

# Driving Change

The story of the South Africa Norway  
Tertiary Education Development  
Programme

EDITED BY Trish Gibbon

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The Story of the South Africa Norway Tertiary  
Education Development Programme

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**AFRICAN  
MINDS**

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African Minds  
4 Eccleston Place, Somerset West, 7130, Cape Town, South Africa  
info@africanminds.co.za  
www.africanminds.co.za

Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET)  
House Vincent, Ground Floor, Wynberg Mews, 10 Brodie Road, Wynberg, 7800, South Africa  
Telephone: +27 (0)21 763 7100  
Fax: +27 (0)21 763 7117  
E-mail: chet@chet.org.za  
www.chet.org.za

Royal Norwegian Embassy in Pretoria  
Ozmik House, 165 Lynnwood Road, Brooklyn, Pretoria, South Africa  
Tel: +27 (0)12 364 3700  
Fax: +27 (0)12 364 3799  
E-mail: emb.pretoria@mfa.no

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# Contents

Acronyms	iv
About the authors	vi
The editorial group	ix
Preface	xi
<i>Introduction</i>	
<i>Trish Gibbon</i>	1
<i>Chapter 1</i>	
Promoting South African reform objectives through development cooperation <i>Nasima Badsha</i>	9
<i>Chapter 2</i>	
The Norwegian perspective <i>Inger Kristine Stoll</i>	29
<i>Chapter 3</i>	
The role of the SANTED Secretariat: Riding the development cooperation bicycle, hands on and hands off <i>Trish Gibbon</i>	47
<i>Chapter 4</i>	
Supporting and enhancing the academic project: Improving student throughput and success within an equity framework <i>Colleen Howell</i>	61
<i>Chapter 5</i>	
Multilingualism for teaching and learning <i>Pamela Maseko</i>	79
<i>Chapter 6</i>	
Challenges relating to the establishment of comprehensive universities in the South African higher education sector <i>Martin Oosthuizen</i>	103
<i>Chapter 7</i>	
Cross-border collaboration in the Southern African Development Community countries <i>Fazela Haniff and Trish Gibbon</i>	127
<i>Conclusion</i>	
Learning from experience: Summing up the impact of SANTED and its legacies <i>Robert Smith</i>	145
<i>References</i>	162

# Acronyms

ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
ALS	African language studies
AVU	African Virtual University
BATT	Broad Academic Task Team
BESSIP	Basic Education Sub-Sector Improvement Programme
CEPD	Centre for Education Policy Development
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CHED	Centre for Higher Education Development
CPID	Centre for Planning and Institutional Development
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DoE	Department of Education (South Africa)
DUT	Durban University of Technology
DUT-UKZN	Durban University of Technology in collaboration with the University of KwaZulu-Natal
ECSA	Engineering Council of South Africa
FTE	full-time equivalent
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
GER	gross enrolment ratio
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HEQF	Higher Education Qualifications Framework
HEMIS	Higher Education Management Information System
HRD	Human Resources Division
LoLT	language of learning and teaching
LPHE	Language Policy on Higher Education
MDM	Mass Democratic Movement
MEP	Multilingualism Education Project
MRCC	Multi-disciplinary Research and Consultancy Centre (at UNAM)
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
NEPI	National Education Policy Investigation
NMFA	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NNMU	Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NPHE	National Plan for Higher Education
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NRF	National Research Foundation
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
NUFU	Norwegian Council of Universities' Committee for Development Research and Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PEDP	Primary Education Development Programme
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PIU	project implementation unit
PSC	project steering committee
RAU	Rand Afrikaans University
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RNEP	Royal Norwegian Embassy Pretoria
RU	Rhodes University
SACP	South African Communist Party
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SANorad	Southern Africa-Nordic Centre
SANPAD	South African Netherlands Research Programme on Alternatives in Development
SANTED	South Africa Norway Tertiary Education Development Programme
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SWAp	Sector Wide Approach
TEFSA	Tertiary Education Fund of South Africa
TELP	Tertiary Education Linkages Project
UAN	University Agostinho Neto
UDF	United Democratic Front
UDW	University of Durban-Westville
UEM	University Eduardo Mondlane
UFH	University of Fort Hare
UJ	University of Johannesburg
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UNAM	University of Namibia
UNCFSP	United Negro College Fund Special Programs
UNETPSA	United Nations Education and Training Programme for Southern Africa
UNIN	University of the North
UNISA	University of South Africa
UNITRA	University of the Transkei
UNIVEN	University of Venda
UNIZUL	University of Zululand
UNW	University of the North West
UPE	University of Port Elizabeth
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UWC	University of the Western Cape
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand

## About the Authors

**Nasima Badsha** is Chief Executive Officer of the Cape Higher Education Consortium (CHEC). Between 1997 and 2006, she was Deputy Director-General in the former Department of Education, where she headed the Higher Education Branch. She also served as Advisor to the Minister of Education from 2006 to 2009, and Adviser to the Minister of Science and Technology from 2009 to 2012. She has held various teaching, research and management positions in South African universities and has extensive involvement with policy development in higher education, including participation in the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) and membership of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE). Nasima has served terms on numerous boards, including those of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). Currently, she serves on the boards of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), the Tertiary Education and Research Network of South Africa (TENET) and the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR).

**Trish Gibbon** has worked as a writer, editor and freelance consultant in the field of higher education and has done considerable work in the area of higher education policy. Previously she was the Director of the South Africa Norway Tertiary Education Development Programme (SANTED) and is currently the Senior Director of Institutional Planning, Evaluation and Monitoring at the University of Johannesburg.

**Fazela Haniff** was educated at Ryerson University in human resources management and at the University of Witwatersrand (Wits) in higher education management. She is the Corporate HR Consultant at Gotel Communications in Yola, Nigeria. Previously she was Director of the Wits International Office where she was also the former President of the International Education Association of South Africa (IEASA), and former

Chair of IEASA's Directors Forum. She has contributed to the *International Encyclopedia of Education*, *The Handbook of Practice and Research in Study Abroad: Higher Education and the Quest for Global Citizenship*, and the *Mail & Guardian* book on South African women. She received the award for Exemplary Leadership of an IEASA President in 2010 and established the Pedagogy of Action in South Africa for the University of Michigan.

**Colleen Howell** is Director: Institutional Research in the Institutional Planning Division at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). From 2008 to 2010 her portfolio included managing the second phase of SANTED at UWC. Before moving into the Institutional Planning Division she worked as a researcher in the Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE) at UWC, with her research interests strongly orientated to addressing issues around equity and diversity in higher education, and the building of inclusive education and training systems. She has published on these issues and contributed to a number of national policy initiatives, including as the National Co-ordinator of the National Commission for Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET). She presently serves on the executive of the Southern African Association of Institutional Research (SAAIR).

**Pamela Maseko** is a senior lecturer in the African Language Studies Section of the School of Languages, and the former Coordinator of the South Africa-Norway Tertiary Education Development (SANTED) Multilingualism Project at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa. She holds a PhD on the intellectualisation of African languages. Her other research and teaching interests include applied language studies, and language policy and planning.

**Martin Oosthuizen** is Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning at North West University. Previously, between 2005 and 2011, he served as Senior Director for Planning and Institutional Development at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) in Port Elizabeth. In this capacity he was responsible for the management of the South Africa Norway Tertiary Education Development Programme



(SANTED) Project at NMMU. He has been extensively involved in national and institutional projects related to standards, quality assurance and qualifications design in the South African higher education sector, and currently serves on the Higher Education Quality Committee as well as its Accreditation Committee. He serves as an international reviewer for the Quality Assurance Agency in Scotland and for the Oman Academic Accreditation Council. His research areas include theology and, more recently, quality assurance and academic planning in higher education.

**Robert (Bob) Smith** is the former Director of LINS, the International Education Centre at Oslo University College. During his time in Norway he and his colleagues conducted over 400 consultancy assignments for the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) and other agencies. Prior to this he spent twelve years in African universities and was the first Dean of Education at Unibo, now the University of the North West in South Africa. He also spent considerable periods of time at the Institute of Education in London and at the University of Bristol (where he was responsible for a link programme with Pakistan and other international activities). In addition to his Norwegian consultancy work he has undertaken assignments for the World Bank, UNICEF, DFID, Ireland Aid and various international non-governmental organisations. In 2004 Bob was awarded an MBE for services to international education.

**Inger K. Stoll** is Senior Adviser in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs dealing with European Affairs. She has worked in the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) and been posted to three Norwegian Embassies in Africa, where she was in charge of development cooperation. She has also worked as an institutional adviser to a South African government department. She served on several committees in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Bank, and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Her main areas of expertise are aid effectiveness and efficiency, aid policy and management, monitoring and evaluation, organisational development and training.

## The Editorial Group

**Nasima Badsha** is Chief Executive Officer of the Cape Higher Education Consortium (CHEC). Between 1997 and 2006, she was Deputy Director-General in the former Department of Education, where she headed the Higher Education Branch. She also served as Advisor to the Minister of Education from 2006 to 2009, and Adviser to the Minister of Science and Technology from 2009 to 2012. She has held various teaching, research and management positions in South African universities and has extensive involvement with policy development in higher education, including participation in the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) and membership of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE). Nasima has served terms on numerous boards, including those of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). Currently, she serves on the boards of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), the Tertiary Education and Research Network of South Africa (TENET) and the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR).

**Nico Cloete** is the Director of the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET), Extraordinary Professor of Higher Education at the University of the Western Cape, Visiting Professor at the Erasmus Mundus Masters Programme in Higher Education at the University of Oslo, and Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Cape Town. Previously he was involved in academic staff organisation as General Secretary of the Union of Democratic University Staff Associations of South Africa (1993/94) and President of the Wits Staff Association (1991/92). He served on the Minister's Advisory Council for Universities and Technikons. In 2010 he gave the opening keynote at the Congress of the European Consortium of Higher Education Researchers in Oslo. He has published widely in psychology, sociology and higher education policy. His latest book is *Higher Education and Economic Development in Africa*.

**Trish Gibbon** has worked as a writer, editor and freelance consultant in the field of higher education and has done considerable work in the areas of higher education policy. Previously she was the Director of the South Africa–Norway Tertiary Education Development Programme (SANTED) and is currently the Senior Director of Institutional Planning, Evaluation and Monitoring at the University of Johannesburg.

**Tove Kvil** is Senior Adviser in the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad). She has worked at Oslo University College at the Faculty of Education and at LINS, the International Education Centre at Oslo University College. She has also worked in the Ministry of Education and Research in the Department of Higher Education. Most of her career has been in schools, from primary to higher education, as a teacher in languages, mathematics and science and as principal (headmistress). In addition, she holds a degree in political science from the University of Oslo and an MBA from the University of Maryland. She has served on various international committees, including the Nordic Council of Ministers, the European Union and the World Trade Organization. Her main areas of expertise are education, higher education, education and development, organisational development, and aid policy and management.

**Robert (Bob) Smith** is the former Director of LINS, the International Education Centre at Oslo University College. During his time in Norway he and his colleagues conducted over 400 consultancy assignments for the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) and other agencies. Prior to this he spent twelve years in African universities and was the first Dean of Education at Unibo, now the University of the North West in South Africa. He also spent considerable periods of time at the Institute of Education in London and at the University of Bristol (where he was responsible for a link programme with Pakistan and other international activities). In addition to his Norwegian consultancy work he has undertaken assignments for the World Bank, UNICEF, DFID, Ireland Aid and various international non-governmental organisations. In 2004 Bob was awarded an MBE for services to international education.

## Preface

Reading through the manuscript of *Driving Change: The story of the South Africa Norway Tertiary Education Development Programme* has given me a lot of pleasure and invoked many positive memories.

The South Africa Norway Tertiary Education Development (SANTED) Programme is an example of useful and efficient cooperation which created worthwhile results. These outcomes were not necessarily without discussion and conflict, but followed a long-term strategy and ideas acknowledging the objectives of all parties involved.

In 1989/90 Norad, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, had formulated a new policy for its work: *Recipient Responsibility*. The idea was that the people in other countries might need financial support, but they were able to take care of themselves, and develop their own institutions, if they were given the chance. Norway felt that external forces (and donors) should not push their own ideas of development onto their partner countries. We tried to base our approach to development programmes on this principle in the following years. *Recipient Responsibility* gradually became a basis for most international development programmes, although there were occasional inconsistencies in the real world.

Another basis for Norwegian development assistance was that if we could create programmes that developed into benefits for all parties, it would lead to longer term cooperation and development for all sides participating. In our rapidly expanding world, I believe we all see how important this is, not the least for us sitting on the outskirts of the world. This view of mutual development does not apply only in terms of economics, but also for enlarging our view of the world, creating new contacts for future cooperation outside development programmes and giving a lift to our own culture. Cultural exchange is an important part of this.

In 1997 a Policy on the Transformation of Higher Education was adopted in South Africa, and a White Paper published. The year before

a paper on the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) plan had been issued, providing for stricter control of public expenditures in tough times. It was in this policy environment that Norway began its discussions with the South African authorities regarding support to higher education.

I was appointed Ambassador to South Africa in 1996 and I quickly found that it was not an ordinary country in development cooperation terms. It had already developed some long-term strategies, and had some outstanding leaders, both politically and administratively. It seemed a perfect match for our own development cooperation strategies.

Norway had a long and well established cooperation with higher educational institutions in South Africa, among them the University of Durban-Westville and the University of the Western Cape. So when the Embassy was approached by the Department of Education to establish a longer term cooperation for assisting them in the development of higher education, it was a pleasure to assist in the process.

But it was not readily accepted by everyone. It was argued that to get involved in higher education in a country with many poor people, and in need of basic things including basic education, was not right. But for a country with its ambitions clear, and policies in place for its own development programmes, there were no reasons for not cooperating in a programme we all saw would have great potential. Norway took the view that to develop and broaden higher education would be very important for the social and economic development of the New South Africa. Higher education institutions in Norway were also very active, creative and supportive.

It resulted in an outstanding example of how development cooperation can be executed, if the policies and intentions are good and seen to be to the long-term benefit of both sides. The programme lasted for ten years, but it will have a very long and far reaching influence on all the partners involved.

We still see a number of positive effects from the SANTED Programme. Among these several students from both countries have been on exchange studies, and still have contacts. Institutions on both sides benefit from common knowledge and contacts. It has definitely

enlarged our horizon. I was on a tour back to South Africa at the end of 2012 with a group of Norwegian youngsters and journalists. I was amazed at the reception we got from the institutions we visited and how strongly they wanted cooperation and contact to continue, not for financial reasons, but to keep in contact and ensure mutual progress.

As a final point I would like to stress how much has been learned from the SANTED experience by both donor and recipient, or rather among all the partners in this highly beneficial programme. The publication of this account of SANTED is intended to make sure that what has been learned can be shared as widely as possible for the benefit of all engaged in education.

Per Ø. Grimstad  
Former Director of Norad  
and former Norwegian Ambassador to South Africa  
Oslo, February 2014

*This book is dedicated to the memory of Derrick Young,  
founding director of SANTED, who served the programme  
with the same warm humanity, humour and dedication  
that he brought to his many academic, political and social engagements.  
One of the few people in the world who chased wine with beer.*

# INTRODUCTION

*Trish Gibbon*

This book tells a story that exemplifies a basic law of physics, known to all – the application of a relatively small lever can shift weight, create movement and initiate change far in excess of its own size. It tells a story about a particular instance of development cooperation, relatively modest in scope and aim that has nonetheless achieved remarkable things and has been held up as an exemplar of its kind. It does not tell a story of flawless execution and perfectly achieved outcomes; it is instead a narrative that gives some insight into the structural and organisational arrangements, the institutional and individual commitments, and above all, the work, intelligence and passion of its participants, which made the South Africa Norway Tertiary Education Development (SANTED) Programme a noteworthy success.

It was because of this success that the idea of writing up the SANTED experience was first mooted. Here was an example of development cooperation that might contain something valuable to be shared with others working in this arena. To do that, however, meant that it had to be subject to a process of analysis and reflection, best captured in writing by those who had been most intimately involved in the conceptualisation, management and execution of the programme. The Royal Norwegian Embassy in Pretoria enthusiastically supported the book-writing project and provided the funds to enable its realisation.

Those who will take most interest in this book will be readers who are involved in setting up similar forms of cooperation or partnership through their governments, philanthropic organisations or foundations,



and those who are on the ground and take on the responsibility for delivering the desired outcomes. The SANTED Programme<sup>1</sup> focussed on higher education development but in its forms and modalities it may have aspects of interest to readers working in quite different fields.

In the first two chapters, Nasima Badsha and Inger Stoll set out the circumstances that gave birth to this programme and the careful negotiations that established the primary terms of the agreement between Norway and South Africa. It was a time of tremendous upheaval and change in South Africa, but also a time when the hazy euphoria that accompanied the first democratic elections of 1994 was clearing to reveal the sharp outlines of what still needed to be tackled from the disastrous legacy of apartheid in order to make real the dream of a just society. This was the necessary, but far less romantic side of the South African miracle, and these two chapters, written from the perspectives of South Africa and Norway, tease out the hard choices to be made. Most telling in this respect was Norway's clear position that it was willing to support development of the higher education system when many others considered this a luxury in the face of the myriad other social problems that required attention. With this commitment established, there were still questions to be settled: what should be supported and on what grounds, what were the policy imperatives, what were the responsibilities of the government, and how could the programme complement these with the limited resources available? Fortunately, the two parties were in accord over most things although they had to debate the choice of individual institutions that would benefit from the programme within the broad designation of 'historically disadvantaged'. In this debate, readers will recognise an old development chestnut: do you offer support to the neediest and probably the weakest institutions in the group, or do you place resources (counterintuitively) where there is an already achieved level of capacity? The tale told here is fascinating, not only for what it reveals of the process of negotiation, but for the sense conveyed of a dynamic unfolding of developments even as discussions took place.

The other issue addressed in Chapters 1 and 2, and in the succeeding chapter on the role of the SANTED Secretariat, is the organisational structure adopted and the process for managing and monitoring the

many projects that comprised the programme. Again, although this is a less than glamorous topic, there are clear indications of learning from past mistakes and making smart choices that helped to achieve desired outcomes.

The initial agreement was for the SANTED Programme to run for five years, from late 2000 to 2005, at which time it would be reviewed by an external panel. The very positive recommendations of the 2005 review led Norway to agree to a further five-year extension of the programme to 2010. The second part of the book focuses on the projects undertaken under the three big thematic areas embraced by the SANTED Programme. The emphasis here is on the projects in the second phase (from 2006 to 2009/2010), but many of these were grounded in the set of projects activated in the first phase.

By the end of the SANTED Programme in 2010, it had project activities in sixteen universities spanning seven countries (including South Africa) in three different thematic areas (see the thematic grouping of the SANTED Projects in Table 1b). Of course, this could have been a recipe for disaster – too great a spread, both thematically and geographically – but it was not. The spread undoubtedly made for greater complexity in terms of administration, management and execution, but the clarity of purpose provided in the business plans for each project and the hands-on management described in Chapter 3 kept the programme pretty well on track and able to deal with moments of threatened derailment.

