance roles and responsibilities, ensure that the qualification gained is of a comparable academic and professional standard and is widely recognised.

The curriculum development process involved consultations with Regional Centres on the design and content which resulted in a curriculum framework document called Human Resource Development for the New Millennium: A Strategy for the Commonwealth Youth Programme.

The materials development process was complex. It involved identifying and appointing subject and distance education specialists in all four Commonwealth Regions to develop materials for each of the thirteen core modules. The draft modules were then reviewed by the four regions and feedback incorporated before finalisation. Instructional designers from partner institutions were identified and trained to ensure good quality materials are produced in all modules. Coherence and consistency were ensured through the appointment of one institutions as the overall instructional design coordinator for all 13 modules. The final materials were printed in Malaysia and distributed to all 16 partner institutions.

The PCO is also responsible for appointing and training regional moderators as part of the quality assurance system of this programme. For the Africa Region, a UNISA academic is one of the regional moderators.

REGIONAL CENTRES LEVEL

The Regional Centres (RC) are responsible for:

- · advocacy at regional level with governments and institutions
- · operationalising the curriculum
- · securing legal and regulatory frameworks: eg. working with partner institutions to secure arrangements for delivery, accreditation, etc
- curriculum development: contributing to specific modules, for example region specific modules and module reviews
- · coherence and consistency: eg. ensuring that the programme is informed and applied in an appropriate way to the regional context
- · providing some financial resources
- reporting to PCO and governments.

In their operationalising role the RCs continue to work closely with partner institutions in curriculum and materials development and in ensuring that the programme is implemented and accredited according to the agreed plans. They coordinate the work of specialists who develop the different modules in their regions and organise region review panels reviews to ensure that regional contexts are covered. In addition they have and will continue to provide the crucial link between the partner institutions and the government organs responsible for youth affairs in each of the countries that fall within their regions. The Africa Region with 22 Commonwealth countries has presented great challenges for the RC that is located in Zambia. Africa, because of its size has been allocated four partner institutions (University of South Africa, Zimbabwe Open University, Open University of Tanzania and University of Ghana-Legon) and of three Regional Moderators based in three of these universities.

NATIONAL LEVEL - South Africa's Experience

The Partner Institutions are responsible for:

- advocacy
- · accreditation and alignment to national qualifications frameworks
- · contribution to curriculum development

· implementation

· quality assurance.

It is at the national level, South Africa and specifically the UNISA experience that this paper give more details of the implementation process. The collaboration, in this instance, is twofold: inter-institutional and intra-institutional.

Because of South Africa's late reentry into the Commonwealth, UNISA and other South African institutions were only invited at a regional workshop held in Pretoria during September 1996 to participate in the CYP, at the time when the curriculum was finalised and the materials developers for each module already appointed. However, due to dissatisfaction with the quality of one of the modules, the responsibility for finalising Module 7 was assigned to UNISA including the instructional design of this module.

The South African organisations that participated in this workshop, while recognising that the CYP had appointed UNISA as this programme's partner institution, decided from the outset to adopt a collaborative approach in the implementation of this programme in order to minimise duplication and ensure that the other initiatives in this area of operation were not marginalised. After the workshop a consortium was formed to encourage and oversee the professional development of youth workers in South Africa and collaborate in various ways to achieve these goals.

The consortium has to-date grown from the six 1996 Workshop participants to nine. The member organisations fall within three categories. These are 5 higher education institutions (UNISA, Technikon SA, Universities of Venda and Port Elizabeth and Huguenot College); 1 government organisation (the National Youth Commission); 3 non-governmental organisations (the Southern African Association of Youth Clubs, South African Association of Youth Workers and Ipelegeng Youth Centre). Each of these organisations has brought distinct but complementary knowledge, skills and attitudes to the development, delivery, recognition, accreditation and articulation of programmes for youth work practitioners. Their contribution to the UNISA Advanced Certificate for Youth in Development Workers (ACYDW) is immense and shows a variety of roles required in collaboration in programme implementation.

