

CIEA 2002

**How does training become successful in different systems
and in different basic conditions?**

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Experiences from South Africa

Introduction

The Elsenburg College of Agriculture had the privilege to present the 2001 CIEA-Seminar in South Africa on behalf of CIEA Switzerland. The aim was to bring this special learning opportunity to Africa. For this reason participants from Africa were invited to attend the seminar that was held during 3 to 14 December 2001

The theme of the Seminar was: "Excellence in Agricultural Education: The challenge for Africa". Sub-themes for the two weeks were "Out of Africa: Lessons in Agricultural Education for the developing world" and "Educational strategies to overcome the restrictions of limited resources in the educational environment".

The Seminar was staged at the Elsenburg College of Agriculture, 16 km from the well-known Stellenbosch and 50 km from the City of Cape Town. The participants were accommodated in the College Hostel.

The proceedings of the seminar are available on the Elsenburg website: www.Elsenburg.com, which is linked to the CIEA website (www.ciea.ch).

The organizing committee also organized several excursions. The aim was to give the participants a good feeling of the Western Cape. The idea was to familiarize the participants with the outcomes of Agricultural training in the Western Cape by visiting several successful farming operations, owned by well trained farmers – ex-students of Elsenburg College. A rural community, where several development projects, amongst others, short courses to the farmers are conducted, was also visited.

The 2001 CIEA Seminar was an opportunity to bring the South African Experience to the participants – to really experience the South African situation through presented papers highlighting the burning issues, tours, group discussions and individual interaction between representatives from South Africa and different countries.

The history as well as the present situation regarding agricultural education and training in South Africa were focal points in various papers presented by experts from South Africa. Directional sign posts for future directions to be taken by educationists were put out by these professionals.

The history of South Africa bears testimony of an unequal and fragmented educational system based on racial discrimination. At present, the system is characterized by a process of change with regard to just about every issue that impacts on education and training, e.g. governance of the educational system, funding regulations and curriculum development. As everything is not in place yet according to the goals and objectives of the process towards an accountable and unified educational system for South Africa, a great measure of uncertainty prevails at present amongst role players e.g. staff, in the educational system.

National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE)

To drive the South African Education and Training system effectively, a National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) with 13 commissioners was established in 1995. It was

charged with advising the government on issues concerning the restructuring of higher education by the development of a well-planned integrated high-quality system of higher education.

In its 1996 report, the Commission identified the following principles to guide the restructuring of education: equity, democratisation, development (in the sense of mobilizing the potential of all – in many cases neglected – resources of the country for the common good – p.72), quality, academic freedom and institutional autonomy, effectiveness and efficiency).

It set national as well as institutional level goals which constitute a synopsis of the ethos in South Africa – not only for higher education, as it can be extrapolated to other levels of education as well.

The goals are:

At national level

- Conceptualise, plan, administer and fund higher education in South Africa as an effective and efficient system which provides a full spectrum of advanced educational opportunities for as wide a range as possible of the population, irrespective of race, gender or age.
- Provide for diversifying the system in terms of the mix of institutional mission and programme offerings that will be required to meet the national and regional needs in the fields of social, cultural and economic development.
- Facilitate horizontal and vertical mobility by developing a framework for higher education qualifications which incorporates adequate routes of articulation as well as flexible entry and exit points.
- Promote participation and equal opportunities for all deserving students, as a means of both redress and development, while using all available methods and instruments to limit public expenditure, including the encouragement of private provision of higher education.
- Advance higher education's function as a custodian of research and as the cultivator of the high-level research capacity which can ensure both the continuation of self-initiated, open-ended intellectual inquiry and knowledge acquisition, and the sustained contribution to the full spectrum of research activities required for technological improvement and social development.
- Introduce and develop capacity-building measures to facilitate a more representative staff component, committed to standards and ideals of creative and internationally recognized academic work, while also sensitive to practical concerns and national needs. The latter includes the need for new strategies of learning that will take account of a more broadly based student body as well as the demands of the learning society.
- Transform the governance structures of higher education to incorporate in a practicable way the philosophy and procedures of democratisation. New structures should provide for cooperative decision-making between autonomous but functionally interdependent stakeholders who recognize their different identities, interests and freedoms, while pursuing the common goals of coordinated and participative polity and civil society.
- Develop and implement funding mechanisms that will embody the principles of affordability, financial sustainability and shared costs, as well as the principles of equity, development, democratisation, effectiveness and efficiency.

- Encourage extensive and intensive interaction among institutions of higher education and between such institutions and all sectors of the wider society, both nationally and internationally. This would mean seeking cooperation and partnerships where possible, and pursuing a viable balance between accountability on the one hand and legitimate autonomy and a critical role on the other.

At institutional level

- Plan and offer qualification programmes which are focused on human resource and other forms of development. Such programmes should be responsive to the social, political, economic and cultural needs of the country and all its peoples, while maintaining high standards of academic scholarship and professional training.
- Strengthen civil society and advance a democratic ethos and culture through the diffusion of the principles of academic thinking, such as free and open debate, critical questioning of prevailing orthodoxies and ideologies, and experimentation with new ideas.
- Facilitate the process of social transformation and to promote social cohesion and shared values, for instance through a study of social conflict resolution and the management of social change, and through the advancement of intercultural communication and understanding.
- Demonstrate higher education institutions' social responsibility and their commitment to the common good by making expertise and infrastructure available for programmes of community service, answering to the needs and contributing to the social, cultural, educational and economic development of their immediate environment.