In Chapter 4, Colleen Howell gives an account of the projects that fell under the ‘Access, Success and Retention’ theme. After 1994, black students had nominal access to any university of their choice, but many did not meet the entrance requirements. By 2000, the gross enrolment rate (GER) in South African public higher education was only 13 per cent.<sup>2</sup> In terms of Martin Trow’s definition (Burrage 2010), it was an elite system in size, but not in composition. The majority of black students did not come from elite educational or economic backgrounds, and even those who gained access into tertiary studies found it difficult to succeed. Howell elaborates an important concept in this regard: for students to succeed, epistemological access, i.e. access to the intellectual

**Table 1a** Universities that participated in the SANTED Programme

UNIVERSITIES IN PHASE 1 2000–2005	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University of Durban-Westville (UDW)</li> <li>• University of Fort Hare (UFH)</li> <li>• University of South Africa (UNISA)</li> <li>• University of the Western Cape (UWC)</li> <li>• University of the Witwatersrand (Wits)</li> <li>• University of Zululand (UNIZUL)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University Agostinho Neto (UAN)</li> <li>• University Eduardo Mondlane (UEM)</li> <li>• University of Namibia (UNAM)</li> <li>• University of Zambia</li> </ul>
ADDITIONAL UNIVERSITIES IN PHASE TWO 2006–2010	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Durban University of Technology (DUT)</li> <li>• Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU)</li> <li>• Rhodes University (RU)</li> <li>• University of Johannesburg (UJ)</li> <li>• University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)</li> <li>• University of Venda (UNIVEN)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University of Botswana</li> <li>• University of Malawi</li> </ul>

**Table 1b** Projects undertaken under each thematic area

Theme 1 Access, Retention and Success	Theme 2 Capacity Building	Theme 3 SADC Collaboration
PHASE 1 2000–2005		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upward Bound (UDW)</li> <li>• Equitable Access through Enrolment Management (UWC)</li> <li>• Formative research on the access and retention projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building capacity in HR, finance and student administration (UFH)</li> <li>• Building capacity in HR, finance and student administration (UNIZUL)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEW project to build academic capacity (UNAM, UEM &amp; Wits)</li> <li>• University of Port Elizabeth and the Evelyn Hone College of Nursing</li> <li>• UNISA and UAN</li> <li>• ZAWECA (University of Zambia &amp; UWC)</li> </ul>
PHASE TWO 2006–2010		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SUKAR (UKZN)</li> <li>• Sakha Ngethemba (UFH)</li> <li>• Equitable Access, Retention and Success (UWC)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic profiles for comprehensive universities (UJ &amp; NMMU)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEW project to build academic capacity (UNAM, UEM, Wits &amp; University of Botswana)</li> <li>• UNISA &amp; UAN</li> <li>• ZAMANAWA (Universities of Zambia, Malawi, Namibia &amp; UWC)</li> <li>• Virtual Classroom (UNAM &amp; RU)</li> </ul>
PHASE TWO sub-theme: Multilingualism		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RU, UCT, UKZN–DUT, UNIVEN</li> </ul>		

and disciplinary discourses of the university, was just as important as formal access. In one way or another, the projects undertaken in this thematic area addressed the need to intervene in the teaching and learning process. The piloted interventions disrupted settled practices, brought new players into the arena, and drove teaching and learning to the forefront of the university stage. All three projects in this area left demonstrable structural change in their wake.

The following chapter (Chapter 5) deals with multilingualism which was, in effect, a sub-theme of the 'Access, Success and Retention' projects. As Pamela Maseko argues, another obstacle to successful learning for students in the system was the fact that for many of them, the language of instruction (English) was their second or third language, and their achieved levels of proficiency were not sufficient for the demands of university study. This is exacerbated in the context of the highly specialised vocabularies in which disciplines traditionally express their founding concepts. Some highly innovative work was done in this respect through the development of 'conceptual glossaries' that facilitated the development of conceptual understanding in the transition from one language to another. The work done in these projects can be seen as an attempt to translate multilingualism policy (at both national and institutional levels) into reality, and included the development of courses for English (or Afrikaans) speakers in the dominant indigenous language of the region. How could a student in a professional programme (nursing, education, pharmacy, journalism or law) hope to operate effectively without a basic grasp of the mother-tongue language of prospective clients, patients or learners? The net effect was a strengthening of the academic foundations of particular indigenous languages and a surprising flowering of research in these areas. As the projects unfolded, particularly at Rhodes University, academic staff came to see the importance of African languages in social and professional contexts, and to build this into the kind of graduate profile they aimed to produce.

What was probably the most intellectually challenging of the SANTED projects is described in Chapter 6. The objective here was to develop appropriate academic structures and programme profiles for two newly created 'comprehensive' universities which were the

products of a merger process bringing together in each instance, a traditional university and a 'technikon' (the South African equivalent of a polytechnic). Martin Oosthuizen gives an absorbing account of the rather fractured relationship between the policy intention that lay behind the creation of this new institutional 'type', and the unfolding outcomes and evidence of the project. In simple terms, the policy intention was to enable much greater student mobility and transfer (articulation) between different types of qualification through offering a comprehensive range of qualifications under a single institutional roof. It was also hoped that the project would clarify a distinct 'mission' for comprehensive universities that would establish them as a particular type of institution in a differentiated landscape, and further, that analysis of the academic programmes brought together in these institutions would contribute to the development of an integrated qualifications framework in place of the two separate frameworks that had governed qualifications in universities and technikons. On none of these matters did the project deliver findings that confirmed policy intentions; in fact, it would not be an exaggeration to say that they did the opposite. As Oosthuizen observes, the independence of the project was a distinct advantage:

[It opened] up opportunities for critical engagement and research that could and did challenge dominant assumptions and agendas. For instance, at a sectoral level, critical questions could be raised about naïve assumptions linked to articulation, the steering instruments that are necessary to enable differentiation, and the role of comprehensive universities in a differentiated system.

He goes on to argue that differentiation would be better driven by study and research field concentration rather than by notions of institutional 'type'. And in relation to student transfer from one programme type to another, the conclusions of the case studies point to a need for increased programme differentiation 'to ensure that the curricular design of programmes is commensurate with their stated purpose'. In other words, if the academic goal of designing curricula appropriate

to the purpose of programmes is achieved (e.g. to prepare students for particular occupations or careers), then the policy goal of easy transfer and mobility across programmes is less likely to be met. Different programme purposes and knowledge orientations make for less mobility rather than more.

Chapter 7 examines a very different set of projects that were designed to promote inter-institutional collaboration in the region of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). These were arguably the most difficult of the projects to implement, and the story is one of mixed outcomes. The focus in most of these projects was on building academic capacity in universities in neighbouring countries. Progress was often slow and challenges arose that had not been anticipated. The key lessons here were to be flexible and willing to understand contextual issues that impinge on project delivery. Development cooperation cannot compensate for an absence of fundamental state support for higher education institutions, but projects did have some local impact at the institutional level when they were anchored in the institutions' leadership and were motivated by professional interests.

There are three important insights that emerge from the chapters devoted to the projects. The first of these is that the context of the high-level agreement arrived at between governments is not the context of the institutions where projects are to be implemented. Initially expressed at the highest level of abstraction, an act of translation has to take place to make goals and objectives meaningful in the contexts of implementation. Even for projects in the same thematic area, the context of each institution is different, as these chapters make abundantly clear. Objectives must make real sense in each of these contexts in order for them to be fully 'owned' by the beneficiaries. The second, very closely related insight, is that to be really effective, this translation must connect to the central strategic plans and intentions of the given institutions. The great danger with any kind of project-based intervention is that it will sit on the periphery, work for the duration of the funding, and leave no lasting impact on the core functions of an institution.

The third insight is this: just as important as the capacity to implement a project is the institutional capacity and willingness to learn from

project outcomes. This relates in a fundamental way to the experimental nature of the SANTED projects. In each of the thematic areas, problems were identified that needed to be addressed, but the solutions were not pre-given or obvious. One is tempted to say that if a solution is already known, a project is superfluous; all that is needed is implementation of the required strategy. This was not the case in the SANTED projects – what was likely to work had to be discovered through trial and error. In these circumstances, it becomes critical for the institution to take on what has been learnt and modify its own practices to accommodate this learning in a permanent way. There are wonderful examples of how this happened, especially in Colleen Howell's chapter on the 'Access, Success and Retention' projects.

The SANTED Programme left lasting legacies in almost all of the participating universities and this book is a tribute to the many, many individuals who contributed to its success, made it work, and in no small measure helped the universities to better serve the needs of their students.

Trish Gibbon  
January 2014

## Endnotes

1. SANTED was called a 'programme' to distinguish the collective from the individual projects that fell under its umbrella. This should not be confused, however, with sector or system-wide programmatic interventions. It was essentially project-based.
2. The National Plan for Higher Education (MoE 2001) gave a participation rate of 15 per cent for 2000, based on the 20- to 24-year-old group in the system. More recent calculations by Charles Sheppard, based on the official mid-year population estimates from StatsSA and audited Higher Education Management Information System head count enrolments for 2000, bring this down to 13 per cent.

## CHAPTER 1

# Promoting South African reform objectives through development cooperation

*Nasima Badsha*

The political transition in South Africa, from a regime which catered largely for the needs of a racial minority to a democratically elected government that needed to meet the needs and aspirations of all its citizens, posed huge challenges for every sector and institution of society. In education, the scope of the transformation agenda has proven to be daunting.

Policy research and development processes began in the early 1990s with the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) and various other studies led by the Mass Democratic Movement.<sup>1</sup> Not only was it necessary to dismantle racial barriers within and between institutions, it was necessary to establish a completely new platform for the governance of the education system. As a consequence, much of the first five years of the new government was spent in establishing the policy and regulatory framework for the system, including the establishment of the Higher Education Branch in the national Department of Education (DoE) and a Council on Higher Education (CHE), which was to serve as an independent advisory body to the Minister of Education.

The government's 1999 *Tirisano Call to Action: Mobilising citizens to build a South African education and training system for the 21st century* prioritised a review of the institutional landscape of higher education, which had been 'largely dictated by the geo-political imagination of apartheid planners' (Asmal 1999). However, the goal of reconfiguring the institutions of higher education incorporated many different objectives and alongside the necessary structural changes much work was needed



to increase and broaden access to and success in higher education in order to meet the development needs of individuals, the economy and society more broadly.

South Africa's reconstruction and development agenda attracted the attention of governments and agencies worldwide, especially those that had supported the anti-apartheid struggle and who now lined up to support the government's transformation goals. International support, including development cooperation, was welcomed by the South African government which recognised the importance of mobilising international assistance and solidarity towards its goal of building a more equitable, just and prosperous society.

This book is an in-depth reflection on one such experience of development cooperation in the area of higher education: the South Africa Norway Tertiary Education Development (SANTED) Programme. The programme spanned a ten-year period between 2000 and 2010 and emerged as an example of best practice in partnerships for higher education development.

This chapter will provide the policy context in South African higher education within which SANTED was located and will situate SANTED within the broader experience of development cooperation to higher education. It will outline the genesis and structure of the programme, its key areas of engagement, as well as its alignment with institutional and national policy priorities. Finally, some of the distinctive features of SANTED, to which its success has been ascribed, will be identified. These themes will be expanded elsewhere in chapters on particular interventions.

## **The higher education policy context in South Africa**

SANTED was conceptualised at a time of intense policy engagement in South Africa. The National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) (1995) had provided the policy framework which informed *White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* (1997). The *White Paper*, in turn, formed the policy basis for the Higher Education Act No. 101 (1997). Also in 1997, the South African and Norwegian

governments entered into a bilateral agreement to provide for the first phase (2000–2005) of development support to the Department of Education in support of its ‘objective of building a higher education system that is based on principles of social justice and equity and that has the capacity to operate effectively and efficiently to meet the educational, cultural and economic needs of a diverse society’ (Department of Education 1997).

This agreement was reached at a time when many development support partners and donors were still unwilling to support higher education systems in developing countries and reflected the Norwegian government’s understanding of the importance of higher education in social and economic development.

*White Paper 3* framed the policy environment for the entire period in which the SANTED Programme was active, and at the time of writing this chapter, it remains the key national government policy framework for informing the regulation of universities in South Africa. It could be argued that the *White Paper* has stood the test of time because it located South African higher education in the context of the dual challenge of redressing the legacy of apartheid and responding to the needs of higher education and the country in an increasingly globalised and knowledge-driven environment.

The three main roles of higher education, as identified by the *White Paper*, were:

1. *Human resource development*: the mobilisation of human talent and potential through lifelong learning to contribute to the social, economic, cultural and intellectual life of a rapidly changing society.
2. *High-level skills training*: the training and provision of person power to strengthen this country’s enterprises, services and infrastructure. This requires the development of professionals and knowledge workers with globally equivalent skills, but who are socially responsible and conscious of their role in contributing to the national development effort and social transformation.

3. *Production, acquisition and application of new knowledge*: national growth and competitiveness is dependent on continuous technological improvement and innovation, driven by a well-organised, vibrant research and development system which integrates the research and training capacity of higher education with the needs of industry and of social reconstruction. (Department of Education 1997:10)

Within the framework provided by the *White Paper* and the Higher Education Act, the newly established Higher Education Branch of the DoE confronted the challenges of policy implementation on a scale which was unparalleled in South Africa. Some of the priorities included the development and introduction of a new funding formula, a higher education management information system, a student financial aid scheme and a framework for student enrolment planning for the system. New governance arrangements were introduced at systemic and institutional levels, including the establishment of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) in 1998, the reconstitution of university councils in line with the Higher Education Act, the establishment of institutional forums and the approval of new institutional statutes. This was unfolding in a period of limited capacity within the DoE's Higher Education Branch and uneven capacity in the higher education institutions to manage complex change processes. In addition, with the formal removal of barriers to the access of black students to historically white institutions, new student enrolment patterns emerged which resulted in serious declines in student numbers at many historically black institutions, especially those located in the former homelands. The fall in enrolment impacted on already strained budgets and a number of the affected universities spiralled into crisis mode fuelled by leadership, governance and management shortcomings.

It should also be remembered that the country's macro-economic Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy framework that was adopted in 1996 and which focussed on maintaining government expenditure within stringent fiscal and monetary targets, placed serious constraints on the funding available from the national fiscus to support the transformation agenda in higher education in this period.

Although the report of the National Commission on Higher Education (1996) and *White Paper 3* had already pointed to the need for the fundamental restructuring of the institutional landscape in higher education, it was only with the release in 2000 of the Council on Higher Education's report *Towards a New Higher Education Landscape* that the debate on the rationale and basis for institutional restructuring gained momentum. The report provided the Minister of Education with far reaching advice, including on the reconfiguration of the landscape of higher education through institutional mergers and incorporations. The DoE subsequently released its National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) in 2001, in large measure in response to the advice received from the CHE. The NPHE addressed five key policy goals and strategic objectives:

1. To provide increased access to higher education to all irrespective of race, gender, age, creed, class or disability and to produce graduates with the skills and competencies necessary to meet the human resource needs of the country.
2. To promote equitable access and to redress past inequalities through ensuring that the staff and student profiles in higher education progressively reflect the demographic realities of South African society.
3. To ensure diversity in the organisational form and institutional landscape of the higher education system through mission and programme differentiation, thus enabling the addressing of regional and national needs in social and economic development.
4. To build high-level research capacity to address the research and knowledge need of South Africa.
5. To build new institutional and organisational forms and new institutional identities through regional collaboration between institutions. (Ministry of Education 2001:17-18)

It is this overall policy context that shaped the conceptualisation of SANTED from the perspective of the South African government and informed the projects that were formalised in the first business plan

for the five-year period which commenced late in 2000. As stated in the business plan the assistance from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) was to assist the South African government to address issues of 'access, retention, institutional capacity and cooperation' (SANTED 2000). This translated into five project components in this phase:

1. The University of Durban-Westville's Upward Bound University-Wide Project, which addressed the interface between schooling and university in order to improve the chances of access and success in higher education of students from disadvantaged schooling backgrounds.
2. The University of the Western Cape's Equitable Access through Enrolment Management Project, which aimed to support the university's strategies to improve the access and success of non-traditional students to enable it to plan and manage student enrolment growth in line with its mission and national goals.
3. Formative research on the above access and retention projects, which was to be undertaken with a Norwegian partner university.
4. The promotion of cooperation between South African higher education institutions and higher education institutions in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.
5. Institutional capacity building.<sup>2</sup>

The broad themes of access, retention and success; institutional capacity building; and regional cooperation were carried into the second phase of SANTED which covered the period 2006 to 2009.

Later in this chapter, a reflection will be provided on the negotiations that took place between the DoE and Norad, which led not only to the agreements captured in the November 2000 business plan, but also to establishing the basis for ongoing engagements between the two principal parties. However, to understand these engagements, it is necessary to explore the DoE's experiences with development cooperation, which, in addition to the prevailing higher education policy context, informed the genesis of SANTED.

## **Experiences of development cooperation**

Following the first democratic elections in 1994, the new government received development assistance from many countries, with much of it being channelled through the National Treasury under the broad umbrella of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). The DoE received extensive support in a number of areas including for its own organisational and capacity development and for policy development. It also negotiated grants for direct support to schooling at the provincial level. In higher education, support was received for a number of areas, including policy development (such as the work of the NCHE), capacity building, particularly of the historically disadvantaged institutions, and for student financial aid.

Particular priority was given to student financial aid, especially in the period 1994 to 2000 and, where possible, development assistance to higher education was directed to this area. As articulated in the NPHE, the Ministry was committed to 'ensuring that academically able students who do not have the financial resources are not prevented from pursuing higher education studies' (Ministry of Education 2001:42). The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) was established in 1996 and was administered by its precursor the Tertiary Education Fund of South Africa (TEFSA), which in 2000 was changed into a statutory body. In 1994, government's contribution to the fund was ZAR10.3 million, compared to donor contributions of ZAR60.1 million in the same year. Donor contributions peaked in 1997 with ZAR153.3 million coming into the fund (Ministry of Education 2001:44). Some of the donors to NSFAS included the European Union, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), United Nations Education and Training Programme for Southern Africa (UNETPSA), Irish Aid, Department for International Development (DFID) and the Swiss government. However, by 2000, the government's contribution of ZAR437.4 million far exceeded the donor amount of ZAR27.5 million (Ministry of Education 2001). There can be little doubt that the NSFAS has been the most successful (individual) redress intervention, and it has allowed large numbers of financially disadvantaged students to access

higher education. The data presented here also demonstrate that the DoE was able to draw effectively on donor funding to build the NSFAS in the early years, allowing the government the opportunity to budget incrementally for significant increases to its own annual contributions. The NSFAS has grown considerably and in the 2012/2013 financial year, ZAR5 billion was available from the fiscus alone for loans and bursaries for university and further education and training college students.

In the post-1994 period, the Tertiary Education Linkages Project (TELP), funded by USAID, was a major intervention which spanned the period between 1995 and 2006. It was broadly intended to contribute to increasing access to and the quality of higher education for disadvantaged communities through the strengthening of the capacity of the historically disadvantaged universities. The project was governed by USAID, the vice-chancellors of the 17 universities and technikon<sup>3</sup> deemed to be historically disadvantaged, and the DoE. The vice-chancellors were central to the identification of the focal areas for TELP, which included curriculum, research, staff, student, management and administrative development. The management of the project was contracted to the United Negro College Fund Special Programs (UNCFSP), which was largely led by staff from the United States, especially in the early phase. Approximately USD50 million was allocated to TELP for projects in South Africa, for administrative overheads of the UNCFSP and for project costs relating to the involvement of partner US universities affiliated to the UNCFSP.

TELP was conceptualised at a time when the DoE's Higher Education Branch was in its infancy and pre-occupied with other urgent matters. This meant that much of the early negotiations with USAID took place without the full involvement of the DoE and the agenda was largely set by the vice-chancellors. This resulted in a somewhat 'arm's length' relationship between TELP and the DoE, and meant that the DoE had relatively little influence in shaping project priorities or spending, especially in its first phase. Efforts were nevertheless made in the second phase of TELP to forge better synergies with the DoE's priorities. However, by this time, the governance and organisational arrangements in TELP were well entrenched and the DoE had limited

success in influencing TELP's interventions. It is worth noting that USAID and the contractor, UNCFSP, were both open to negotiating with the DoE to shift some of the priorities within the constraints of the operational and legal framework of TELP. Interestingly, some of the vice-chancellors resisted change, presumably as it might have impacted on their allocations.

The DoE had a number of concerns about the focus areas of TELP, some of the implementation modalities and, in some instances, the lack of sufficient accountability on the part of some of the beneficiary universities and technikons. One of the central concerns at the time was that resources were being channelled to some universities that had very little capacity to benefit from the investment. The DoE also wanted to see a greater focus on assisting the institutions to respond better to the new enrolment and other planning processes that were being introduced at the time. Some gains were made in this area, but the DoE continued to have reservations about the use of 'once-off' workshops for capacity building.

While a systematic reflection of the achievements and shortcomings of TELP is well beyond the scope of this chapter, there can be little doubt that some institutions, such as the former Peninsula Technikon, did draw significant benefit from TELP. This has been ascribed by some observers to the commitment of the institutional leadership (particularly the vice-chancellor) to capacity building, and the existence of well-functioning administrative, financial and management systems. Individual staff members also benefited from the training opportunities that were made available, especially at the partner US institutions.