Within the institution, UNISA, collaborative arrangements had to be established as well. The interdisciplinary nature of the programme demanded collaboration with three faculties within UNISA, that is Arts, Education and Economic Management. The faculties are responsible for the academic aspects of the programme; development of assessment strategies, assignment and examination setting and marking, tutor training etc. ICE, on the other hand, oversees the administrative and international cooperation aspects. To facilitate the smooth and successful coordination of the tuition and administration aspects of the programme, an inter-faculty coordination committee consisting of ICE staff and representatives from all faculties involved with the teaching of the modules was established two years ago. This committee has met regularly to plan the programme and will continue to monitor progress over the next two years. ICE staff present regular progress reports to this committee and valuable inputs have been made on the delivery and assessment strategies. Members have also played a vital role in facilitating the accreditation process within the university.

Delivery Partner Institution: UNISA- Institute for Continuing Education

As the Commonwealth Partner Institution, UNISA- Institute for Continuing Education (ICE) is responsible for recruiting, registering, supporting and ensuring that learners complete their studies successfully and that the certificate is accredited appropriately. In discharging these roles it is clear from the above description that ICE has implemented both intra- and inter- institutional collaboration. These types of collaboration are interwoven in the various aspects of delivery and contribute greatly to the quality of the programme as the descriptions of the various levels of delivery as described below will indicate

Participation in Curriculum Development

The consortium and faculty members were involved in the review of the draft modules of the ACYDW and provided valuable feedback to the RC. Two representatives, one each from UNISA and the SAAYC presented the consortium's feedback on the modules at the Regional Review Meeting held in Zambia two years ago. The consortium has played this role in other members' curriculum development processes.

UNISA developed one of the Modules of the course, that is Module 7 on Management. The instructional design of this module was also done by a UNISA staff member.

Learner recruitment and sponsorship

Consortium members have been actively involved in the recruitment, selection and sponsorship of

EP Nonyongo & NADEOSA, August 2000 NCG Vakalisa –6– UNISA learners. Most of the learners of this programme are youth workers from consortium member institutions. As the government structure involved in this programme, the National Youth Commission (NYC) has been involved in the development of criteria for participation in the programme and the criteria for awarding bursaries. Provincial youth structures have also sponsored their commissioners' registration on the programme.

Face-to-face Tutorial Support

Cooperation through the consortium has resulted in UNISA appointing as local tutors in each of the nine provinces the students of the Technikon SA and Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology Masters in Youth Work collaboration programme. These tutors are participating in training programme organised by ICE and receiving practical experience of providing face-to-face support and marking assignments for distance learners. The ACYDW collaboration is thus also serving as a local capacity building programme for tutors who should be an asset to multi-purpose learning centres that South Africa has been considering for some years. Because these tutors are located in each province, they can be utilised in each of the programmes that the consortium members offers and in any other youth work programmes.

Assessment Strategy

The varied collaboration arrangements of this programme have contributed to the assessment strategy adopted for this programme. Besides the existing UNISA strategies, the regional and Commonwealthwide quality assurance strategies put in place in this programme have contributed to constant review of existing strategies and adaptation to improve quality and align strategies with best practice regionally and internationally.

BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION

The benefits of this collaboration are already evident and seem to far outweigh the challenges covered below. These benefits are present at all three levels of collaboration and include:

Quality of the programme and learning materials.

Most of the institutions involved in this collaboration would not have individually developed this

programme and begun delivery within this time-frame. The pooling of resources, financial, material and human in all levels (governmental, institutional and non-governmental) across the Commonwealth has helped to speed up the process and enhance the quality of the products. The modules for example were written by specialists in different institutions within the four regions of the Commonwealth; the quality assurance team is also Commonwealth-wide. The CYP was able to muster financial resources from governments through the various Commonwealth governance structures, a situation which individual institutions would not have been able to achieve.

Enhanced articulation of programmes

The learners who successfully complete the ACYDW will receive a qualification that is recognised in all 17 partner institutions that is including the University of Huddersfield, the Quality Assurance Agent. The possibility for further studies by successful candidates in each of these institutions has been enhanced. In South Africa concrete arrangements have been made with TSA for ACYDW successful candidates to get two years' credit in the Youth Work Course of the B Tech.