To attain the goal of mobility, a National Qualification Framework (NQF) was established in 1998. It is governed by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and comprises of eight levels of qualifications, which is divided into three "bands" e.g. General Education (level 1) Further education and Training (levels 2-4) and Higher Education (levels 5 - 8). A detailed NQF is presented as Annexure to this report. Agricultural Colleges' training programmes feature in the Higher Education (HE) band at level 5, while the short courses represent levels 1 to 4 in the General (GET) and Further Education and Training (FET) bands.

Adult Education

Adult Education is a focal point in the educational system, as it has to deal to great lengths with the education of adults that was previously disadvantaged and did not receive normal training opportunities. A Directorate of Adult Education and Training has been created in the National Department of Education and it is planned to implement the following in an effort to cope with the demands in the place of work.

That:

- Well-planned literacy campaigns be conducted
- Guideline for teacher training be prepared
- Capacity for the training of teachers be created
- There be training at all necessary levels in the outcomes-based education mode
- Capacity be created for research in curriculum development, system design, research in regions
- Audits of skills and infrastructure be done

- A comprehensive information base be established
- Priority groupings be identified
- The state night schools be changed into community centers
- Partnerships be created between government and organised labour, business, women's and youth organisations, civics, churches, specialist NGOs, learner associations, all levels of government, media and other stakeholders
- More attention be paid to African and South African second languages
- There would be a possible state involvement in materials development
- There would be an audit of materials

The Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) programmes feature in level 1 (GET) of the NQF. Farm workers and resource-poor farmers are prominent learners in the ABET and short course programmes.

South Africa as part of Africa

South Africa cannot be seen as an island and should be regarded as a member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and be part of its strategy for the training of professional manpower for agriculture. South Africa will also have to deal with the five challenges (as stated by a SADC report in 1990) the agricultural sector are faced with. The one dealing with education and training is: "to develop and transfer technology that would increase productivity, such technology to be backed by timely available inputs".

Elsenburg, in pursuit of success in Agricultural education and training.

Elsenburg took to the challenge of training capable manpower for the agricultural sector by focusing on several burning issues that are also addressed in the goals and objectives of the national Department of Education. Examples are:

- Elsenburg adapted its curriculum through the years to address the needs of the day of their clients. An example being the introduction in 1976 of a Diploma in Agriculture: Cellar Technology, where students are trained to become winemakers. Another example is the Diploma in Agriculture: Extension that was introduced in 2001, where prospective Extensionists are trained in extension science to become qualified Extensionists.
- To assure that qualified ex-students meet the demands of the place of work, the syllabi of the different instructional offerings were developed in an outcomes based mode. In this way, a lecturer is urged to adapt the study material to cater for the needs of industry.
- Elsenburg enjoys a high level of credibility from the agricultural industry. This is a result of successful tuition in agricultural sciences, delivering capable qualified manpower to the agricultural sector. Qualified ex-students from Elsenburg are in great demand as farmers, farm managers and agriculturalists in this sector. Members of the agricultural sector serve on the Board of the College, while staff of the College also serve on various industry related institutional structures.
- Elsenburg adopts the well-known mode of practical training, namely "training by doing". Students are expected to implement the theory in a practical way by executing the practicals in a "hands on" way.
- Elsenburg adopts the rule of the Council for Higher Education, namely that a lecturer should be qualified one level above the level he/she tutors. The staff of the College is well trained and in most cases holds Masters degrees in their field expertise.

- Elsenburg has to its credit, very functional and appropriate practical facilities, extremely fit for excellent practical tuition. The training cellar, 40 ha of vineyards, 9 ha of deciduous fruit, four breeds of sheep totaling ±300, two breeds of dairy cattle and well equipped laboratories bears testimony of quality facilities.
- Elsenburg expanded its Further Education and Training (FET) division by employing several new staff members – all of whom are on a graduation level of expertise. A comprehensive programme of short courses are presented in rural communities as well as at Elsenburg.
- Elsenburg is involved in the development of unit standards for several study fields and participates in pilot projects regarding learnerships governed by the Standard Generating Body for primary Agriculture (PAETA) to give direction to the new initiatives regarding Agricultural education and training in South Africa.
- Close collaboration between the Training and Extension staff is a feature in the training of resource poor farmers and farm workers in rural communities of the Western Cape Province.
- The Departmental researchers and extensionists from the different disciplines, namely Farmer Settlement, Technology Development and Transfer, Veterinary Services and Agricultural Engineering is based adjacent to the College. These experts serve as a back-up to training staff and also as resources to be tapped when needed. This results in the enrichment of the College programmes.
- Elsenburg College of Agriculture – one of 11 in the country fulfills a very prominent gap in the agricultural education and training environment of the country. Agricultural scientists are generally trained at Agricultural Faculties of Universities, Agricultural Technicians are trained at Technicons, while farmers, farm managers and agriculturalists are mainly trained at Colleges of Agriculture.
- Agricultural scientists are trained at graduate level (B. to PhD) at universities, while Technicians are Diplomats or graduates (B. to D.Tech) from Technicons. Colleges of Agriculture present Higher Certificate (2 years) or Diplomas (3 years). Faculties of Agriculture at universities and Colleges of Agriculture have in general, very well equipped practical infrastructures, while the Technicons make use of farms and collaboration with the agricultural industry for their experiential learning mode of tuition.

Summary

In summary it can be claimed that Elsenburg is geared to cope with the demands from the agricultural industry regarding human resource development and that it still do justice to its long and creditable track record as an agricultural training institution over 104 years.

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