The TELP experience undoubtedly influenced the way in which the DoE approached the negotiations with the Norwegian partners (Norad and the Norwegian Embassy in Pretoria), both in the conceptualisation of SANTED and in setting the framework for ongoing deliberations. From the outset, there was a determination on the part of the DoE to do things differently; in particular, to seek a better balance between the role of the DoE in shaping and monitoring the programme and respecting the autonomy of institutions to oversee implementation.

In the post-apartheid period, there were also a number of other



substantial development cooperation-funded initiatives in higher education. The Dutch, for example, focused support on the holistic development of a single institution, the former Technikon Northern Gauteng. While the DoE was supportive of this initiative and recognised its potential, it had no direct involvement in the project. The South African Netherlands research Programme on Alternatives in Development (SANPAD) has been a highly successful initiative that has supported research capacity building since 1997.

The DoE played an important role in shaping the European Union-funded project for building the capacity and holdings of the libraries of the historically disadvantaged universities. Good working relationships were forged between the key partners, the EU delegation in Pretoria, the DoE, the British Council (which was appointed as the implementing agency), and the beneficiary universities. While much of the energy of this project was absorbed in meeting the complex rules and regulations of the EU, especially for the procurement of library books and other resources, the project goals were clearly defined by the needs of the institutions, and largely met.

There were also many examples of development assistance grants which enabled the DoE to undertake various policy investigations, often with the assistance of international consultants and other experts.

## **Negotiation of the development cooperation agreement and setting up the SANTED Programme**

The South African government valued its relationship with Norway, which was rooted in the Norwegian government's support to the anti-apartheid struggle over many years. While this history set the very positive tone for the negotiations, as did the explicit commitment to joint agenda setting, it became clear that some work was nevertheless needed to understand each other's priorities and objectives, and to build trust and joint ownership of SANTED.

An early decision was taken to offer support directly to selected higher education institutions. No provision was to be made for support to the DoE or any of its entities, such as the CHE or NSFAS. However,

Norad was explicit in its desire to ensure that the institutional-level interventions would be in line with the objectives and priorities of the DoE, and that this would be entrenched in SANTED's governance arrangements.

### *Selecting institutions*

The next step was to arrive at a decision on which institutions to support.

Norwegian support to South African higher education was not new. There was therefore a request from Norad to provide support at universities where it had already established relationships. The University of Durban-Westville (UDW), University of the Western Cape (UWC) and the University of the North (UNIN) were earmarked for support. While the DoE was sympathetic to this history, there was, at the same time, a desire for flexibility in the choice of institutions.

The DoE was comfortable with the inclusion of UWC and UDW, but did not support the participation of UNIN, which at that time was experiencing serious governance, leadership and management problems and would not, in the DoE's view, have been able to manage effectively or even benefit from a significant donor-funded project. The Norwegian delegation nevertheless decided to visit UNIN to make its own assessment. Sadly, the matter resolved itself as there was no capacity at UNIN to receive the delegation, let alone engage in discussion about potential project support.

The DoE then proposed the inclusion of the University of Fort Hare (UFH) in the initiative. This suggestion was not initially well received by Norad as Fort Hare, at that stage, was only just emerging from a serious leadership and management crisis of its own and the Norwegian delegation was rightly concerned that, like UNIN, Fort Hare would not be a viable partner. However, the DoE was determined that the time was right to secure support for the building of administrative and managerial capacity which was central to the turnaround strategy of the Fort Hare leadership headed by the newly appointed Vice-Chancellor Derrick Swartz, a highly respected academic with excellent standing in the broader community. Systems were clearly lacking at Fort Hare, but

the political will to embrace change was apparent and it was on that basis that agreement was reached to make a significant investment in the revitalisation of the university. The DoE was fully cognisant of the risks involved in this decision and, from the outset, took steps to complement the SANTED activities with targeted support, and closely monitored developments at the university. Similar arguments were made to include the University of Zululand (UNIZUL) in the first phase of SANTED and the University of Venda (UNIVEN) in the second phase, and they subsequently became part of the programme.

### *Selecting themes*

Reaching agreement on the themes to be supported was relatively easy, especially given the commitment of Norad and the Norwegian Embassy to support the DoE's transformation agenda for higher education.

In the first instance, the DoE looked to SANTED for targeted support to help achieve a number of its key objectives.

The Higher Education Branch in the DoE viewed SANTED as an important vehicle to provide earmarked support to the selected historically disadvantaged universities in order to strengthen, amongst other things, their core administrative and financial management policies and systems, and to improve the quality of teaching and learning provision. As stated in the business plan 'the institutional projects aim to strengthen institutions by helping them to translate critical aspects of their strategic and/or business plans into reality' (SANTED 2000:2).

Over the years, all three universities had received considerable redress funding from the DoE over and above their regular subsidy. However, much of this additional funding was used by these universities to meet pressing debt obligations and to supplement budgets in essential areas, such as salaries and maintenance. This meant that there was little left for building the capacity which was so necessary if these institutions were to stabilise and become more sustainable. It was therefore particularly significant that, through SANTED, the DoE, in close consultation with the universities, was able to earmark resources for the identified capacity-building initiatives. The DoE was also able, through the

SANTED office, to monitor progress and hold the leadership at these institutions accountable for the effective use of the grants. The close connections and inter-relationship between the DoE, the SANTED office, and the institutions proved to be one of the key features of the programme and contributed significantly to successful delivery. The SANTED contribution to capacity building also complemented the recapitalisation funding that was later received by these institutions as part of the restructuring process of the DoE. Furthermore, the capacity which was built through SANTED assisted the institutions to use the recapitalisation funding more effectively.

Following the early discussions which took place with UDW and UWC about areas that they wished to prioritise for potential support from SANTED, it became clear that the issue of enhancing student access and retention was a recurring theme, and this resonated with the policy objectives of the DoE. This theme became a key thread throughout the life of SANTED, although necessary shifts were made in response to the changing context and the best practice which emerged in the earlier phase. This will be discussed in Chapter 4.

As outlined above, it was agreed that SANTED's resources (in the first phase) would be prioritised to drive capacity development at UFH and UNIZUL and to enhance student access and retention at UDW and UWC. But, both the Norwegians and the DoE wanted to use the grant to explore new ground. It soon emerged that the parties shared two interests. The first was to find ways to expand the reach of SANTED into SADC. Norad was no stranger to the region and in alignment with Norway's development cooperation priorities in southern Africa, it was open to promoting higher education in the SADC region. On the South African side, the *SADC Protocol on Education and Training* had been ratified by the Parliament of South Africa in February 1999 and the South African government's main contribution to the Protocol was to enable a growing number of SADC students to study in South Africa by treating them as 'home students' for subsidy purposes. However, few resources were available to promote collaboration between South African universities and universities in the rest of the region. This was to become a significant area of engagement for SANTED and straddled the

full duration of the programme (see Chapter 7). From the outset, both parties recognised that this was a unique opportunity to pilot activities in an area in which there was limited institutional experience.

The second area of joint interest was to explore ways in which SANTED could be used to strengthen links between South African and Norwegian academics. From the outset, it was understood that, in the course of time, development cooperation between Norway and South Africa would be replaced by other forms of bilateral relations, which in the area of higher education and research would be based on knowledge partnerships. It was therefore important to use initiatives such as SANTED to build sustainable partnerships as bridges to future bilateral cooperation arrangements. It was with this in mind that the Formative Research Project was conceptualised to understand what facilitates or obstructs successful outcomes of planned change. The intention was that researchers from the universities of Bergen, Western Cape and Durban-Westville would jointly work to undertake the formative evaluation of the access and retention interventions, and use this as a basis to reflect on project implementation, draw lessons for higher education, and advance knowledge of policy implementation and organisational change. Although this component yielded useful institution-specific findings, it was probably the weakest in SANTED and failed to generate any substantial systemic outcomes, and an early decision was taken to abandon the project. Despite this setback, within the larger framework of SANTED, lasting relationships have been established between researchers in the two countries.

In the second phase of SANTED, two new areas were added. The first was programmatically located under the institutional capacity-building theme. It was an ambitious and innovative collaborative project to assist two newly established comprehensive universities, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) and the University of Johannesburg (UJ) 'to address the development of a new academic structure and new curricula for comprehensive universities' (DoE 2006:8). Both NMMU and UJ had been established through mergers of traditional universities with technikons and were designated as 'comprehensive' universities. This work provided the space to pilot new approaches and possibilities that

could, in turn, inform curriculum development at other comprehensive universities.<sup>4</sup> The project is elaborated upon in Chapter 6.

The second new area was multilingualism (see Chapter 5). This project was intended to provide institutions with the opportunity to explore multilingual approaches to teaching and learning which could enhance student success. This new project area resonated with the need expressed by institutions to give practical effect to their language policies. It was also an area of common interest amongst researchers in Norway and South Africa, and was therefore seen as an opportunity to stimulate academic research into multilingualism in higher education.

### *Selecting organisational structures*

There was much discussion about the best institutional location for the programme. Initially Norad was keen that the organisational structure for SANTED reside within the DoE to ensure optimal ownership by the Department. While the DoE had no in-principle objection to this proposal, it was acutely aware of the likely constraints that this would impose on the programme. In particular, the programme would be required to comply with the procurement, employment and other policies and administrative procedures of the DoE, which were not sufficiently flexible nor nimble to support the efficient and timely implementation of a donor-funded initiative. The DoE was also keen to secure strong ownership of the programme by the participating universities and to enable institutional autonomy in the implementation of projects and felt that these objectives would be better served if the programme was located at arm's length from government.

In the light of these arguments it was agreed that the programme should be located outside of the DoE and the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD) was selected as the implementing agency for SANTED, based on its demonstrated track record of managing other donor-funded projects on behalf of the DoE. While the CEPD had good financial and other management systems in place, it had relatively little experience of working in higher education. Most of its focus was in the area of schooling.

It was therefore particularly important for the DoE to retain ownership and overall responsibility for the programme and this was formalised through the Director of its Management Support Directorate, Dr Sanette Boshoff. The DoE also took the lead in identifying the first Director of SANTED, the late Mr Derrick Young, who was seconded to SANTED from the University of the Witwatersrand. He came with a wealth of knowledge and experience of the higher education sector honed from his work as an academic and through active involvement in the development of higher education policy within the democratic movement. He was highly respected within the sector, as were the directors who succeeded him. Although administratively located in the CEPD, the SANTED directors managed the programme and were directly accountable to the DoE.

## **What was distinctive about SANTED?**

Two major independent reviews of SANTED have been conducted (by Hansen, Africa and Boeren in 2005; and Smith and Cross in 2009), numerous project reports have been compiled, and there have been many opportunities for SANTED stakeholders to meet and reflect on challenges, achievements and setbacks, including the Close-out Conference in September 2010. The overall consensus is that SANTED has been astonishingly successful in avoiding many of the problems which are known to bedevil large-scale development cooperation projects. As stated by Smith and Cross (2009:6) in the Mid-term Review of SANTED II:

The effectiveness of the programme may be measured by the extent to which objectives were achieved, whether SANTED was critical to this achievement and whether the changes brought about by the programme are sustainable. On all these measures SANTED II can be judged an effective intervention.

A number of key factors contributed to the success of SANTED. These are summarised below and will also be elaborated on in subsequent chapters.

- Projects were well aligned with the policies and priorities of the South African government and beneficiary universities in South Africa and the region. Examples of this alignment have already been provided in this chapter.
- There was strong ownership and leadership of SANTED at all levels, i.e. the political principals in both countries; the Norwegian Embassy in Pretoria (including successive Norwegian ambassadors to South Africa who embraced the programme); the senior management of the DoE and Norad, who took joint responsibility for the governance of SANTED, and who convened for the annual programme meetings; the Management Support Directorate of the Higher Education Branch of the DoE which assumed overall responsibility for programme implementation; the director and staff of the SANTED office at the CEPD; and vice-chancellors and project staff at participating institutions.
- There were committed and identifiable champions for the programme at all of these levels. Of relevance also was that many of these champions were in office for much of the life of SANTED. This was particularly important in relation to the staff in the DoE who held the historical memory of the programme.
- Throughout its entire period of operation, SANTED was supported by strong organisational arrangements, including highly credible professional leadership within the SANTED office. Each of the successive directors of SANTED were highly respected leaders in higher education and came to the programme with a wealth of experience and knowledge of the sector. The SANTED office maintained close contact with projects through its monitoring and evaluation framework which included regular institutional visits.
- SANTED actively promoted networks and learning across the participating institutions and beyond. This took different forms, including seminars and meetings of staff from different institutions working in the same thematic areas, and the dissemination of best practice through reports and conference presentations.
- The programme arrangements were sufficiently flexible to allow



for changes in focus or direction if this was required. Problems at institutional level tended to be detected early on, especially given the close contact between the SANTED office and project staff. This meant that, with the support of institutional leaders, strategies could be developed to remedy shortcomings. Where there was little prospect of progress, decisions were taken at the Annual Programme Meeting to curtail initiatives, as was the case with the Formative Research Project in the first phase of SANTED.

- Unlike many development cooperation projects, SANTED was not bogged down by onerous and debilitating bureaucratic requirements. Both the Norwegians and South Africans recognised the need to account for the use of public funds, and agreements were reached to ensure that all projects were measured against clearly articulated objectives.

At a systemic level, and particularly for the DoE, the key legacy of SANTED was that it shaped the way in which the DoE approached other development cooperation partnerships. The lessons learnt from the SANTED experience allowed the DoE to be a more confident partner in negotiating and managing development cooperation agreements. The new strategies which evolved from SANTED were applied, for example, in shaping the grant provided by the Finnish government in support of the DoE's restructuring priorities (with emphasis on the provision of ICT infrastructure and capacity in newly merged institutions and quality assurance in the newly designated universities of technology) and the large-scale support received from the European Union to support the higher education sector to develop its policies and programmes for the prevention and mitigation of HIV and AIDS.

The success of the institutional projects, which are elaborated upon in other chapters of this book, attest to the SANTED legacy at individual institutions and the broader influence these projects had on the South African higher education system as a whole.

## Endnotes

1. The Mass Democratic Movement was an alliance of anti-apartheid groups formed in 1988, following restrictions imposed by the apartheid government on the United Democratic Front and other anti-apartheid organisations.
2. These were located at the universities of Fort Hare and Zululand.
3. Technikons were formerly institutions which offered technical and vocational qualifications at higher education level. They were re-designated as universities of technology in 2003 as part of the overall restructuring of the institutional landscape of higher education in South Africa.
4. These new institutions, as a consequence, offered a range of programmes that spanned the vocational, professional and general academic, and qualifications that ranged from diplomas to doctorates. There were no precedents for this institutional type in South Africa.



## CHAPTER 2

# The Norwegian perspective

*Inger Kristine Stoll*

Development cooperation is not an easy terrain in which to work.

The international development agenda is in constant change, from an approach with donors and recipients of aid, to an approach based on inclusive development partnerships. On the Norwegian scene aid has been replaced by development cooperation and subsequently included as an instrument for Norwegian foreign policy interests. This chapter argues that Norway has been at the forefront regarding the international development agenda, and that SANTED was a remarkable example of realising Norwegian policy interests, South Africa's own political interests and those of the participating institutions, as well as students' need for appropriate academic learning.

Features of the SANTED Programme that made it an example of best practice in international development cooperation include policy alignment, catalytic funds that provided room to manoeuvre in the higher education institutions, and people who wanted to use this space for redress and equity. The programme was guided by clear objectives and policy direction from management and champions at all levels, and flexibility for the individual institutions to follow their own development path (alignment to local priorities).

During the latter half of the 20th century Norway transformed from a relatively poor nation into a wealthy country. The wealth creation went along with a strong belief in an egalitarian society, equity and a fair distribution of the income derived from effective management of Norway's abundant natural resources. These values were embodied both

in its internal social relations and in its broader relations with the world beyond its borders. One manifestation of this was in the active support that Norway provided for organised resistance against the apartheid regime in South Africa, particularly in the area of education. Norway provided scholarships and support for the training of South Africans inside and outside the country. This was a humanitarian gesture, an act of solidarity and a political commitment to the liberation of South Africa. In the course of these difficult years, close ties were created between individuals, churches and civil society organisations, as well as between the South African liberation movement and successive Norwegian governments.

It was natural to build on these bonds after apartheid. Cooperation in training, education, exchange, research and institutional capacity building have taken, and still take place, with some regional and international spin-offs.

### **Recipient responsibility and the international agenda of development cooperation effectiveness**

Norwegian development cooperation was imbued with the values outlined above. Moreover, the idea of ‘recipient responsibility’ was a central element in its development policy. In the past decade, Norway, along with many other countries, has subscribed to the principles embodied in the international *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* (OECD 2005), but in many respects, the principles of Norwegian development cooperation can be seen to have anticipated the *Paris Declaration* by several decades. The *Paris Declaration* focuses on five key principles of effective development cooperation: (1) ownership by developing countries; (2) alignment with countries’ strategies, systems and procedures; (3) harmonisation of donors’ support; (4) managing for results; and (5) mutual accountability.

The understanding and implementation of these principles have varied and changed over time. The fourth in a series of high-level forums on aid effectiveness held in Busan in the Republic of Korea in December 2011 defined four shared principles to achieve common development goals:

(1) the ownership of development priorities by development countries; (2) focus on results; (3) inclusive development partnerships; and (4) transparency and accountability to each other (Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation 2011).

The *Paris Declaration* developed out of a donors' forum, but is now widely accepted as expressing the key principles and objectives, and differential commitments, for effective international development cooperation.

Did Norway live up to the intentions of recipient responsibility and the five principles in the *Paris Declaration* in the SANTED Programme of cooperation? This chapter intends to answer this question.

## Negotiations, issues at stake and critical success factors

### *SANTED aligned to South African and Norwegian policy priorities*

According to the Declarations of Intent of 1999 and 2004 agreed upon between the Kingdom of Norway and the Republic of South Africa, the overall objectives of the development cooperation were:

- consolidation of the democratic transition;
- cooperation in areas where the collaboration could result in long-term, self-sustaining, bilateral relationships; and
- strengthening regional integration and collaboration (through the utilisation of South African expertise in the region, added in 2004).

These objectives were to a large degree included in the individual development programme agreements between South Africa and Norway. How they were pursued in the context of SANTED will be discussed.

University and research cooperation was identified as a priority area in the development cooperation between South Africa and Norway after 2000. Norway expressed a commitment to support institutional capacity building in higher education and research, and to promote long-term bilateral relations between institutions, as well as regional institutional cooperation in the sector. These priorities must be understood in

the context of the long history of cooperation, the wish to maintain bilateral relations, Norway's long-time support to the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the political commitment of the Minister for Development Cooperation at the time, Hilde Frafjord-Johnson, who persuaded the Norwegian parliament to agree that 'Education is job number one'.

South African higher education policies and priorities were identified in the 1996 *New Policy Framework for Higher Education Transformation*, in the *White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* (1997), and in the subsequent Higher Education Act No. 101 (1997). These policy documents were the foundation for what was to become the South Africa Norway Tertiary Education Development (SANTED) Programme. In other words, the SANTED Programme was well embedded in the policies and priorities of both countries.

#### *Clear policy direction and ownership by the Department of Education*

The SANTED Programme was owned by the Higher Education Branch in the South African Department of Education (DoE) and managed by the deputy director-general of the Branch and her staff. An intense interest was taken in the programme by the senior staff who gave it the necessary attention and continuity, and provided consistent policy guidance and supervision. In-depth knowledge of the sector and its stakeholders was demonstrated by the leadership who were highly respected at all levels.

It was a huge advantage that the programme was embedded in the Branch and the higher education policy sphere of the DoE. This secured the alignment of the programme with key policy objectives. Other donor-funded programmes were often managed via the DoE's International Relations Directorate, and in some instances the shaping of these programmes was less firmly anchored in strategic policy than was the case with SANTED.