Refocusing of institutional culture and mission

Such large scale international collaboration in distance education is new in all participating institutions. The intra and inter institutional cooperation is bound to influence the culture and missions of participating institutions. All the South African participating institutions have learnt that such cooperation is possible and that the national policy guidelines can be implemented through collaborative arrangements of this nature. Other programmes in each institution are likely to learn from the lessons, both good and bad, of this programme.

Building of academic and administrative capacity

The three tiered collaboration of this programme has exposed academics and administrative staff of the Quality assurance Agency, the 16 Partner Institutions and 9 South African Consortium Members to various aspects of collaborative programme and curriculum development and delivery. The experience has built staff capacity and exposed them to different systems and process that partner institutions in the four regions of the Commonwealth use. It has also opened the way for other potential areas of future capacity building strategies. In the Africa region, for example, new institutions like the Zimbabwe Open University are learning through staff visits, existing systems and documentation from other experienced institutions and do not have to reinvent the wheel in many aspects of distance education delivery.

New Governance Structures

The need to keep participating institutions informed and involved in the development of the programme has led to the development of new governance structures. Intra- institutionally, the Inter-faculty Coordination Committee at Unisa is one example. Inter-institutionally, the Consortium Board for South African partners is an example at the national level. At the international level, the Regional Module Reviews Structures, the Regional Moderation Teams and the mooted Pan-Commonwealth Partner Institutions Meeting are other examples. Proposals from all these structure will help to shape and

improve the quality of the programme.

EMERGENT ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Collaboration sounds easily achievable, and one would even venture to say attractive, until one remembers that this was foreign to the higher education sector, that had thrived on competition in the past. Institutions have competed for students especially because student-based government funding formula. They have competed also on academic excellence of the programmes or qualifications offered. Otherwise how would they attract large numbers of students, if the qualifications they offered were not reflected as the best available in the country, and could not be obtained in any other institution? These realities make one understand that collaboration is not an easy undertaking. Johnson (1988:193)

alludes to this in his statement that:

...- from child-rearing practices to Olympic competition, and from bake-offs to presidential races – competition is not only condoned, but rewarded and encouraged. Institutions of higher education foster that same competitive stance and have learned to live with oftentimes ruthless competition for faculty members,

for students and for federal, state and private dollars.

Johnson (1988: 193) goes on to say that the reason "... that consortia have not flourished in the higher education community is that they run counter to the grain of higher education. Competition is a given; co-operation is a variable that one can accept or reject". He notes though that competition need not be directed at another person or institution.

EP Nonyongo & NADEOSA, August 2000 NCG Vakalisa –9– UNISA In South Africa however we can say that higher education institutions have responded positively to the call of the Ministry of Education to form collaborations among themselves to cut down on duplication of programmes. Dodd, Nonyongo and Glennie (1999) identify several collaborative initiatives that have developed among higher education institutions. Among others Dodd et al mention the Confederation of Open Learning Institutions of South Africa (COLISA) which was formed by UNISA, Technikon South Africa (TSA), and Vista; the UNISA-SACHED collaboration on materials development for the post graduate diploma in distance education; and collaboration between the University of Natal Pietermaritzburg and the South African College for Teacher Education (SACTE) to offer a Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.) programme. With the imminent merging of SACTE and the Faculty of Education of UNISA the University of Natal is making negotiations with the UNISA's Faculty of Education for possible collaboration on this programme.

As mentioned above collaboration among higher education institutions is not without challenges. In this section we look at a few challenging issues which member-institutions of the Commonwealth Youth Programme consortium have to wrestle with, at the national, regional and Pan Commonwealth levels.

Quality Assurance standards: Whose standards?

As mentioned above the responsibility to overseer quality assurance mechanisms for this programme remain with the Pan-Commonwealth and the latter has assigned this portfolio to the University of Huddersfield. It has also appointed regional representatives to participate in the moderation of examinations and other performance assessment mechanisms that form part of the programme. This has given the participating regions some representation in the determination of quality assurance mechanisms employed in the CYP. Participating institutions played an active role in the development of the curriculum, and the designing of instructional materials, and thereby contributed to the quality assurance that was built into the programme.