This is not a trivial point: Norway had direct contact with the institutional policy and implementation centre of the DoE as compared to other donors and this secured access for Norway to policy-makers in the

DoE as well as to the beneficiary institutions. On the other hand, Norway was seldom invited to meetings between the DoE and other donors, which in turn led to less harmonisation on Norway's part with other donors in the education sector. This cannot be seen as a disadvantage, as Norway gave higher priority to 'recipient responsibility and ownership' than to 'donor harmonisation' when or if these principles were not shared. In fact, Norway chose to take an active role in arenas that were led by the South African authorities, rather than to spend limited resources on donor-led forums. This was a matter of principle, but probably also influenced by Norway not being a member of the European Union.

### *From institutions to themes*

Towards the end of the 1990s when negotiating cooperation in higher education, Norway funded research projects at the universities of Fort Hare, the North, the Western Cape and Durban-Westville through the Norwegian Council of Universities' Committee for Development Research and Education (NUFU). NUFU focused on building research capacity through project-orientated collaboration between researchers in developing countries and Norway. NUFU did not support institutional capacity building in a broad sense. Hence, to find suitable ways and means to strengthen South African higher education institutions, a feasibility study was commissioned by the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Pretoria (RNEP) in 1999 for a complementary programme of institutional support aimed at the transformation of higher education in South Africa. The study suggested a programme with five major components (Kruse 1998):

1. capacity building of historically disadvantaged institutions through new partnerships between universities in South Africa;
2. institutional support programmes with the aim of assessing and strengthening the managerial and strategic capacities of particular universities, and supporting bridging programmes for disadvantaged individuals;
3. regional (SADC) networking and regional courses;



4. new innovative masters and/or bachelor courses; and
5. research capacity building.

In its response, the DoE suggested targeting a group of institutions for support and invited Norway to participate in the strengthening of the financial management capacity of six historically disadvantaged universities: the University of the North (UNIN), the University of the North-West, (UNW) the University of Transkei (UNITRA), the University of Zululand (UNIZUL), the Medical University of South Africa (MEDUNSA) and the University of Fort Hare (UFH). It was suggested that the Norwegian funds should contribute to rectifying some of the problems and irregularities in their systems and contribute to restoring the credibility of those institutions.

In the concomitant consultations between the DoE and the RNEP, it was agreed to include the universities of Durban-Westville and the Western Cape because of their involvement in the Norwegian-South African collaborative research programme (NUFU), and to limit the original number of universities. Four institutions (UNIN, UNW, UNITRA and UFH) were invited to submit proposals and the DoE, in consultation with the universities, prepared a consolidated project plan.

An appraisal of the proposed projects to be located in the four universities was submitted to the RNEP in March 2000. It expressed serious concerns about the inclusion of the universities of UNIN and UFH as their institutional capacity was considered too weak to manage donor-funded projects. It suggested the postponement of decisions about the funding of projects at these two universities until political guidance had been given about the future size and shape of higher education institutions in South Africa, expected later that same year. The appraisal did, however, recommend Norwegian funding of the Upward Bound Programme at Durban-Westville (UDW) and another access programme at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). It was further suggested that Norwegian funding should not be limited to UDW and UWC, but rather to establish a flexible funding mechanism whereby various institutions could apply and compete for project funds. Since the higher education sector was in 'a state of flux' (Kruse et al. 2000:43), a

*thematic* rather than an *institutional* approach was proposed. This strategy was adopted, and the agreement that was signed in November 2000 reiterated that the programme would focus on equity and redress, with three themes and five components.

The three themes were (1) access and retention of previously disadvantaged groups; (2) institutional capacity building of universities; and (3) regional cooperation (implementation of the SADC protocol on higher education). The five components consisted of:

1. the Upward Bound University-Wide Project at UDW;
2. the Equitable Access through Enrolment Management Project at UWC;
3. formative research on the access and retention projects;
4. institutional capacity building; and
5. promotion of cooperation between South African higher education institutions and higher education institutions in the SADC region.

The three themes were kept during the whole programme period with a shift in focus from access to retention and success in the second phase. Additional institutions were gradually included in the programme; in the first phase mainly weaker institutions, whilst the second phase included a mix of institutions with regard to institutional and academic capacity (see Table 1a on page 4).

### *Managing for results*

In the last years of the decade after 2000, the RNEP worked closely with the National Treasury on implementing the principles of *The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* where managing for results is a central element. The Treasury was introducing results-based management in government, but it had not ‘taken off’ in many departments at that time.

Both SANTED agreements specified a series of objectives at different levels: from the overall level of contributing to the restructuring, rationalisation and transformation of higher education in South Africa (Agreement of November 2000:5-7), to contributing to improved

retention and success rates in the higher education system; from building sustainable partnerships between South African universities and universities in other countries (Agreement of June 2006:9-10; Kruse 1998), to teaching and learning support and exchange programmes.

In the second agreement, Norway wanted to introduce indicators to track progress. This was not well received by the DoE, especially not in terms of overall programme indicators (Smith & Cross 2009) and the agreement was signed without indicators.<sup>1</sup>

The view of the DoE reflected a combination of three factors. First, the DoE expressed concern that SANTED could not be held responsible for broad outcomes and impact on the sector as the programme was a small intervention in the system as a whole. This was well understood on the Norwegian side which emphasised that SANTED would not be held accountable for overall sector outcomes and impact, only for its planned outputs. Norway's concern in this respect was to use an understanding of development trends in the sector as a basis for assessing results in a wider context. If development trends are not moving in the right direction, information about these trends can prompt reflection on the appropriateness and effectiveness of programme interventions and the chosen strategy.

Second, the DoE felt that the demand for programme indicators and targets was a bureaucratic demand from Norway.

Third, management for results requires a systematic application of statistics to development. From the Norwegian side it was not clear whether the resistance of the DoE stemmed from the absence of reliable sector data, or whether the DoE did not want to publish the data. Norway had only limited access to broad sector data from the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) operated by the DoE.

The RNEP did not see it as SANTED's responsibility to provide data on sector trends. Ideally an analysis of the programme in terms of wider sector trends would be provided by the DoE and included in the dialogue at the annual meeting. But only to a limited extent did the discussions in the annual meeting focus on development trends and sector outcomes.

As there was a demand by the Norwegian Parliament to focus on longer-term outcomes, the RNEP reported on sector trends to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs's Annual Budget to Parliament using other data than that received through SANTEDE.

### *Management structure – alignment with country systems and procedures*

The management structure was conducive to the programme's success. Some of the features that characterised the programme's management structure are outlined below.

#### *Governance of the programme*

In both phases of the programme, the governance structure for Norway's involvement was established by an international agreement (the Business Plan) between the Kingdom of Norway, represented by the Ambassador in Pretoria, and the Republic of South Africa, represented by the Treasury with the DoE as implementing agency.

The agreement stated that there would be an annual meeting to: review results and progress; approve the annual report and the certified statements of accounts; approve annual work plans and budgets for the programme and the thematic components; and discuss, recommend and/or take decisions on the programme and projects.

Four weeks prior to the annual meeting, a report, accounts, plan and budget were to be submitted by the DoE.

This annual meeting was the only regular meeting scheduled in the agreement. Decisions, however, were also made in writing by the parties between the annual meetings. Norway approved the themes and the institutions to be included in the programme in both phases. During the first phase Norway approved projects; in the second phase Norway approved each project concept, commented on the project business plan, but did not approve the latter document. The DoE initially wanted Norway to approve all projects including those in phase two and expressed a wish for co-management, but the RNEP decided to take a step back from project management, in line with recommendations of an administrative review of the RNEP, carried out in 2005 by the

Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), at the request of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA).

In spite of few formal decision-making structures that involved Norway, there were many meeting points, especially in the beneficiary institutions. Both SANTED directors took great care in inviting the DoE and the RNEP to events and meetings at the universities. This gave all parties adequate opportunities to meet the stakeholders and to understand the issues. This implied that continuous monitoring took place, which in turn contributed to trust and flexibility.

The documents for the annual meeting were as a rule written by the SANTED Secretariat, based on input from the institutions (reports, plans, accounts and budgets), as well as first-hand information from numerous field visits. Due to the complexity of the programme, they were rather lengthy documents. However, especially during the second phase, the reports had an analytical approach with a focus on reflection and learning, as well as outputs/results as opposed to activities.

#### *Organisational structure on the Norwegian side*

In 2000 Norad was an agency under the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA) with wide responsibilities for bilateral development cooperation. In countries with a Norwegian embassy, the responsibilities for development projects and programmes were normally delegated from Norad to the Embassy through annual letters of allocations and approval of a workplan.

The first SANTED agreement was signed by the Norwegian Ambassador to South Africa, with delegated authority from Norad. By 2006 the responsibility for bilateral cooperation was taken back to the NMFA, which again delegated the responsibility for bilateral development projects and programmes to the Embassy through annual letters of allocation and approval of a workplan. Norad's main role was now to provide technical advice to the NMFA and the embassies regarding bilateral and multilateral development cooperation. In both phases the Embassy had wide authority for monitoring a programme once the agreement was signed, with the responsibility to provide annual narrative and financial reports to headquarters.

Norad followed the SANTED Programme very closely, more than is commonly the case. This is mainly due to the continuity of Norad's advisers who knew the higher education sector both in Norway and South Africa. The advisers understood their role well, developed wide networks and provided the Embassy with good technical advice that was relevant to the South African context. Solid working relations were established between the Norad advisers and the SANTED Secretariat.

### *The Secretariat*

Although the RNEP initially was of the opinion that the DoE should manage the programme, it was agreed at an early stage that a third party would house the programme on behalf of the DoE. The Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD) was selected by the DoE to host the SANTED Secretariat as they had proven their ability to manage donor funds in other projects. In the contract between the DoE and the CEPD the latter was appointed to administer the funds and physically house the SANTED Programme management. The SANTED Secretariat was therefore located within the CEPD which played the role of fund administrator, while the Secretariat prepared budgets, plans and reports and performed all management, administration and coordination functions of the programme on behalf of the DoE. In practice the Secretariat was given the mandate for all tactical operations whilst the DoE made the strategic dispositions. The director of the Secretariat reported directly to the DoE and not to the CEPD.

CEPD was again chosen to host the programme during the second phase with the same functions as before.

The first SANTED Secretariat Director proved to be very capable with a solid understanding of the issues at stake. He established good processes and provided guidance to the institutions, and acted as a mediator between the institutions and the DoE. The same is to be said about the secretariat director in charge of phase two. The reporting requirements increased in the later stages of the programme as there were more results to show. The Secretariat delivered a thorough end-report after phase one, as well as analytical, results-based reports during phase

two. The other staff in the Secretariat were also capable, enthusiastic and very loyal to the cause of the institutions. These champions were critical to the programme's success.

At this point, a word must be said about this kind of structure vis-à-vis the *Paris Declaration*, which explicitly advises donors to avoid creating dedicated structures for the day-to-day management and implementation of development cooperation-financed projects and programmes, so-called parallel project implementation units (PIUs), where 'parallel' refers to having been created outside existing country institutional structures, and gives three typical features of parallel PIUs (OECD 2007):

1. They are accountable to the external funding agencies rather than to the country implementing agencies.
2. Most of the professional staff are appointed by the donor.
3. The salaries of PIU personnel often exceed that of civil-service personnel.

CEPD hosting the SANTED Secretariat was not the creation of a 'PIU'. The contract was approved by the RNEP the first time, but not the second time. There were no reporting lines between the SANTED Secretariat, and the RNEP, and no member of staff was contracted by Norway. Norway's approach to running the Secretariat was completely hands-off. The SANTED Secretariat was created by the South African government and not by the donor to act as a secretariat for the DoE and as a coordinating body for the implementing institutions.

#### *Disbursements*

There was one apparent 'anomaly' in the funding procedures related to disbursements. According to Norwegian policy, as well as the *Paris Declaration*, donor funds should follow the partner country's procedures. In South Africa funds should initially go from the RNEP to the Treasury's Reconstruction and Development Fund. Most of the Norwegian funds to South Africa were in fact channelled to the Treasury, but in the case of SANTED disbursements went from the RNEP to the CEPD, after the

request for funds had been sent from the DoE. The funds were reported in the DoE's annual report to Parliament, and considered as donations 'in kind'.

*Issues at stake for Norway: the overall objectives of the declarations of intent*

*Democratic transition*

SANTED was evaluated twice and scored high on the evaluation criteria. SANTED achieved a lot, and as such, gave Norway a chance to contribute to democratic transition. In the higher education sector Norwegian support helped open up opportunities for advancement for many university students through facilitating their access, retention and success, thus paving the way for their contributions to a new South Africa.

*Regional cooperation*

Norway and the other Nordic countries were staunch supporters of SADC. After the democratisation of South Africa, there were high expectations that South Africa would become an engine of development within the region, and that South African institutions would act as centres of excellence and nodes in regional networks. The expectation was that development cooperation would foster regional cooperation<sup>2</sup> with South Africa in a leading role, and this was expressed as an objective in the SANTED agreements and the declarations of intent for the cooperation between the two countries in 1999, 2004 and 2009.

Based on experience, knowledge and trust in various South African institutions the RNEP was a prime mover for establishing a Declaration of Intent on Partnerships in Africa (trilateral cooperation) between South Africa and the five Nordic countries in 2008.

Norway added funds to SANTED from the regional budget vote (in addition to the funds allocated to South Africa) to underline its intention to foster regional cooperation, but Norway's expectations proved to be unrealistic. Nonetheless, some small gains were made.

The SANTED Programme included several regional projects between institutions in South Africa, Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia



and Zambia. These projects worked well when they were anchored in the institutions' or institutes' leadership, were motivated by professional interest and had competent drivers. SANTED had a particular approach to institutional cooperation: a project must be wanted by someone, it needs to be driven by those who want it, and there must be something 'in it' for the participants.

A lesson learnt is that cross-border academic cooperation works best when the project is embedded in the institutions' strategy, (academic) priorities and plans, and provides for academic rewards to the participants.

Regional cooperation in Southern Africa has proven to be difficult and time-consuming. The SANTED-initiated forms of regional cooperation would probably have needed another ten years to become sustainable.

A third lesson is that the DoE, and most other South African government departments, do not have the capacity to extend their scarce resources outside the country. If funded, and if the cooperation is aligned to the participants' priorities and gives rewards to the stakeholders, academia seems to have some capacity for cross-border cooperation provided it has an extended time-horizon.

#### *Bilateral relations*

Norway had two concerns in 2000 that could not in the end be reconciled when it came to the choice of SANTED beneficiary institutions. On the one hand, Norway wanted to build on existing partnerships with four universities in South Africa; on the other hand Norway wanted to promote self-sustaining academic relations between individuals and institutions in both countries and feared that the inclusion of weaker academic institutions might not be conducive to longer-term relations. In addition Norway did not want to 'risk' subsidising academically weak institutions. This last point may be understood from the perspective of development optimism where it was expected that the transformation in South Africa would be swift, and that the need for development cooperation would be short term.

As discussed earlier, SANTED was not set up to cater for bilateral cooperation,<sup>3</sup> either as an objective or as a measure in the programme. An alternative vehicle was therefore set up to facilitate bilateral academic relations, which took the form of a research cooperation programme jointly funded by the Norwegian and South African governments. This programme is co-managed by the Norwegian and South African Research Councils, and all projects include researchers from both countries.

In retrospect, the combined portfolio of SANTED, the bilateral research programme, the NUFU research cooperation and various smaller projects have established a broad common ground and many arenas for cooperation in higher education and research between South Africa and Norway. An impact evaluation in five to ten years could establish the effects and the sustainability of this many-faceted cooperation.

#### *Other spin-offs*

This broad spectrum of cooperation in higher education and research has given opportunities for dialogue at all levels. The South African Embassy in Oslo and the Norwegian Embassy in Tshwane have both been deeply engaged in facilitating cooperation in higher education, and on both sides the relations have been a point of departure for bilateral relationships, knowledge and political capital.

There have been many encounters between ministers of education and research on both sides and every time the Norwegian Royals have travelled to South Africa they have visited institutions of higher education. According to a study (Wirak 2009), commissioned by Norad, there were 187 cooperative projects and activities in the higher education sector in 2009; 112 in research and 75 in higher education.

Another spin-off was the formation of the Southern Africa-Nordic Centre (SANORD). This is a network of 20 member institutions and a meeting place for academics and academic institutions in southern Africa and the Nordic countries, seeking to promote research for the development of technology in Africa. The association has organised conferences that address such topics as economic development, environmentally friendly technologies and education.

## Going beyond development cooperation

### *Framing Norway's views on development and political dialogue with South Africa*

For the Embassy, SANTED turned out to be the 'jewel in the crown', a highly appreciated gem in the Norwegian development portfolio in South Africa. In all phases of the programme, the Embassy was invited to visit universities, faculties and institutes, and was integrated into the closely woven SANTED network which brought together the DoE, the university leaders, staff and students, in South Africa and also in other countries in the region. This gave the Embassy staff invaluable insight into a range of South African academic, political, social and cultural issues in an extremely dynamic situation. The connections, experience and knowledge gained gave the Embassy a unique understanding of the South African development context. This, in turn, was an excellent foundation for the Embassy's reporting to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on political and development issues, and for framing Norway's views on development and political dialogue with South Africa.

### *Merging development policy and foreign policy*

In addition to the principles of 'recipient responsibility', of alignment with partners' systems, of managing for results and of accountability, the Norwegian 2004 *White Paper on Fighting Poverty Together* also emphasises the importance of 'the partnership for development'. This is a concept that situates the aid policy in a development context and, further, the development policy within the framework of wider foreign policy issues. These ideas have been taken further: in the last ten years or so, development cooperation has acquired yet another dimension. It has become an integrated element of a foreign policy that seeks to maximise Norwegian interests. Development cooperation, in addition to improving people's lives and the situation in the beneficiary countries, is intended to foster diplomatic, economic, social and cultural bonds between Norway and its partner countries.

This shift in Norwegian policy is reflected in the last Declaration of

Intent between Norway and South Africa of 2010 where it is envisaged that the cooperation shall be characterised by a 'transformed relationship and mode of cooperation based on partnership relations on equal terms, where both countries have something to offer, and both countries have something to gain [...] Shared political and developmental priorities shall form the platform and legitimate basis for future cooperation. The modalities of future cooperation within the priority areas are envisaged to consist of institutional cooperation, tripartite partnerships (including skills training programmes) and research cooperation.'

Much of the basis for these modalities is found in experiences in the higher education and research sectors.

There may be an inherent tension between the concern for poverty reduction on the one hand, and use of development cooperation funds as a tool for Norwegian foreign policy interests on the other hand. In retrospect, the development cooperation between Norway and South Africa was one of the first examples in Norwegian foreign policy where these concerns were successfully merged. This is due to several factors:

- South Africans and Norwegians had co-operated on an equal footing against the apartheid regime.
- This mutual respect continued after the establishment of majority rule in South Africa.
- In line with South Africa's policy for incoming aid, Norway and other donor countries were invited to play a catalytic role in the transformation of South African society.
- Cooperation was aligned to both the South African and the Norwegian policy agendas.
- There were champions on both sides who wanted the cooperation: on the South African side the DoE gave priority and attention to the success of the programme. SANTED had excellent leaders who managed to weave together a complex and closely knit web of committed and dynamic people in the higher education institutions and who contributed to the implementation of a programme where the different components were tailor-made to

meet the needs of the various institutions, while all along being aligned to the political priorities of the sector.

- On the Norwegian side there were visionary and far-sighted ambassadors who implemented what were to be the future elements of Norwegian foreign policy. At the headquarters in Norway and at the embassy there were staff members who had the principles of national ownership and recipient responsibility under their skin, and who had contributed actively to the development and implementation of the *Paris Declaration* in South Africa under the leadership of the National Treasury. This cooperation was extended: the close cooperation in implementing the *Paris Declaration* in South Africa was carried further, and extended to joint work in the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness hosted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee following the Paris Agenda.

The SANTED cooperation was a small but strategic contribution to the transformation of the South African higher education sector, and the programme emerged as an example of best practice in bilateral partnerships for higher education. It lived up to the principles of the *Paris Declaration* and the cooperation successfully balanced Norwegian foreign policy interests with the concerns for redress and equity in higher education in South Africa and the region.

## Endnotes

1. The second agreement stated that each institution participating in the programme was expected to provide baseline data pertinent to the nature of the project. Some projects did define indicators, provide baseline data and report in terms of these indicators.
2. The same expectation was expressed when the cooperation between Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC) was enlarged to include South Africa in 2010.
3. There was one bilateral project, a formative research project involving the universities of Bergen, Durban-Westville and the Western Cape, but for various reasons this did not deliver to expectations.

## CHAPTER 3

# The role of the SANTED Secretariat: Riding the development cooperation bicycle, hands on and hands off

*Trish Gibbon*

Once the dust has settled and the broad terms of an agreement have been put in place, a number of necessary but sometimes awkward questions arise. Who will administer, manage and generally run the programme? Where will its administrative centre be located? What reporting and monitoring conditions should be established? And what recourse will be available to the signatories should conditions not be met or objectives not realised? The implicit sub-text here concerns how a development cooperation programme such as SANTED can be protected from becoming the vehicle for realising a donor agenda imposed from outside, and conversely, how a donor can be protected from misuse of funds and fraudulent practices by the recipient. This chapter addresses these rather vexed issues through a discussion of the critical importance of finding the right form, structure and location for the management and administrative centre of such a programme. Should it be housed in the local offices of the benefactor, in this case, the Norwegian Embassy in Pretoria, and run by its own staff? Or should it be located in the offices of the recipient, the Higher Education Branch of the then South African Department of Education (DoE), and run by government officials? These are both models of tight control which run the danger of favouring the interests of one party above the other, and limiting mutual accountability.

For Norway, the initial preference was for the programme to be managed from within the DoE as this would be in accord with its avowed principle of recipient responsibility and ownership (see

Chapter 2). This was the model adopted for a Carnegie-funded project for the advancement of women in higher education and it had worked well. But in the case of SANTED, it posed something of a conundrum. On the one hand, the bureaucratic sluggishness of the civil service made the DoE reluctant to run a programme of this nature from within, while on the other hand, it had experiences of development aid projects set up outside the DoE and staffed by the donor country that had been less than completely successful (see Chapter 1).

The issues in this instance were complicated by the fact that the DoE was not the direct beneficiary of the agreement.<sup>1</sup> Indirectly it would benefit by having the means available to realise some key policy objectives that it would otherwise be hard-pressed to meet, but the direct beneficiaries were to be a select group of public universities which fell under the regulatory control of the DoE, and were largely financed by the state. Should the vice-chancellors be given a prominent role in determining how the programme was to be implemented? In the example described in Chapter 1 of the Tertiary Education Linkages Project (TELP), funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the powerful influence of vice-chancellors had not been conducive to strong alignment of project outcomes with national policy directions, and had led the DoE to question the effectiveness of key aspects of the project. The DoE wanted greater influence and control over the SANTED Programme but at the same time resisted the idea of managing SANTED itself.

## **Location, management and administration**

Universities are rightly protective of their autonomy, even in the context of acknowledged public accountability. In relation to this particular bilateral agreement, it would not have been unreasonable to expect a certain initial defensiveness in response to the programme. After all, the universities might have assumed, with some justification, that various agendas were at play, confirmed by the fact that the SANTED Programme did not involve an open competitive bid for a no-strings-attached funding opportunity. The beneficiaries in this case were *pre-*

*selected* and then invited to submit proposals for projects within quite tightly described thematic parameters. Put differently, the programme was already set up, with only limited prior consultation with the universities that were its target.

At the same time, the broad thematic areas identified as critical for intervention fell squarely within both national and institutional mandates and addressed issues about which the universities themselves were deeply concerned. The question was *how* the programme was to be implemented rather than the focus areas themselves. What was required was the means for the selected institutions to take possession of the programme in their own way, to interpret the conditions and parameters of what was being offered to suit the particular challenges of their own institutional needs without diverging from the intentions and goals expressed at a national level. To allay fears of interference<sup>2</sup> it was therefore important for both the DoE and the Embassy to keep their distance while still conveying a keen sense of interest in the progress of institutionally-based projects.

To this end, they chose to set up a Secretariat, accountable to the DoE, which would be neither in the Department nor the Embassy but relatively free-standing, with staff sourced from outside. For pragmatic reasons, it was housed within the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD), an independent policy and research centre with impeccable political credentials, which had been set up in the year before the first democratic elections in South Africa, and had substantially contributed to the first *White Paper on Education and Training* of the new government. Since its inception it had managed a variety of externally funded projects and had considerable experience in handling donor funds.

SANTED rented office space from the CEPD in Johannesburg, and the CEPD provided the financial administrative services to SANTED within its own systems. It did not, however, manage the programme. The management was entirely in the hands of an appointed director supported by two project coordinators and an administrative assistant. This was in many respects an ideal situation in that it gave relative independence to the Secretariat and distance from the two chief role-players. The reporting line was to the DoE and an annual meeting provided progress and financial reports to both the DoE and the Embassy.



The metaphor of the bicycle is a useful one in this context in that the SANTED Secretariat was set up to deliver the programme to chosen institutional beneficiaries and to be an almost constant intermediary between the institutions on the one hand, and the DoE and the Norwegian Embassy on the other. It enabled a relationship of very close contact and involvement on the part of the Secretariat (hands on), while maintaining hands-off distance on the part of the Department and Embassy. In other words, the Secretariat was given the delicate role of managing policy implementation on behalf of the DoE within a context of institutional autonomy. At the heart of this role was the translation of the broad intent of the bilateral agreement into the individual contexts of each institution, the alignment of national policy objectives with the interests and strategic objectives of each institution, building in the process, a culture of trust. Any initial reticence on the part of institutions was soon dispelled, and there were many occasions when invitations were specifically extended by the universities to both the DoE and the Embassy. In fact, the willingness of the DoE and Embassy to send very senior officials and counsellors on field trip visits to the beneficiary institutions lent stature to the projects and played an important part in preventing the marginalisation of the work undertaken.

## **Project proposals and business plans**

The mechanisms for the translation of the government-to-government agreement into institutional contexts were project proposals developed by the selected universities in consultation with the DoE, followed by detailed business plans. At the start of both phases of the SANTED Programme, the directors worked intensively with institutions to hone project proposals.<sup>3</sup> It was in the project proposals that universities expressed most clearly their interpretation of the broad thematic areas of the programme. The key to later success lay in the ability of institutions to see, at the highest strategic level, the potential offered by these projects for realising some of their own ambitions, or addressing some of their own perceived limitations. Where this happened, projects became fully institutionalised over time, and the positive outcomes of

projects as they unfolded effectively changed institutional behaviour, as the succeeding chapters demonstrate. The University of the Western Cape was exemplary in this regard, with its vice-chancellor taking a keen personal interest in the two projects embarked upon and using them as levers to raise the profile of teaching and learning on the one hand, and regional collaboration on the other.

Even more exacting than the development of project proposals was the reformulation of each proposal into a business plan with key objectives, planned activities, timelines and budgets. It is hard to describe how much work went into the compilation of these business plans, especially as some universities had little experience of ever constructing a document of this kind. But it was not just inexperience that made the task difficult; in many instances it was not immediately apparent what activities should be undertaken to achieve the desired outcomes. For example, in the Access and Success projects, enabling greater access to students from disadvantaged communities was one thing, but enabling those students to succeed at their studies was far more complex, as is demonstrated in Chapter 4. There was no blueprint for what might work, no silver bullet to undo the tangled knot of issues that presented themselves in this respect. Here the wisdom and generosity of Norway must be mentioned. Senior counsellors made it clear that institutions could experiment, using pilot studies, and that failure would itself provide a valuable learning experience. This ‘philosophy’ was one of the enormous strengths of the SANTED Programme, because had it been institutional money at stake, there would have been immense pressure to produce positive results and anything less would have been considered a ‘waste’. Instead the notion of the university as a learning organisation that could initiate change and not simply be reactive was reinforced. What was learnt in the process was that strategies had to be shaped to particular institutional conditions, and even within institutions, approaches had to be adapted to suit the needs of students in different disciplinary fields. Some experiments worked better than others and while there were generic lessons, the outcomes underscored the need for highly flexible approaches in a sector that is extremely diverse at a variety of levels.

A number of business plans took shape fairly quickly, but in other instances, it took up to a year for business plans to be fully developed and approved. This was too long in the context of an umbrella programme that had only a five-year lifespan (in each of its phases), but the value of a carefully devised business plan must be emphasised. For all the projects undertaken under the SANTED Programme, the business plans provided the framework for the unfolding of project activities and the criteria against which reporting and monitoring could take place. It provided the means for assessing whether good progress was being made or whether things were getting bogged down and required intervention. Nonetheless, it was important that adherence to the stipulations of the business plans was not rigidly required. A feature of the role of the director was to maintain the kind of regular contact with project leaders and their teams that allowed for an understanding of the circumstances and events that sometimes moved projects in directions that had not been anticipated. Such circumstances might range from changes in personnel, or new institutional imperatives, to realisations that an adopted approach had not produced the desired outcome. In the collaborative University of Johannesburg–Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University project, for example, the management structure for the project set out in the business plan proved to be unwieldy and cumbersome, taking on a bureaucratic life of its own. At one stage, the activities of this overly elaborate structure almost became a substitute for making any substantive progress in the project itself. Its dismantling released a lot of energy and a greatly pared down structure allowed for much greater movement. In this case, as in others, discussion, dialogue and advice-giving lay at the centre of the interactions between the director and the universities.

The business plan also gave an indication of how and where each project would be located within the universities. In almost every instance, senior executives were given an oversight role, but the degree of involvement from this level was varied. Location was important: the closer to the centre, the greater the alignment with other institutional initiatives and the greater the sense of significance for the project teams which became a strong motivating factor. This did not happen in all instances and there were sub-projects (such as the Multilingualism Project at the

Durban University of Technology) where the effects were so minimal and marginalised that they cannot be said to have had any institutional impact. In hindsight, this was probably the effect not just of inappropriate location, but more importantly of a plan where the component elements were too diffuse and fragmented. In other projects where there was a higher degree of concentration of efforts and energy, at least in the initial stages, a more marked and measurable effect was produced, as for example in the parallel project at Rhodes University. At Rhodes, small successes in the initial roll-out of the project engendered confidence and interest, and allowed the project to expand into a variety of different disciplinary areas. In the end, this was one of the more successful projects in the SANTED Programme and it had a lasting institutional influence.

### **Site visits and field trips**

Once project proposals and business plans were approved, initial tranches of funds were released and the role of the Secretariat shifted to that of advising project teams and monitoring progress. Responsibility for the day-to-day administration of the projects from the SANTED offices was divided between the two project coordinators each of whom took charge of a group of related projects. They developed a system of close communication with project leaders in the institutions and maintained regular communication of an informal nature in between the formal periods for reporting. The consequence was not only the growth of good relationships but a sense of continuous movement. Projects were not simply left to their own devices for months on end with consequent stagnation followed by a rush to complete activities in time for annual reports, but encouraged to maintain a steady pace of action. Many project leaders were senior academics or managers who had huge institutional demands on their time, and there is always the danger that project activities will become lesser priorities in the context of more immediate pressures. Maintaining a constant flow of communication did much to mitigate this danger.

In all the beneficiary universities, a project management or steering committee was set up for internal monitoring of project progress and, in most cases, the director was an ex-officio member of the committee.

This enabled the director and project coordinators to make regular site visits and hold discussions not only with project teams, but also with senior executives. Exchanges at this level were invaluable in pre-empting problems and clarifying expectations. On other occasions, field trips were organised to multiple sites and included representatives from Norway (the Embassy, Norad or both) and the DoE. While some of these visits marked the official launch of a project, they were all treated as special events which allowed project achievements to be showcased and donor and government officials to be entertained by the vice-chancellors and their executives. Again, the interest shown by the donors, by the DoE and by the senior leadership of universities lent significant stature to the projects and to all those who participated in them.

### **Disbursing funds**

One of the great ironies of donor-funded projects is the difficulty encountered in spending allocated funds. Anyone with experience in this area will recognise the phenomenon. It has multiple causes including some of the circumstances mentioned above. When projects are led by people with large institutional portfolios, activities may not be initiated timeously or sustained as they should be, so funds are not spent. In some instances in the SANTED Programme, the problem lay in internal financial structures: resources to support SANTED activities that were closely aligned to other institutional activities were at times mistakenly drawn from institutional funds instead of from the dedicated SANTED account. At other times there was simply an over-estimation of costs.

All SANTED business plans were required to provide budgets for the duration of the projects, which were then broken down into annual costs. The primary reason for under-spending was that plans were overly ambitious as to what could be completed or achieved within the projected timelines. This points to another issue: projects often come on top of the normal workload of those responsible for implementing them, and this is a blind spot for institutional leaders who are keen to reap the benefits of a project but fail to make allowances for the extra burdens placed on members of staff. To relieve these pressures, SANTED

allowed for extra personnel to be employed on fixed-term contracts who could be dedicated to project work. A number of the projects made good use of this provision. Nonetheless, it comes with its own dangers which will be explored later.

Because under-spending was a widespread problem, SANTED applied strict rules with regard to the disbursement of funds. Any request for further disbursement of funds had to be accompanied by a financial statement signed by the chief financial officer of the university indicating the current balance, and a statement of proposed activities and costs for the next financial period. In other words, the universities had to demonstrate that the previous funding tranche had been successfully used or committed before any more money was released. This worked well for the national projects, but was more complicated in the regional projects.<sup>4</sup> When it came to releasing funds to universities in other SADC countries, the regulations of the National Treasury slowed things down considerably and fluctuating exchange rates meant that recipients did not always receive the full value of the allocation. It became necessary to release monies between six weeks and two months in advance of actual needs, but if institutions were slow to make requests, then they sat without funding for the equivalent period of time.

## **Moving from SANTED I to SANTED II**

The move from the first to the second phase of SANTED required re-contextualisation. The 2005 review of the programme had confirmed the relevance of the broad thematic areas, but the passage of time and lessons learnt from the first phase meant that shifts in emphasis were desirable. The concern to increase the access of black students to universities, especially those from disadvantaged communities, had diminished considerably; the problem was to keep students in the system and to help them to succeed academically. Here a new element was introduced, namely exploring multilingualism as a vehicle for improving student success. And with the massive restructuring of the higher education sector undertaken through mergers and incorporations since 2003, a new need arose, which was to help build a new institutional

form: the comprehensive university. Nominally this fell under capacity building but it probably stretched the meaning of that term and was quite distinct from the building of financial, human resource and student administrative capacity that had been the focus of the first phase.

The projects included under the SADC collaboration theme were reduced in number and the focus sharpened to ensure that they were not used for what might be seen as normal university operations such as the offering of distance programmes by a South African university to students in SADC countries. The focus was primarily on building academic capacity through improving staff qualifications, developing the curricula and teaching materials for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, and providing the resources to support these programmes. Only one project fell outside this ambit and that was a project carried over from the first phase and expanded in the second. Its primary objective was to promote student peer education in HIV and AIDS and a secondary objective was the development of student leadership capacity. Norway had originally opposed this project on the grounds that it lay in the field of health rather than higher education, but evidence that student populations were being decimated by the disease led them to change their minds. As it turned out, the most sustained formal agreements between institutions arose out of this project, marked by annual meetings of the vice-chancellors.

### **Trouble-shooting through hands-on management**

Direct and frequent engagement of the Secretariat, but also of the Department and donors, meant that many problems were addressed before they became real impediments to progress. Nonetheless, there were other cases where difficulties were not that easily resolved.

One of these arose in the collaborative project between the University of Johannesburg (UJ) and Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU), both newly created comprehensive universities, when a profound difference of approach emerged in the two project teams. It became necessary to engage the services of an external facilitator to run a workshop in which issues could be debated frankly, and the outcome

was a loosening of the initial form of collaboration. Although the disagreement emanated from the UJ side, in the end, the approach taken by UJ proved to have less successful outcomes than that of NMMU.

Another problem related to the employment of externally contracted staff for project work. This worked to best effect where the task was one of management or administration of the project, but was not as effective when it related to central project activities. Again, the UJ-NMMU project is a case in point. In one of the institutions, a senior researcher was appointed who had no curriculum expertise, although much of the work was in this area. The director was not in a position to intervene without being accused of micro-management, but this was one of the factors that contributed to limited outcomes.

The most intractable of problems arose in the SADC collaborative projects. These ranged from unrealistic expectations about what sorts of things were eligible for funding to constantly changing personnel and poor administrative and governance structures. Even at the level of communication, protocols had to be established to ensure that email messages would be acknowledged and responses provided within set time periods. But these projects provided important insights into what was necessary for successful implementation of a cross-border project.

Assumptions that institutional cultures would be similar were turned on their heads, and acute differences in the conditions of academic employment were starkly exposed. An annual team-teaching field trip in the NEW<sup>5</sup> Project illustrates this well. Students in life sciences programmes would travel to a particular type of natural environment (marine, desert, rocky shore) where they would be given lectures, gather samples and write reports for a period of up to two weeks in their winter vacation. The staff from all three participating institutions were expected to contribute to the lecture programme and assist with translation (from English to Portuguese and vice versa). The assumption was that academics would do this on a voluntary basis as part of a project that was benefiting their students and institution, but when academics failed to arrive, further questions had to be asked. It was revealed that in some universities, academic salaries were so low that most members of staff held at least two jobs and their work commitments ran into the



official academic recess period. Unless a stipend was paid to compensate for loss of earnings, they were unwilling to contribute to the team-teaching exercise. This was a humbling insight and a salutary reminder of the complexity of this kind of collaboration.

Levels of commitment are required for project success, but the ground is not even and this must be understood at the most painfully detailed level. And sometimes it is not the project staff who can be faulted, but broader governance and administrative systems over which they have little control. The implementation of two masters programmes at the University Agostinho Neto in Luanda was delayed for almost a year because of repeated postponements of the senate meeting at which they had to be ratified.

In this particular project, gender power relations also had to be confronted in unexpected ways. In the course of one of the project workshops, the academics responsible for the implementation of the project in Angola (largely women) were effectively silenced by the all-male senior leadership of the university. The dynamics of the workshop were extremely interesting (and tense) in that it was facilitated by a woman (who determined who could speak and when) and took place with the female SANTED director present (a proxy for control of the purse strings). While patriarchy could be challenged in that setting, it was clear that it would reassert itself in the institutional environment.

A positive outcome of the identification of common problems was the instigation of joint workshops for project teams working in similar areas. These proved to be invaluable for sharing experiences and pooling ideas, practices and possible solutions. It would have been good if more could have been arranged, but they involved large numbers of people from different parts of the country and the logistics were complicated. Participants in the few that were convened returned to their own universities invigorated with renewed interest.

## **Annual reports and monitoring**

In preparation for the annual meeting of the Embassy, the DoE and the Secretariat, each project was required to produce a financial statement for

the year and an accompanying narrative report with a focus on outcomes and results, rather than a listing of activities. The Secretariat provided templates for both reports so that there was a level of consistency and to ensure that they spoke to the original objectives set up in business plans. Plans for the following year would have to indicate any roll-over of activities that had not been completed and projected costs. Project leaders were urged to use the annual report to identify problems and risks, and refrain from a simple showcasing of positive outcomes that papered over the cracks. On the basis of the project reports, the director wrote a consolidated report addressing each of the thematic areas and the presentation of this report provided the basis for the substantive part of the discussion at the annual meeting. It was also here that any shifts in direction would be debated and approved.

Report writing of this nature can be time-consuming and arduous. There is always the danger that more time and energy will go into reporting than actual delivery of outcomes and it should be kept within reasonable limits. It is, nonetheless, an absolutely critical element in the life of any project, as valuable to the participants as a recorded measure of their own progress and moments of faltering, as it is for the donors in monitoring the effectiveness of a programme such as SANTED.

## **Conclusion**

There is no formula for successful project implementation: each situation will come with its own specificities, opportunities and challenges. But there is something to be learnt from this very statement. If the means to achieve particular outcomes are known, then a project is probably not required: what is needed is the implementation of the systems, practices and processes that are known to produce the desired end result. The SANTED projects, however, shared some features with scientific experiments which require an open and investigative approach, from which new knowledge is produced and outcomes are not always known, though they may be hoped for. And again, as in scientific research, it is the ability to reproduce the results of a pilot study in other contexts or when taken to scale, that confirm their validity. More than anything

such projects require an openness to learning from their participants and their institutions.