Quality assurance is however a contentious issue in a situation where different higher education institutions are responsible for the implementation of one programme. In the case of the ACYDW programme the situation is more complex as sixteen institutions, spread throughout the Commonwealth countries with varying cultural and socio-economic backgrounds are involved. The latest report of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) (2000:14) notes that quality and standards are not timeless and invariant and cautions that:

It is unwise and inappropriate to conceive of quality as being attached to a single, a-historical and therefore universal model of a higher education institution. Quality and standards are historically specific and must be related to the objectives of higher education institutions and to educational and broader social purposes.

Learning Contracts

This is closely related to quality assurance as it involves assessment criteria for the learning performance of learners. The learning contract is a new concept to almost all learners, institutions and probably to some tutors as well. It involves making the student select the outcomes he/she plans to achieve in each module so that assessment of his/her performance should be based on the outcomes agreed upon at the time of enrolment. The regional institutional forum of this collaboration proposed that students and tutors/mentors should be formally oriented to the concept of alearning contract. It was also pointed out that for students to decide on a learning contract at the time of registration, prior to having opportunity to go over the learning materials to get a feel of what they might achieve is not realistic.

Familiarity of tutors with learning content

The Pan-Commonwealth went into great lengths training representatives of participating member institutions in materials development and curriculum design. It did not end there, it facilitated the peer review of these materials by the representatives of member institutions, and external reviewers. All these were part of quality assurance mechanisms used to ensure high standard quality materials. Since the dominant mode of delivery of this programme is distance education one might say this was adequate, and it was up to the learners to use the materials effectively. However the element of learner support through

tutors brings on board a third party to the process of delivery that was not part of the planning and development of the materials. In order to provide the support they are expected to offer to learners the tutors have to be conversant with the learning content.

At the August 2000 Africa regional forum in Zambia, the issue of tutors' familiarity with the content of the modules was raised. The conference resolved that a tutor training workshop included a strong component on familiarising tutors with materials. This issue is also closely related to issues of quality assurance, and the success of the programme to deliver what it promises.

The Language of Instruction

The Commonwealth countries have one thing in common, a history of colonisation by Britain. Such countries use English for formal learning although their indigenous languages are also developed to appreciable levels of literary communication, and their speakers use them in their daily communication. Youth in development workers work more in informal education settings, and most of the time communicate in their indigenous languages. To some of youth development workers English is their third or fourth language. The fact that they do not use English frequently renders some members of this group to be less proficient in English. Where this is the case, analysis, interpretation and understanding of the programme's learning materials may be difficult, and reduce the effectiveness of the programme. This may negatively affect the performance of learners, as assessments are also conducted in English.

Valentine (1984) refers to one of the mistakes that caused the Crawford City Adult Education collaboration to fail in its planning to make a provision to offer the programme in English and Spanish, since the latter also had a large population in Crawford City. According to Valentine (1984) this did not stop the director of the programme from making an open invitation to a Hispanic alliance to advise its members to join the programme if they wished to do so. This placed the coordinator of the programme in an embarrassing position when during the late morning of one Wednesday fifteen Hispanic clients arrived with the intention to participate in the programme. "None of the program (sic) staff spoke Spanish; few of the Hispanic clients could speak, understand, read, or write English with anything approaching fluency" (Valentine, 1984:74). The beleaguered programme coordinator, after a fragmented discussion with the new clients, and in the absence of the director, who had forgotten to warn the staff

about his offer to the Hispanic alliance, decided to admit the prospective learners. This meant they had to join that day's afternoon activities that included achievement tests in reading and writing. "The Hispanic participants could not understand the oral directions, let alone the tests themselves, ... The resulting chaos disrupted the session, delayed the schedule, and satisfied no one, let alone the Hispanic clients ..."(Valentine, 1984:74).

The situation in the participating Commonwealth countries is not as bad as the one reported by Valentine (1984). However the ready acceptance of the fact that learning materials, especially at the higher education level, may provide false hope that learners are acquiring the knowledge the programme is meant to assist them to learn, when they are in fact experiencing learning barriers as a result of inadequately developed language skills for English. This has implications for quality assurance as well.