From the perspective of the Secretariat, certain practices evolved that definitely contributed to the overall success of the programme. Among others, they included (1) flexibility and alertness to alternative approaches; (2) consistent effort to understand the particularities of context and how these shape a project; (3) open communication that establishes trust and encourages honesty; (4) clarity around intentions and expectations; (5) strict adherence to financial accountability and reporting requirements; (6) frequent contact in the form of visits; and (7) consistent elevation of the stature and significance of projects by all parties.

In summary, the bicycle is again invoked as a metaphor because a successful ride requires clear direction, energetic propulsion and careful balance. SANTED balanced closeness with distance, flexibility with firmness, and attention to detail with awareness of broad national objectives. The combined efforts of the Secretariat, the DoE and Norway provided consistent direction, and the SANTED participants brought astonishing energy and enthusiasm to project delivery.

## Endnotes

1. The idea of using some of the funds to strengthen capacity within the Higher Education Branch of the DoE was mooted at one stage, but rejected in favour of directing all resources to selected universities.
2. This is not at all far-fetched. One vice-chancellor was extremely cautious about the SANTED Programme, suspecting that it was a Trojan horse that would be used to impose the DoE's ideas on the university.
3. The approval of proposals initially involved both the DoE and the Embassy, but in the second phase, approval was left to the DoE. However, business plans were sent to technical teams in the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) for assessment and refined on the basis of advice and suggestions received.
4. Within the programme, two broad types of project were envisaged: the first set were national projects that would address issues of access, retention and success of students, and the building of institutional administrative capacity; the second set were regional projects that were aimed at building cross-border collaboration between South African universities and those in Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries.
5. A collaborative project involving the University of Namibia, University Eduardo Mondlane and the University of the Witwatersrand.

## CHAPTER 4

# Supporting and enhancing the academic project: Improving student throughput and success within an equity framework

*Colleen Howell*

One of the objectives of Norway's development cooperation with South Africa was to 'consolidate the democratic transition' (see Chapter 2). This objective is expressed at a high level of abstraction and requires translation into far more concrete terms before it becomes meaningful. In translating it, however, a number of difficult and contentious questions arise: What needed to be done to consolidate the democratic transition? Of the myriad of pressing issues competing for attention, which were to be selected and made the priorities? Who would make this decision?

This chapter argues that the success of SANTED as a particular example of development cooperation arises from the way in which this translation was effected and the wisdom of the issues identified for attention. Norway had already affirmed that education was a first priority. This was entirely congruent with the South African government's identification of access to higher education as key to social justice and to the social and economic development of the country.

Under the apartheid system the majority of learners in South Africa had been denied access to its higher education system, mainly on the basis of race. Within the post-apartheid policy framework, learners who had historically been classified as black, coloured<sup>1</sup> and Indian were now recognised as people who had been historically disadvantaged and thus the recipients of measures aimed at redressing these inequities. These equity concerns formed part of a broader spectrum of education policy goals which included substantial raising of participation rates in higher education. The government argued that the overall expansion of the

higher education system in South Africa was necessary to address both the inequalities of the past and meet the country's development needs. The latter was acknowledged as essential to South Africa's participation in a 'knowledge driven world' associated with the phenomenon of globalisation (Department of Education 2001:5).

This chapter discusses those projects in the second phase of the SANTED Programme, set up as the 'Access, Retention and Success' projects of SANTED II. They were the:

- Sakha Ngethemba Project – Student Access and Retention in a Nurturing Environment at the University of Fort Hare (UFH);
- SANTED-University of KwaZulu-Natal Access and Retention Project (SUKAR) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN); and
- Equitable Access, Retention and Success Project at the University of the Western Cape (UWC).

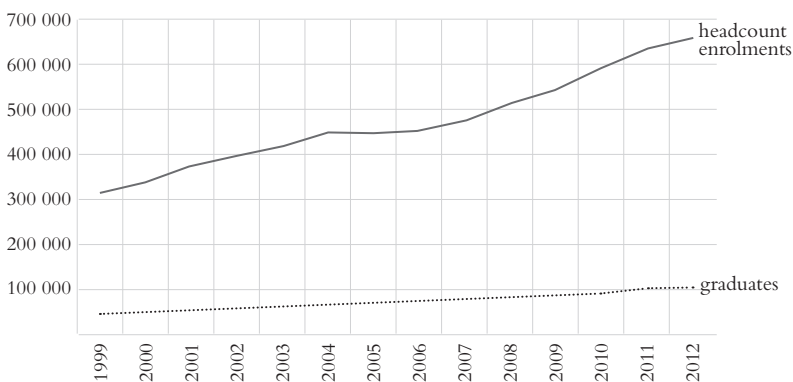
In all of these projects, while the broad objectives were held in common, a critical factor contributing to their positive outcomes was the successful translation of the objectives into the particular context and strategic intentions of each institution at the time. For each of the institutions the context was defined by the complex and pervasive legacy of their designation within the racially defined apartheid higher education landscape, and the imperatives of an expanding and increasingly competitive post-apartheid higher education system. Each institution faced different challenges and each needed to re-contextualise the objectives of the project to match its own needs.

In 2004, as SANTED I was coming to an end, the national review of the programme argued that it should be extended for another five years. Moreover, the focus on improving access to higher education for historically disadvantaged learners should be retained and deepened in the second phase, as it remained a priority for a post-apartheid higher education system. However, the reviewers also pointed to an associated issue of concern that was becoming more evident within the system, sometimes referred to as the 'revolving door' syndrome. Many of the

students who entered the universities dropped out before completing their studies. The concern, therefore, was increasingly with *student success* and creating equitable opportunities for historically disadvantaged students to not only gain access to higher education, but also to *succeed in their studies* and to graduate (Hansen et al. 2005).

In 2004, although overall participation rates in the system remained below the targets of the National Plan (2001), significantly more historically disadvantaged students were now gaining access to the system (Council on Higher Education 2004). However, as the National Plan (2001) emphasised, ‘equity of access’ was not being matched by ‘equity of outcomes’. Thus, despite the increase in the enrolment of historically disadvantaged students, graduate output, especially in relation to qualification levels and areas of study, remained significantly skewed and unrepresentative of the South African population (Council on Higher Education 2004). It was starkly evident that many historically disadvantaged students were dropping out of the system before graduating. The graph below captures these trends in the South African higher education system between 1995 and 2002.

**Figure 1** African headcount enrolments and graduates in public higher education institutions



Source: DHET (2013)

These throughput trends were extremely problematic, not only from an efficiency and effectiveness perspective, but because they also reflected a significant equity challenge within the system. In 1993, Morrow argued for the importance of recognising that access to higher education involved more than gaining formal access into an institution. Whilst gaining formal access was crucial, equally important was gaining access to the ‘essential goods which the university distributes’, that is, knowledge. He called this ‘epistemological access’ (Morrow 1993:3).

Throughput patterns across the system were showing that while many more historically disadvantaged students were gaining formal access to institutions, they were not gaining epistemological access, reflected in the inability of so many of them to successfully graduate. This is the challenge that institutions confronted in 2004, as they began to conceptualise the SANTED projects in this thematic area – the task of *improving student success and ensuring epistemological access* for historically disadvantaged students. It was argued that the depth of this challenge required institutions to focus their projects on ‘longer-term outcomes’ that would contribute to the kind of institutional and systemic changes that were needed (Smith & Cross 2009).

For the South African higher education system the epistemological access challenge is informed and shaped by two overarching concerns. The first has to do with what is required from South African universities as they negotiate their growing importance to national development needs within an increasingly globalised and knowledge-driven society. Central to this are the kinds of skills and high levels of knowledge required by a changing workplace defined by ‘new conditions of production and management’ (Castells 2009).

For South African higher education institutions, however, this challenge is exacerbated by a schooling system deeply damaged by the inequalities of the past that was and still is failing to prepare learners adequately for higher education. Those students most affected by the inadequacies of the schooling system are historically disadvantaged students, living in the poorest conditions with the most inadequate levels of educational provision. Institutions constantly have to find ways to address the inadequacies of the schooling system so that students

can progress with confidence in their studies. This burden is greatest in institutions with the highest concentration of poor, educationally disadvantaged students.

Addressing this challenge draws attention to what is happening within institutions themselves and the extent to which they are able to organise, manage and deliver their core academic functions in a way which creates the conditions for sustained epistemological access. Central to this is an institution's ability to develop and manage teaching and learning processes that can respond to both the inadequacies of the schooling system and national development needs. As the emphasis in the SANTED II projects moved towards student success, strengthening the organisation, management and delivery of the teaching and learning mandate began to emerge as central to this second phase. All the institutions considered in this chapter were also affected, albeit to different degrees, by the reconfiguration of the public higher education system in the early part of the last decade. This generated challenges that also influenced and shaped how institutions constructed and used their SANTED II projects.

The next section shifts the discussion to the institutions themselves. It begins to explain why these SANTED projects were so important to the institutions at this juncture, why they were in need of assistance to address the epistemological access challenge, and how they sought to use the projects to leverage necessary change within the institution towards this end.

## **Conceptualising the projects and building an institutional framework for delivery**

### *The University of Fort Hare*

The situation at the University of Fort Hare (UFH) perhaps illustrates most clearly the apartheid legacy issues discussed earlier. UFH, like many of the historically black universities in South Africa, is located in an economically underdeveloped and marginalised rural area of South Africa. It is situated near Alice, a small town in the deep rural areas of the



Eastern Cape, the poorest province in the country. It draws the majority of its students from these surrounds. Not only do many students come from extremely poor families, but they also come from resource-poor schools which have not prepared them adequately for university study (UFH 2006). The Sakha Ngethemba ('building in hope') Project launched at UFH in 2006, had as its overarching objective to 'address the factors which result in students being unable to complete their courses of study and graduate within a reasonable period of time' (UFH 2006). It built strongly on the experiences and achievements of the Sakha Ngethemba Project of SANTED I, implemented between 2001 and 2005.

SANTED I at UFH had played a significant role in supporting 'a massive transformation drive' initiated at the university in 2000 as a response to a set of complex and wide ranging problems that it had struggled with towards the end of the 1990s (Knickelbein 2005). These problems were largely reflective of the persistent impact which the underdevelopment of historically black universities by the apartheid government continued to have on the institution. Most notably, it affected their ability to compete on an equal footing in an increasingly market-driven higher education system. Central to this challenge was the declining student numbers at the historically black universities as the system began to 'de-racialise' with more and more black students having the opportunity to enter the historically white institutions.

For UFH this challenge was exacerbated by its rural location with students also attracted by the benefits of attending an urban university. UFH argued that it was confronted by a set of challenges that reflected the 'combined impact of internal dissonance and structural underdevelopment' (UFH 2000:14). Within this context, as part of the process of institutional transformation, the SANTED I Project had focused on building capacity by contributing to the creation of a critical mass of people with a shared vision of where the university wanted to go and with the skills to address these challenges (Knickelbein 2005:82).

By the time the second phase of Sakha Ngethemba began in 2006 the university was in a position to focus more specifically on the problem of student throughput (UFH 2006). In the rationale for the project, the university pointed to the challenges that it experienced, emerging out of

and shaped by the socio-economic realities described above. For UFH the epistemological access challenge was therefore strongly influenced by these socio-economic factors which needed to be addressed in a system where student throughput and success had become important for the allocation of state funding and improved efficiency. UFH acknowledged that it needed to enhance its capacity to respond to this challenge and once again recognised the SANTED II Project as an important mechanism to assist it to do this.

The Sakha Ngethemba Project of SANTED II was therefore largely orientated to building institutional capacity in academic and administrative areas. This would improve its ability to manage and deliver its teaching and learning mandate, especially in those areas most directly affecting student success. This included attention through the project to:

- the development of an institutional retention policy;
- institutional research;
- improved enrolment management measures;
- student tracking;
- student learning support; and
- teaching support (UFH 2006).

The second phase of SANTED at UFH also took as its starting point an important principle that had shaped the project in the first phase. This was its conceptualisation and implementation as a *leadership-lead initiative* within the institution. This was reflected most prominently through the strong support it received from the vice-chancellor and the senior management team, and through the organisational arrangements put in place to manage, implement and monitor the project. The project was managed by a project management committee made up of senior university personnel across different areas of responsibility.

### *The University of the Western Cape*

At the University of the Western Cape (UWC) the Equitable Access, Retention and Success Project in SANTED II also built strongly on

the university's experiences in SANTED I, and had similarly sought to address a set of deep and pervasive challenges for the university. These challenges, largely recognised as enrolment challenges, had emerged towards the end of the 1990s and early 2000s and had 'threatened [UWC's] academic and financial viability' (UWC 2005).

A pivotal factor influencing the university's precarious position at this time was the impact, as was the case at UFH, of the dwindling student numbers at the historically black universities and the increasing competition across the sector both for students and for alternative funding sources (Hansen et al. 2005). This latter challenge was especially important for UWC as it was increasingly exposed to competition from its historically privileged and well-resourced neighbouring universities. The university argued at the time that these challenges were exacerbated by the levels of educational disadvantage and poverty of many of its students. While these socio-economic challenges were not as extreme as those faced by UFH, within the context of the Western Cape, UWC still attracted the poorest and most educationally disadvantaged students seeking a university education.

As had been the case at UFH, when SANTED II was initiated and UWC began to conceptualise their participation in this phase, it had managed to address a number of the challenges described above, especially in relation to its enrolment base which had been effectively stabilised (UWC 2005). The university recognised the significant contribution the SANTED I funding had made to its efforts and was intent on continuing to use SANTED as a tool to leverage necessary change in the institution in pursuit of its strategic goals.

With this positive experience informing its thinking, a number of issues became important to how the Equitable Access, Retention and Success Project was advanced in the second phase of SANTED. UWC wished to continue to strengthen a number of the very positive initiatives that had received substantial support in SANTED I and which advanced the university's strategic intentions. These included:

- improving access for historically disadvantaged learners by intervening at the school–university interface;
- strengthening its postgraduate capacity in support of its strategic

goal to build itself into a significant research and innovation-led university;

- supporting the setting up of a Directorate for Teaching and Learning at UWC;
- strengthening the Student Enrolment Management Unit's work around alternative admissions testing; and
- undertaking institutional research tasks to provide insights into what could be learnt from the project for the institution's strategic thinking.

Like UFH, the UWC project was conceptualised and driven as a leadership initiative through its organisational arrangements and management structure. Located within the Institutional Planning division of the Vice-Chancellor's Office, the project was managed by a Project Board chaired by the vice-chancellor and supported by members of the university executive with areas of responsibility addressed through the project. The Project Board also included the directors of divisions within the university most centrally involved in the project's implementation, linking again at a structural level, the project and its role in taking forward the different strategic intentions of the institution.

### *The University of KwaZulu-Natal*

The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) came into being in 2004 as a result of the far-reaching and complex merging of the University of Natal and the University of Durban-Westville. The merger not only brought together a former historically white institution and a former historically black institution, but also five geographically separated campuses, including teachers' colleges and a medical school. This resulted in, by international standards, a very large and complex institution with just under 40 000 students (UKZN 2007).

The SANTED University of KwaZulu-Natal Access and Retention Project (SUKAR), which also built on lessons that had been learnt from SANTED I at the University of Durban Westville, began in 2006. Drawing from these lessons, the UKZN was intent on ensuring that the 'transformatory potential' of the project 'for the university as a whole' be

realised by having a more explicit focus on retention and concentrating on embedding the project within the 'mainstream' curriculum of the university (Hansen et al. 2005:20).

Like the other universities, UKZN recognised the importance of the project as a tool to enhance the capacity of its academic project to respond more effectively to the epistemological access challenge. It recognised that at this critical time in its development, enhancing its capacity required the careful bringing together of separate academic infrastructures from the two primary institutions, including teaching and learning practices, approaches and organisational forms. The SUKAR II Project provided an opportunity to build a new ethos around teaching and learning at the newly merged institution. It could also enhance institutional integration and establish new partnerships between staff previously located at the different pre-merged institutions (Dhunpath 2010). It created an opportunity to begin to integrate academic development initiatives to support and improve student learning into mainstream teaching and learning activities across the five new campuses. This was recognised as an increasingly important challenge as the new institution sought to respond to a much larger and substantially more diverse student body, with very different school experiences and levels of preparedness.

The project was therefore designed to respond to some of the merger challenges that UKZN was experiencing, particularly towards addressing the imperatives of access, redress and success within the strategic framework of the newly merged institution (UKZN 2010). It was conceptualised around two central focus areas: to improve equity of student access, retention and success rates; and to contribute to building academic (teaching) capacity at the newly merged UKZN (Dhunpath 2010).

Driven by these broad objectives the project was conceived of as a set of smaller projects, with a number of elements strongly embedded within the faculties, which were collectively designed to address these areas of strategic importance:

- institutional access and throughput research;
- collaboration with secondary schools;

- integration of alternative access programmes; and
- enhancing postgraduate and undergraduate throughput.

SUKAR II, reflecting a similar approach to UFH and UWC, was taken forward at UKZN by the leadership of the institution. However, what was especially important about the project for the institution was the impact it had on supporting the argument for the creation of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning position at UKZN. Once this position was in place, the project was moved to this office and managed and directed by the new DVC, thus strengthening its strategic value and importance for the institution.

## **Building institutional capacity and enhancing organisational learning**

The overview of the specific institutional contexts presented above, the project objectives and organisational arrangements put in place, show how each of them aimed to bring about institutional change to improve student success and enhance epistemological access for historically disadvantaged students. In each case, the design of the project reflected a careful and nuanced understanding of the complex nature of this challenge for that specific institution. Central to this challenge were those processes of the university, academic and administrative, most important to an effective and responsive teaching and learning environment.

However, institutional change by its very nature is highly complex, especially within higher education institutions. It is influenced by a range of structural and conjunctural conditions external to the university and by ‘human agency’ which affects the ‘pace, nature and outcome of institutional change’ (Badat 2009:457).

This section reflects on the projects themselves, but recognises that within the limitations of a chapter of this nature, these insights cannot do justice to the very real challenges each of the projects faced on a daily basis and the complexities of the change processes they initiated and shaped. Suffice to say that for all of the institutions involved, the SANTED II Access, Retention and Success projects made a fundamental

contribution to the institutions and what they are seeking to realise as South African public higher education institutions. Those elements common to the three projects which are important to understanding why and in what way they were able to make such an important contribution are discussed.

While the focus in this section is on how the projects contributed to building the capacity of their institutions to respond more effectively to the epistemological access challenge, it is important to note that between 2001 and 2010, the period in which both phases of the SANTED Programme were implemented, each of the institutions showed a steady improvement in overall student success rates. Between 2001 and 2010 UFH improved its success rate from 65 to 78 per cent, UKZN from 69 to 75 per cent and UWC from 73 to 78 per cent (Centre for Higher Education Transformation 2012).<sup>2</sup> These indicators provide evidence of a trajectory of improvement to which the projects clearly contributed.

The overviews of the projects' design described earlier show that each of the projects reflected 'institutionalised agendas', where the projects' operational plans and what they sought to take forward were *embedded within the broader strategic goals of the institution*. All three projects were conceived, therefore, as strategic 'tools' that the institution would use to take forward, materially and conceptually, important strategic interventions and necessary processes of institutional change.

The Council on Higher Education (2007:182), in explaining change in higher education, argues that 'change is as dependent on capacity as it is on political will'. Clearly, in all of the three institutions such political will was in place. This was evident through *senior leadership support for the project*. Most notably this is seen in the chairing in all three cases of the central project management structure by the vice-chancellor or the deputy vice-chancellor, and through the projects' reporting lines and institutional locations. However, these leaders also recognised both the importance of epistemological access to their strategic intentions and, most importantly, that increased capacity was needed to adequately address this challenge. They recognised that the projects provided a valuable mechanism for building such capacity and that it

would primarily involve strengthening the academic project through improvements to teaching and learning practice and administrative support mechanisms. In fact, in the Mid-Term Review of the SANTED II Programme, the reviewers noted the importance of capacity building to what the programme had managed to achieve, arguing that ‘capacity building became a major spin-off from all the activities of SANTED in both phases’ (Smith & Cross 2009:7).

The contribution all three projects were able to make to building institutional capacity came about because of what they were able to achieve *and* because of *the way in which they were conceptualised and organised within the institution*. The latter was substantially influenced by the approach of senior management to the project. This suggests that where institutional projects are aimed at influencing institutional change processes and addressing high-level strategic goals, they must be designed and managed in a manner which provides them with the *leadership support they need to have legitimacy and to be of maximum benefit to the organisation*. However, such support needs to extend beyond expressed commitment by institutional leaders. It must include leadership thinking about where the project is located and the levels of institutional authority associated with this location, the management processes in place to direct project decision-making, and how best to align project objectives and activities with broader institutional functioning.

In these three projects the organisational arrangements put in place show that in each institution the *different elements of the projects were all included into important areas of leadership responsibility*. Put another way, the different elements of the project were taken forward in the institutions by role-players with sufficient levels of institutional responsibility and authority to deliver on the issue addressed. In many instances, project activities were integrated into the work activities of the responsible person, providing legitimacy for activities and their objectives, and further embedding them into the strategic direction of the institution. The project also provided a valuable learning experience for these staff members, becoming an important *training ground for leadership development*. This is a critical element to building sustainable institutional capacity.



Another and obvious way in which the projects were able to build institutional capacity was through *new institutional structures, systems and procedures*. These were put in place through the project or came about indirectly through evidence which influenced leadership thinking. These achievements included:

- the setting up and strengthening of new senior portfolios and offices, particularly around teaching and learning at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels;
- the development of new administrative systems to support student throughput and success, such as student tracking systems;
- the establishment of innovative monitoring and evaluation systems, especially to enhance student enrolment, track progress and improve teaching and learning practice; and
- the development of new institutional policies around issues related to student success, such as retention and assessment practice.

These achievements all reflect ways in which the projects and their objectives were *institutionalised*, becoming part of the normal organisation and functioning of the universities, including being integrated into institutional planning and budgeting.

Institutional capacity was also built through the breadth of the projects' foci – a reflection on the extent to which the universities recognised the complex and multi-faceted nature of the epistemological challenge and what is required to address it comprehensively. This was evident from the range of *issues given attention through the project and the different institutional portfolios* that participated in the various project structures. An important consequence of this multifaceted approach was that the projects set up structures and initiated processes that required staff to work collaboratively across traditional and deeply entrenched institutional boundaries. Encouraging staff to move and think out of their institutional 'silos' was important to realising the objectives of the projects and created the momentum for *new communities of practice* to develop across the institution. These new communities remain important sites for ongoing organisational learning and as drivers of change.

As already noted, institutional capacity development through strategic projects requires attention to institutionalising the project and its outcomes. Project institutionalisation is most often understood to include the putting in place of new institutional structures, portfolios and procedures through the project and/or the ‘taking over’ by the institution of financial responsibility for project activities or outcomes. While this is important, project institutionalisation needs to be understood more broadly than this. Project institutionalisation must also involve a ‘sense-making’ or ‘ideological element’, where projects enable role-players within the institutions to begin *to make sense of required institutional changes* (Astvik et al. 2005) and consider what they would mean for their own practices and execution of responsibilities.

Strategic projects, as was the case with these three projects, must be able to *contribute to organisational learning where new ways of thinking emerge within the institution that translate into new practices and ways of doing things*, far out-living the project’s duration and becoming embedded in the culture and day-to-day functioning of the organisation. The SANTED II projects discussed here provide evidence of project institutionalisation having taken place at both a ‘structural’ and at a ‘ideological’ level within the institutions.

One of the most effective ways in which the projects were able to facilitate such ‘sense-making’ and associated organisational learning was through *piloting as a project strategy*. In a number of different cases, project activities involved piloting new organisational practices, institutional policies and strategic interventions. This project strategy was encouraged and supported by the funders who recognised that piloting provided the universities with opportunities for experimentation, where new insights could be gained and shared using donor funding rather than drawing from limited, highly contested institutional funds. Moreover, these piloting activities created ‘supported spaces’ for learning within the institutions. This created opportunities outside formal institutional structures and processes for in-depth discussion around complex and sometimes sensitive issues, without directly challenging staff and their own practice and undermining institutional confidence. They also created possibilities for good practices to emerge, which could then be

embedded within the institution, principally, as noted above, where they involved working across traditional institutional boundaries.

In all of the projects, piloting activities were also linked to the undertaking of various *institutional research tasks*, aimed primarily at collating evidence to inform institutional responses to the epistemological access challenge beyond the scope of the project. In addition to the information gathered, these institutional research tasks contributed to building research capacity at the universities, with some producing publications on the research undertaken and thus contributing to the production of new knowledge. In all of the universities the projects strengthened the case for ongoing reflection and interrogation of existing practices and systems, particularly around the organisation and delivery of their teaching and learning mandate.

## Conclusion

This chapter has presented a picture of the three Access, Retention and Success projects of the SANTED II Programme, building on the foundations laid and lessons learnt from SANTED I. It has argued that each of these projects was able to make a substantial and profound contribution to their institutions.

It was argued that central to this has been the ways in which the projects have enhanced the capacity of the institutions to improve student success and address the challenge of epistemological access to higher education for the majority of learners in South Africa – learners who in the past, and who remain, socially, economically and educationally disadvantaged by the inequalities of apartheid and its pervasive impact on the present South African reality.

This contribution would not have been possible without the presence within these institutions, both at the time of conceptualisation and implementation, of insightful and dynamic leadership, who, put simply, took these projects seriously. These institutional leaders were able to recognise and maximise the value of the projects for their institutions, using them to leverage necessary processes of institutional change and organisational learning. In particular, they recognised the importance

of strengthening their institutions' teaching and learning mandate so as to better respond to the needs of their students and enhance the opportunities for successful academic study.

Equally important to why the projects were able to make the contribution they did, was the manner in which the projects were designed. The projects' organisational arrangements were intentionally embedded within existing institutional structures and their objectives mirrored the strategic intentions of their institutions. Similarly, their activities were designed to facilitate necessary but difficult processes of institutional change that would not only lead to new structures and practices, but also new ways of thinking and understanding across the institution.

An aspect which is easily overlooked, but of critical importance, was the model of donor support that provided for institutional ownership and direction, and which respected the individual institutional contexts. Throughout the duration of SANTED, the projects were supported by a national project framework which, while providing for careful processes of financial and leadership accountability, enabled flexibility at the institutional level so that institutions could, within the broad objectives of the project, adapt project activities to emerging needs and priorities.

The lessons from the equitable Access, Retention and Success projects of SANTED II suggest that strategic projects of this nature provide a unique opportunity to manage change within the academy, primarily by influencing strategic thinking and by grappling with new processes and practices. The epistemological access challenge which underpinned the focus of these projects with its inherent complexities for South African universities will remain for some time to come. For the institutions discussed here, this challenge will include continuing to take forward the insights, organisational changes, new practices and leadership capacity generated through their access, retention and success projects.

## Endnotes

1. A term accepted in South African discourse to denote people of mixed race.
2. This ratio indicates what proportion of the courses for which students were enrolled were passed in a specific year. Success rates are calculated by dividing the university's full-time equivalent (FTE) enrolled student total by its FTE degree credit total (Centre for Higher Education Transformation 2012).

## CHAPTER 5

# Multilingualism for teaching and learning

*Pamela Maseko*

This chapter will address a number of issues pertaining to multilingualism for teaching and learning in South African higher education during the SANTED II Programme. It will provide the national and institutional language policy context for the SANTED multilingualism projects, the challenges of implementation, the strategies used for implementation and monitoring, and the institutional uptake of the programmes at the end of the SANTED II Programme in 2010. The discussion will illustrate how the pilot projects introduced through SANTED provided a springboard for implementation of multilingual learning and teaching. The chapter will further demonstrate that while some universities had policies that supported multilingualism, in most cases these policies were largely dormant. The pilot projects provided the means for activating them and institutionalising practices conceptualised therein. The process itself provided impetus for robust debates on the value of bilingual and multilingual education for effective learning in higher education, as well as the importance of linguistic and cultural diversity in building national unity.

### **Multilingualism in South African higher education**

Multilingualism is a norm in South African institutions of higher learning because of the linguistic composition of the students and staff in these institutions. Despite the fact that lecture halls are multilingual and multicultural, the language of learning and teaching is English.

The choice of English, especially for speakers of languages other than English, can be linked to issues of practicality. English, on the one hand, is historically the language of academic discourse in South Africa and a global language seen as presenting opportunities for economic and social empowerment. African languages, on the other hand, are not seen as sufficiently developed as languages of academic discourse. Research on bilingual and multilingual teaching and learning models in higher education is not advanced enough to support the implementation of multilingualism. However, there is research that supports bilingual education and multilingualism for its value in facilitating cognition in the learning process (Bamgbose 1991:62-3; Heugh 2003:452-453; Obanya 2004:8-10). This research shows the important relationship between language and cognition in the learning process and illustrates that the mother tongue of a learner is critical, amongst other things, in ensuring quality education. It further supports the view that multilingualism can develop human potential, promote social cohesion and a sense of inclusive citizenship. In the South African context, African languages are indispensable in the accomplishment of these aims.

As stated above, English is the common medium of instruction in South African higher education. This benefits those students who have had the privilege of developing linguistic competence in English suitable for the higher-level thinking demands of university teaching and learning, while disadvantaging those who have English as an additional language and making it difficult for them to access the curriculum presented to them in that language (Kapp 2000). The throughput rate in degree programmes between English first language and English additional language students shows that the first language students have better success in higher education than the additional language students (Department of Higher Education and Training 2013). While the Department of Higher Education and Training's (DHET) report does not identify language as a factor in student throughput rates, learning problems resulting from the use of English in teaching and learning are often cited, amongst others, as a contributing factor (Setati et al. 2002; Heugh 2003). In the South African context, the majority of English additional language students are black. It could therefore be argued that

poor schooling and socio-economic factors, a result of our political past, are also impacting on their academic performance.

While English is the language of teaching and learning in higher education, it is also the language of wider communication outside the lecture halls – in administration, in residences and other campus spaces, even though linguistic and cultural diversity is characteristic of these spaces.

Given the value of mother tongue in facilitating epistemic access and success, multilingual teaching and learning models need to consider the role of African languages, while at the same time recognising the role of English as the language of academia. In the democratic South African context, multilingualism is supported by legislative policy that aims to enhance linguistic and cultural sensitivity, and promote equity of access and success for all students.

### **The legislative policy context for promotion of multilingualism in higher education**

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) confers on all the right to quality education. Quality education is generally understood as effective teaching and learning which empowers individuals to be producers and consumers of knowledge, and which nurtures diversity and the need to understand the world views of others, while encouraging rootedness in one's own culture. Central to the provisions of the Constitution is the issue of access and success. The Constitution states that language, race and other markers that have been used in the past to discriminate against certain groups should not hinder the access and success of these groups. Policy pertaining to higher education advances the sentiments of the Constitution.

The Language Policy on Higher Education (LPHE) (2002) provides for the promotion of multilingualism, equitable access, and the participation and success of all in higher education. Other language policy guidelines, such as the Development of Indigenous African Languages as Mediums of Instruction in Higher Education (2003), also emphasise the social, pedagogic, economic and political value of languages. While recognising



the position of English as the dominant language of academia in South Africa, maintenance of the status quo is seen as a threat to equity and the success of students speaking languages other than English who have gained physical but not epistemic access to higher education. In education, epistemic access is generally understood as access to the conceptual platform from which the learner is able to construct new knowledge from pre-existing knowledge and knowledge presented in the learning process.

An important objective of the South African legislative framework on language in higher education is to develop a multilingual environment in which all languages are promoted and developed, and past political injustices redressed. Furthermore, the medium of instruction should not present a barrier to the access and success of any student. This objective is in line with the pedagogical value of language, and with the vision of the state for a nation where equity, equality and multilingualism are cherished.

## **The SANTED II Programme on Multilingualism**

When the SANTED II Programme on Multilingualism was introduced in 2006, it presented South African universities with an opportunity to pilot research on implementation of multilingual teaching models. The aim of these models was to initiate the implementation of multilingual teaching and learning in higher education, as stipulated by language policy at both national and institutional level. A more detailed discussion of the four South African universities that hosted the SANTED multilingualism projects is presented below.

The two main thrusts of the SANTED multilingualism projects were the development and promotion of the use of indigenous African languages, alongside English, to support learning; and the development of language learning curricula that promote proficiency in indigenous African languages, especially for students in professional disciplines. The key purpose of the projects was to promote multilingualism in higher education in the following areas:

- enabling multi-language acquisition for students in professional programmes (e.g. in the Health Sciences, Law and Education);
- piloting projects in the use of African languages as the medium of instruction (e.g. in student support programmes and tutorials); and
- offering short courses to promote multilingualism among both academic and non-academic university staff.

As can be seen above, the thrusts and the purpose of the SANTED II Programme on Multilingualism are aligned with the objectives of the legislative framework: multilingual awareness and proficiency, the development of African languages to achieve this, as well as the use of African languages to support academic literacy.

### **The programme's theoretical foundations**

The theoretical foundations that underpinned the work of the SANTED multilingualism projects advance the notion of language being central to cognition and the facilitation and maintenance of social cohesion. South African policy on language in higher education recognises this link and the SANTED projects provided a platform for initiatives using multilingualism for teaching and learning in universities.

As illustrated by local, continental and international research (Cummins 2000; Obanya 2004; Alexander 2007; Heugh 2003), learning mediated through the mother tongue facilitates cognition and should be maintained for as long as possible in education, including higher education. This is not the case for most students for whom English, the common medium of instruction, is an additional language. Madiba (2010:230-5) argues that English additional language students in South African universities experience conceptual difficulties in four ways. First, their underpreparedness, mainly because of their schooling background, means that they are unable to deal with the cognitive demands of university education. Second, the discipline-specific nature of knowledge at university is highly abstract and far removed from their

own knowledge and experiences. The third aspect considers the fact that each discipline uses key concepts that the students must understand and master in order to be competent in it. Fourth, students learn scientific concepts through a language which is not their first language and this presents difficulty in the learning process. Therefore, low proficiency in the language of instruction leads to inadequate levels of academic proficiency.

Mother tongue-based bilingualism and multilingualism enable epistemic access by using the home language to access knowledge presented in a second language. This provides a foundation for contextualising newly acquired knowledge within pre-existing knowledge and should enable students to produce new knowledge in both content subjects and languages. The general view in mother tongue-based bilingual education is that the languages that a learner brings into the learning space should be perceived as a resource, rather than a problem. In South Africa, this raises two long-term challenges: research into the development of indigenous languages as languages of science and teaching in higher education has to be intensified, and African languages need to be further developed for use in higher education. Corpus planning in African languages, i.e. the development of African languages in scientific domains, and acquisition planning, i.e. the development and design of curricula to teach the African languages to their speakers and non-speakers, were therefore pivotal in the work of the SANTED multilingualism projects.

Besides the centrality of language in cognition, the work of the multilingualism projects was motivated by the role of language as a source of identity. In South Africa's multilingual context, and as citizens of a global environment, it is easy to minimise linguistic and cultural differences for the sake of what is perceived as 'unity' and easy communication. Where our university campuses are linguistically and culturally diverse, when one language (in this case English) is favoured over many others, it results in the other languages and cultures being sidelined and their speakers having limited means to express their own views in formal learning and social contexts. Communication classes that focus on language learning and cultural awareness are pivotal in providing an intervention in such cases.

SANTED project plans took cognisance of theories of learning, language teaching and learning, and language planning in multilingual contexts. The process of implementing these plans provided the framework for the implementation of multilingual education in the South African context. This provided rich material for the other focus of the projects, which was postgraduate research. Each of the universities that hosted the projects approached them in a manner consistent with their institutional and language contexts, but each reflected the key objectives of the SANTED multilingualism theme.

### **Introducing the four universities**

The four beneficiary universities of these projects were the University of KwaZulu-Natal in collaboration with the Durban University of Technology (2007–2009), Rhodes University (2007–2010), and the University of Cape Town (2007–2010).

#### *The Durban University of Technology-University of KwaZulu-Natal Project*

The Durban University of Technology (DUT) and the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)<sup>1</sup> are located in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, on the east coast of South Africa. The dominant language in the province is isiZulu (spoken by over 80 per cent of the total population in the region), followed by English, isiXhosa and Afrikaans.

During the period of SANTED activity, the institutions had over 65 000 students in total. At UKZN the institutional language policy, approved by the University Senate in 2006, named English and isiZulu as the official languages of the institution. The policy makes explicit the benefits of being bilingual, and commits the university to ensuring students' academic proficiency in English, the international and national language of wider communication. Acknowledging the underdevelopment of isiZulu in high function domains such as higher education, the university undertakes to initiate collaborations with regional universities to develop isiZulu usage at university to promote communicative proficiency in it as an additional language, as well as to

use it as a language of learning, instruction and administration (UKZN Language Policy 2006). While the UKZN Language Policy mentions Afrikaans as a third language, there is no explicit designated role for it in the university's teaching and other practices. The policy is in line with the requirements of the LPHE, but there is no indication that there was an implementation plan aligned to it. Except for some programmes on the teaching of isiZulu as an additional language to students, language teaching practices at the institutions, prior to the Multilingualism Project, were limited.

At the inception of the project, DUT had no official language policy. Its language policy was only approved in 2010. The formulation and publishing of a policy and its implementation plan is a requirement of the LPHE (2002), as indicated in the policy framework section.

The DUT and UKZN submitted a joint proposal and sought to consolidate their multilingual practices in the following areas to:

- enable non-isiZulu-speaking staff and students to learn isiZulu and begin to use it, selectively and when appropriate and feasible, for teaching and learning;
- develop additional staff capacity in teaching in isiZulu;
- develop the requisite disciplinary terminology and some teaching materials in isiZulu;
- develop a model for working towards multi-language teaching and learning; and
- produce graduates who have the capacity to interact professionally in both English and isiZulu with their clients, as appropriate.

These proposals for multilingual practices were incorporated into the projects which was renegotiated with the SANTED staff.

The DUT-UKZN Multilingualism Project was housed in the School of isiZulu Studies at UKZN. The two institutions implemented the project in the School of Education and the Departments of Nursing and Psychology at UKZN, and Dental Assisting at DUT.

The project consisted largely of second language learning programmes for staff and students in professional disciplines, development of

terminology lists and glossaries, translation of tutorial materials, and provision of interpreting services in isiZulu in DUT.

IsiZulu second language learning programmes in professional disciplines were offered in the Education Department to trainee-teachers in Early Childhood Development, in the Department of Community Health to students training in Nursing, as well as to students in the Psychology Department. Their main purpose was to provide English students with conversational proficiency, cultural awareness and sensitivity in contexts where isiZulu would be spoken during the students' professional experiential training at the university and as practitioners beyond university. In other words, the students were prepared and sensitised to the multilingual and multicultural South African society.

Professional language training is important in the South African context given the country's linguistic profile: English is the language of wider communication in professional contexts, it is the main medium of instruction in institutions of higher learning, but it is spoken by less than 9.6 per cent of the population and, when combined with Afrikaans (the medium of instruction at some historically Afrikaans-medium universities), is spoken by less than 25 per cent of the population. Therefore, over 75 per cent of the South African population speaks indigenous African languages. When this is applied in the context of universities as centres of vocational training, it means that most professionals trained in South Africa do not speak the language of the majority of the South African population they will serve when they leave university. General language learning programmes offered to students in professional disciplines at universities do not produce the kind of knowledge required from their candidates – the kind of vocation-specific language competence that students need to deal with their clients in a specific context. These students have different communicative needs and, as such, the communicative competence they need to develop is often different from that offered to students in general second language learning contexts. It is for this reason that vocational-specific language learning and teaching is now a preferred method of teaching second languages in vocation-specific contexts. Professional language learning and teaching was therefore

an intervention strategy to prepare professionals for a society where linguistic and cultural diversity is the norm. Its purpose was to prepare students to function in the multilingual and multicultural contexts in South Africa where isiZulu was spoken.

Generic isiZulu second language learning programmes were offered to academic and non-academic staff and students in other disciplines with the aim of reinforcing and sensitising them to institutional language policy provisions on multilingualism.

Another aspect of the DUT-UKZN Multilingualism Project involved the development of English-isiZulu terminology lists and glossaries to support learning in the professional disciplines listed above, as well as in Dental Assisting in DUT. Terminology lists and glossaries enabled the universities to provide academic support and to promote concept learning for English second language students.