Financial matters

Financing programme delivery

Successful delivery of a programme over which many member institutions are collaborating requires continuous interaction among the stakeholders. This implies travelling to meeting places where representatives from member institutions can discuss the process of implementation and emergent issues if and when these arise. The recent Africa regional conference which was held in Zambia, during August, 2000 was one of such meetings. At this initial implementation stage the process of implementation needs to be closely monitored, and evaluated both internally and externally. There are costs attached to these activities. At national level government funding formulae do not cover collaboration costs, though in theory such costs are promised (Government Gazette No 17944, 1997). The fees which learners pay cover only their learning materials, tuition and assessment activities. The nature of the learner support in this programme is also very costly. There must be definite arrangement at each participating institution of how the expenses inherent in the implementation of the programme are met.

Funding of Learners

The target group of the Advanced Certificate for Youth Development Workers are people who work for community organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Some

EP Nonyongo & NADEOSA, August 2000 NCG Vakalisa –13– UNISA of these workers offer their services voluntarily and therefore do not earn any income. In most cases the organisations they work for are charity organisations which means that they are not in a position to assist their workers who wish to enrol for this programme financially. Learners have to pay for the learning materials, tuition and assessment of their performance. If they cannot do this themselves the programme providers must find means of finding sponsors for prospective learners. The UNISA's Institution for Continuing education (ICE) has been fortunate in that the National Youth Commission (NYC) has offered bursaries to the first group to enrol in the programme. There is no certainty that this will continue indefinitely. Lack of financial assistance to learners may reduce the size of enrolments thereby threatening the existence of the programme.

Pan-Commonwealth quotas

As explained earlier, the participating institutions were given specific numbers to enrol during the pilot implementation of the programme. In the case of UNISA the number to be admitted into the programme was 180 learners made up of twenty learners per province. This imperative overlooked the fact that youth in development organisations are concentrated more in big cities than in rural areas. Provinces that are predominantly rural such as the Northern Province, the Northern Cape had a lower demand for placement in this programme. This resulted in some prospective participants being turned away while reserving space for clients that never came forward. This aspect needs to be revisited.

There are many more challenging issues than the ones listed here, and probably more are yet to be identified. Issues like this keep the dialogue and negotiations going among collaborating institutions, to find mutually acceptable solutions to problems.

CONCLUSION

Beder (1984) identifies four principles for successful collaboration, namely:

- √ reciprocity
- ✓ system openness
- ✓ trust and commitment
- ✓ compatible organisational structure

We believe that this collaborative initiative of the CYP does possess the properties suggested by Beder (1984). For example, in South Africa at the national level reciprocity exists between UNISA and the Technikon SA. UNISA offers the ACYDW programme and Technikon SA supplies tutors for the programme. The certificate offered by UNISA articulates to a diploma offered by the Technikon SA. This implies that the certificate programme offered by UNISA is a feeder to the diploma offered by the Technikon SA. The four collaborating institutions, namely, UNISA, Technikon SA, University of Port Elizabeth and the Huguenot College, also undertake to recruit learners for each other. The community organisations and NGOs that employ youth development workers do not only serve as feeder institutions for the ACYDW, they also offer opportunities for learners in this programme to do the practical component of the certificate programme.

The four collaborating South African institutions have compatible organisational structures as they are all higher education institutions. Two of these institutions, UNISA and Technikon SA offer all their programmes through the distance learning mode of delivery. The fact that all participating institutions joined the consortium voluntarily in response to the invitation of the Pan-Commonwealth implies trust and commitment. Commitment among the South African member institutions is further encouraged by the repeated calls of the government for collaborative initiative among higher education institutions to end unnecessary duplication of programmes.

The extensive consultation during the development of the ACYDW programme and the involvement of participating institutions in the development of the curriculum, learning materials and their implementation implies openness of the system. Representatives of the collaborating institutions meet regularly at the regional and consortium levels to review the process of implementation. This gives members opportunity to monitor the implementation closely to be able to identify any signs of weaknesses in the system and address them before they grow into serious problems. This means that the system is open to modification if and when the need arises.

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