There is a clear indication that the project spurred the implementation of UKZN's Language Policy. The focus of implementation was primarily on acquisition of isiZulu as an additional language for students speaking other languages, and corpus development where concepts in professional disciplines were developed or translated from English into isiZulu. The other outcome of the implementation of UKZN's Language Policy is that staff, from executives to support staff, became more aware of language issues in the context of higher education, particularly the role of isiZulu within the university and in the South African multilingual context. In the case of DUT, the institution developed and adopted its Language Policy in 2010. While there is no clear indication of the correlation between the SANTED activities and the adoption of the Language Policy, inference can be made that the policy formulation and its adoption must have been encouraged by the language-related activities driven by the SANTED Multilingualism Project.

The SANTED multilingualism projects were implemented at a time when the study of African languages and their role in higher education was marginalised. It therefore made sense that institutions that hosted the projects used the opportunity to revive scholarship in African languages, especially in relation to their significance in transforming higher education in terms of access and success. For this reason, all

the institutions had the projects hosted by, or had some relations with, the departments of African languages as academic homes for African languages. UKZN's SANTED Multilingualism Project was hosted by the Department of isiZulu. It is clear, and indicated above, that there was increased awareness from the university community of issues related to language and learning, and particularly the role of African languages in access, success and retention in higher education. However, there is no scientific baseline data to gauge the impact of the project on the 'growth' of the department, but there is evidence that the scientific output of the department, in the form of academic publications, increased during the SANTED period. The publications, that constituted reports on the process and implementation of the SANTED activities, were produced by staff and postgraduate students.

The DUT-UKZN Multilingualism Project certainly achieved its objectives, as conceptualised in their business plan, and as conceived in the multilingualism theme of the SANTED II Programme. The project piloted the introduction of multilingualism in teaching and learning at the two institutions, and provided an opportunity for reflection in the form of publications. The impact of the project on practices of multilingualism and their institutionalisation within the DUT and UKZN and the extent of their impact on promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity, access, success and retention of students, particularly those to whom English is a second language, must still be evaluated. The 2007-2009 period focused on the practical implementation of programmes, and reporting on the process of their implementation. The institutional adoption of these programmes will provide a basis for the evaluation of their impact on students and staff.

### *The University of Cape Town Project*

The University of Cape Town (UCT) is situated in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. The Province has Afrikaans, isiXhosa and English as its official languages. Afrikaans has the highest number of speakers while English has the fewest speakers. However, as with all South African universities, UCT is linguistically and culturally diverse



and its language of teaching and learning is English. Its Language Policy and Plan were approved and adopted by the University Senate in 1999, and revised in 2003. In UCT's policy, English is recognised as the medium of instruction, and academic language departments are tasked with the responsibility of ensuring students' academic proficiency in the language. The policy acknowledges the need to produce students who are proficient in other South African languages and who are aware of the multilingual nature of the South African society.

Unlike the UKZN and DUT, the University of Cape Town has a history of multilingualism in its teaching and learning practices, but until the SANTED phase only focussed on teaching the acquisition of isiXhosa to speakers of other languages. Institutional recognition of multilingualism was strengthened with the establishment of the Multilingualism Education Project (MEP) in 2005. The project's main responsibility is to drive the implementation of the institutional Language Policy with the objective of promoting a multilingual environment on campus by fostering multilingual proficiency and awareness amongst staff and students. It made sense for the UCT-SANTED Multilingualism Project to be hosted and coordinated by MEP. In implementing its activities, the project collaborated with the Department of African Languages and Literatures and the Department of Afrikaans, which had been offering academic programmes in the learning of isiXhosa and Afrikaans as additional languages to medical students and general isiXhosa courses to students in the Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty.

The activities of the project were based on objectives outlined in the business plan which were to:

- provide an isiXhosa communication skills course to staff and students; and
- facilitate the compilation of multilingual corpora and glossaries, including the development of a machine translator for African languages.

On the one hand, the project enabled the expansion and the consolidation of the academic isiXhosa second language courses that were already in

place, while introducing isiXhosa non-academic conversation courses to staff and students. The isiXhosa course in the Health Sciences Faculty was initially offered as a one-year course. With the introduction of the project, the course offering was changed to a six-year course that was presented alongside the medical training programme. The course was structured to provide physical contact with the teacher in the first two years and this was then gradually replaced by partial teacher support, and eventual independent learning. Materials developed during the SANTED phase, in the form of language learning CD-ROMs and phrasebooks, facilitated the independent learning. The programme was further customised and introduced in other professional disciplines, including Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy and Physiotherapy in the Health Sciences Faculty. Funding from SANTED enabled the development of course materials and various computer-assisted language learning materials, and the hiring of teachers to provide teaching support to the course. The teachers were capacitated on various aspects of language teaching for professional purposes.

The strength of the language courses was rooted in their integration into the curriculum of the health sciences courses, as well as the robust collaboration between MEP, academic language departments, and the targeted disciplines in the Faculty of Health Sciences.

For its non-academic language learning programmes MEP introduced certified short isiXhosa communication skills courses to staff and students. These courses further entrenched multilingualism on campus. Offering the course as a non-academic subject, but providing a certificate approved by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) at successful completion of the course, motivated students to see the value of participating in the course, but with less of the anxiety often associated with academic courses. The evaluation of both the academic and non-academic courses at the end of each cycle illustrates student and staff awareness of and sensitivity to issues of multilingualism on campus and beyond. The courses have also been fundamental in the introduction of 'homestays' for medical students when they stay with a family speaking isiXhosa or Afrikaans while they undertake their training at hospitals. Students reported that the ability to speak basic isiXhosa and Afrikaans enabled them to embrace other

cultures and to become sensitive to problems that could arise as a result of communication difficulties with their patients.

On the other hand, the work of the project enabled the extraction of English corpora and glossaries in the disciplines of Statistics and Mathematics, Law, Economics, Physics and Health Sciences. The Statistics and Mathematics, and Economics glossaries from the corpora have been translated from English into the other ten national official languages and uploaded to UCT's e-learning platform. The objective of this project was to pilot the use of African languages in facilitating concept learning, alongside English, the medium of instruction. This project for piloting the use of isiXhosa and other languages was not focused on the actual implementation of multilingual teaching, but rather on the development of materials for that purpose. While the glossaries were uploaded to the e-learning platform, there has been no study to report on their impact on students' learning or whether the glossaries facilitated quality learning. As with the UKZN-DUT project, the four-year period provided for the systematic development of concepts in African languages in specialised disciplines. The period after the SANTED intervention will facilitate the next stage of developing classroom methodologies to implement bilingual or multilingual teaching where African languages are used alongside English to support learning. The impact of such interventions can only be evaluated then.

Of the three SANTED multilingualism projects, the UCT project was the only one that developed three languages in its academic communication skills courses. In the Health Sciences Faculty, the project offered courses in both isiXhosa and Afrikaans to students who were proficient in English, with students graduating with proficiency in three languages. However, the specialised language glossary was translated into all the other official languages. The UCT Multilingualism Project provided a systematic and research-based approach to the design, development and implementation of their activities and its work on terminology planning, particularly the extraction of corpora, and development of multilingual glossaries, provided a breakthrough in the development of indigenous languages for use in higher education.

### *The Rhodes University Project*

Rhodes University (RU) is situated in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. With about 7 000 students, it is one of the smallest universities in the country. The project was guided in its activities by the university's Language Policy and the vision and mission of the African Language Studies (ALS) Section of the School of Languages where the project was housed. The ALS's objective is to promote academic literacy in English (the language of learning and teaching of RU) as well as to encourage teaching and learning of isiXhosa as an additional and academic language.

Prior to the launch of the SANTED Multilingualism Project in 2007, the ALS had just over 80 students studying isiXhosa as an additional language at undergraduate level. With the exception of the staff communication skills course at beginner level, which was introduced in 2006, the isiXhosa additional language course was the only such course offered at the university. In 2007, the ALS had three staff members and the project employed the coordinator as well as five other staff members. From its inception in 2007, the project institutionalised the programmes it had conceptualised within the Humanities, Pharmacy, Education and Law faculties, and in the Human Resources Division (HRD). It is within these entities that the activities of the project were planned, designed and implemented to realise the broad aims of the project.

The programmes that the RU SANTED Multilingualism Project conceptualised focused on three areas: the development of the isiXhosa second language learning programmes, the development of teaching support materials in specialised academic disciplines aimed at students speaking English as an additional language, and the advancement of scholarship in isiXhosa.

More specifically, the project operated in the following broad areas:

- enabling the acquisition of isiXhosa, as an additional language, for both academic and support staff at the university;
- enabling the acquisition of isiXhosa as an additional language in

- professional programmes (Pharmacy, Law, Education, Journalism and Media Studies);
- developing bilingual glossaries and piloting the use of isiXhosa as an additional teaching resource in specialised academic disciplines (Computer Science, Political Studies, Geography);
  - promoting African languages in ICT and other domains (offering human language technology courses in mother tongue and localising computer software terminology); and
  - promoting scholarship in and intellectualisation of African languages, particularly by advancing isiXhosa as a subject of study for mother tongue students at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

The Pharmacy and Law faculties offered language acquisition and cultural awareness courses in isiXhosa. The Pharmacy Faculty course was designed together with the community engagement arm of the faculty while the Law Faculty course was designed in collaboration with the Legal Aid Clinic. In both these faculties the students were required, as part of service learning and community involvement, to engage with local community members who speak isiXhosa. The courses were designed and piloted in 2007 and offered as credit-bearing electives from 2007. The Pharmacy Faculty course was offered to final year and doctoral students who were already in the field and the Law Faculty course was offered to students in their penultimate year of study.

The Education Faculty course also focused on language acquisition and cultural awareness. The curriculum for the course was designed in 2007 and 2008. It was introduced into the curriculum of the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in 2009 as a credit-bearing module and was offered to all PGCE students.

The materials designed and made available to teach these courses consisted of printed manuals, phrase books and, except for the Education Faculty course, audio and a digital version of the course manual on a flash drive.

The curriculum for the Journalism course was developed and designed in collaboration with the School of Journalism and Media Studies in

2009, and the course was piloted in 2010 and 2011. It was included in the Bachelor of Journalism programme as a compulsory course in 2012. The course has two streams, one for mother tongue speakers with a focus on writing and translation skills in isiXhosa, and another for speakers of other languages where the focus is on developing proficiency in isiXhosa and cultural awareness in the context of journalism.

IsiXhosa, as a subject of study for mother tongue students, had not been offered at RU for 15 years and one of the main activities in the RU project involved the reintroduction of the subject. The academic programme established as a result of the project is an indication of how it reinvigorated the scientific study of isiXhosa and resuscitated the ALS at the university. By the end of the project, the programme had over 60 undergraduate students and an equal number of postgraduate students, including students at doctoral level. One of the reasons often cited for poor education in African languages, both at school and university, is the lack of exposure of teachers to mother tongue education. It makes sense, therefore, that the development of conceptual understanding of school children in their mother tongue and the success of mother tongue education are dependent on teachers who have also received training in their mother tongue.

As a service to academic and non-academic staff, the project also continued with the isiXhosa communication skills course at beginner level that had been in place prior to the inception of the project, and then went on to design and develop an intermediate course. The project applied for SAQA approval of the course and, on successful completion, the participants were awarded a certificate with a recognised unit standard. At the inception of the project, this programme was managed and financed by the Human Resources Division of the university. During the SANTED period, this relationship was maintained with SANTED providing the staff that professionally designed, developed and offered these courses. This arrangement made it easy for the programme to become sustainable when SANTED funding came to an end.

The development of bilingual teaching support material was also one of the leading activities of the project. Bilingual (English–isiXhosa) glossaries were developed in Computer Science, Political Studies and

Geography. This was in response to a need identified by academic staff in these departments, concerned with the many entry-level students enrolled in these courses who failed to progress further, because English was not their mother tongue. They sought language assistance from the project to facilitate cognition.

The project also developed a bilingual computer literacy booklet which was used, in collaboration with the Computer Science Department, in local high schools. The booklet was also utilised by the teachers enrolled in the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) programme in the Education Faculty. The materials were developed by masters and doctoral students in isiXhosa.

In its first year the project also developed a multimedia facility which was localised into the other ten official languages in collaboration with Translate.org, a non-governmental open-source software localising organisation. The facility, named the SANTED Peter Mtuzze Multimedia Facility, was launched in 2008. The development of glossaries, CD-ROMs, and the teaching of most of the courses in the project, were supported by this facility. The facility continues to support the teaching and learning of all other languages offered by the School of Languages such as French, German, Chinese, Afrikaans, Dutch, Latin and Greek.

The main goals of the project were to implement the RU Language Policy to promote multilingualism on campus, enhance student academic success, develop African language scholarship, and advance isiXhosa as an intellectual and academic language. Generally speaking, the activities of the project and the teaching of proficiency in isiXhosa strengthened and promoted the use of isiXhosa alongside English at the university, thereby creating an environment where previously marginalised languages became valuable and visible in both formal and informal learning contexts.

## **Challenges, unexpected results and lessons learnt**

From the discussion above, it is evident that the SANTED multilingualism projects were successful on many fronts, but there were also many challenges in the implementation of project activities. On reflection,

the impact of the challenges was mitigated by the supportive and non-prescriptive nature of the management and monitoring offered by the SANTED Programme management and staff. Their regular visits and reporting helped projects to identify challenges before they became problems and allowed them to change their course, but within the focus areas identified in their business plans. Having said that, there were critical challenges that could not be resolved, and which affected the outcomes of the projects.

The use of African languages and the implementation of multilingualism in higher education requires expertise that has not yet been sufficiently developed at universities and other post-school training entities. This presented the challenges of developing the appropriate pedagogy and practices related to implementing multi-language usage in higher education, and finding staff with the capacity and expertise to undertake the activities of the projects, including language learning curriculum design in professional disciplines and terminology planning. The SANTED office therefore arranged workshops with leading local and international scholars who could provide expertise and share knowledge for all project staff. Unfortunately these workshops were one-off events and the implementation of their recommendations was not always carried out in a systematic way by the various projects. For example, a computer-based tool that was introduced at a workshop on extraction of corpora in specialised disciplines for terminology planning was used by only one of the projects afterwards, even though its benefits in corpus extraction were immense. Furthermore, because of the interdisciplinary nature of the programmes, it was often a challenge to find a person with expertise in both the language and the discipline within which the projects worked. All the projects were able to identify a willing expert in each discipline, but these experts were often not language specialists, and language specialists did not necessarily possess the disciplinary knowledge for identifying and glossing concepts in another language. This often raised questions about the appropriateness of the resulting terminology within the discipline and for the level of study at which it would be used.

Another challenge related to the staffing of the projects. Except in the case of Rhodes University, all project coordinators were, first and



foremost, employees of the host universities and project coordination was a secondary responsibility for these people. Given the fixed period within which the multilingualism projects received funding, and the inevitably output-focused form of reporting, important features of activities were sometimes overlooked. It is in the post-SANTED phase that the academic departments that adopted the project activities, through their postgraduate programmes, are systematically documenting the conceptualisation, design, development, implementation and impact of the courses. This research should inform the future implementation of multilingual teaching and learning practices in the South African higher education environment.

The linguistic profile of staff at the universities also proved a challenge. Whilst the non-academic communication skills courses might have provided participants with basic conversation skills in African languages, as well as an awareness of issues of language and learning, their language abilities would not enable them to implement with confidence the use of other languages as mediums of instruction alongside English. The linguistic profile of staff is changing slowly and therefore the strategies of implementing multilingual teaching and learning, especially with the objective of facilitating epistemic access, need to take this into consideration. During the SANTED phase RU and UCT piloted mother tongue-based bilingual teaching using multilingual senior students and tutors.

The challenges experienced, although worth noting, were negligible compared to the unexpected and positive results of the projects. Firstly, the projects fostered collaboration, not only between the recipient institutions, but also with other institutions that invited participants to share their experiences of implementing multilingualism. The models adopted by the SANTED multilingualism projects have left a lasting legacy, because their achievements and the models they developed have been shared with, and adopted by, many institutions in the country.

The activities of SANTED also attracted other sources of funding from within the country. The UCT SANTED Multilingualism Project, for example, secured funding from the National Research Foundation (NRF) to recruit students from the Department of Electrical Engineering

to undertake research on human language technology. The RU SANTED Multilingualism Project received funding for a scholarship for Applied Language Studies over a three-year period. The success of these financial grant applications relied on the research environment created by the SANTED work.

Another valuable consequence of the projects is the manner in which the campus community at large, from the managing executives to support staff, embraced issues of multilingualism in higher education. Senior managers, across the three universities, participated in the communication skills and cultural awareness courses. Academic staff members, also in all three projects, started recognising language as a factor in students' underperformance and considered intervention strategies based on language issues. The successful introduction of models of bilingual practices in teaching, for example in the PGCE Programme at UKZN, and in the ACE Programme at RU, are also examples of positive outcomes of the projects. These modules provided a classroom environment to debate issues around multilingualism in higher education, particularly the role of African languages in facilitating meaningful learning and social cohesion, among other things.

Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the SANTED interventions, relationships were created that resulted in cutting-edge interdisciplinary research which has been published in scientific journals. The UKZN Press also dedicated a volume of its journal *Alternation* to the work of the SANTED multilingualism projects.

The revitalisation of the ALS at RU and the reinvigoration of the study of isiXhosa as a scientific language remains one of the most positive outcomes of the RU SANTED Multilingualism Project. The ALS, in 2006, prior to the inception of SANTED, had two staff members and approximately 80 students studying isiXhosa as an additional language at undergraduate level. By 2010, there were eight staff members, four of whom were previously employed through SANTED, and student numbers had increased to over 500. Approximately 20 per cent of these are postgraduate students.

One of the issues hampering the implementation of multilingualism in higher education in South Africa is insufficient funding. The funding

formula used by the state for research at universities awards the lowest level of funding to research in languages. Therefore, even if a university commits to multilingualism, state funding remains a challenge. The nature of these multilingualism projects, although output-orientated, allowed for the piloting of programmes which, in retrospect, would not have been possible in this funding context. Because of the successes of the projects, many of them were institutionalised and integrated into the curriculum.

### **Sustainability of the multilingualism projects beyond SANTED**

One of the key objectives of the SANTED multilingualism projects has been the institutional uptake of the courses conceptualised during the SANTED period. The academic courses were generally integrated in the curricula in which they were taught. Other non-academic courses, for example the staff communication skills courses, are funded through the universities' operating budgets.

Institutional language committees at UCT, RU and UKZN are instrumental in keeping debates on multilingualism in higher education alive. RU, whose Language Committee was formally constituted in 2010, hosts an annual event to celebrate multilingualism in higher education, and UKZN has an annual interdisciplinary conference on issues of multilingualism in higher education.

There is no doubt that the SANTED activities provided an impetus in research on multilingualism in higher education, both within and outside the institutions that hosted the projects. RU African Language Studies was awarded a Research Chair on Intellectualisation of African Languages, Multilingualism and Education by the National Research Fund. The research derives its focus areas from those conceptualised during the SANTED period. UKZN also funded a Research Chair in African Languages. In both instances, the research and other activities initiated by the SANTED multilingualism projects continue to form part of the institutions' enterprises.

## Conclusion

The activities of the SANTED multilingualism projects attempted to implement key objectives expressed in national and institutional language policy. These objectives include using language to facilitate equity of access, both physical and epistemic, to all students entering higher education; facilitating academic success; and creating sensitivity and awareness of issues related to linguistic and cultural diversity within the university environment and beyond. These principles are fundamental in preparing students to be responsible members of a multilingual nation and global village who will contribute to the socio-economic development of South African society.

The promotion of multilingualism and development of African languages in higher education is an inherently difficult task, especially given the history of the practice of these languages in South African higher education and in society at large. However, the SANTED multilingualism projects presented a timely opportunity to pilot multilingual teaching and learning models using African languages. The institutional uptake of these programmes, as well as the research opportunities in African languages that they presented, benefitted all the participating institutions, albeit to varying degrees. Dialogues on the role of African languages in teaching and learning are robust at institutions that hosted the SANTED multilingualism projects, and within the Department of Higher Education and Training.

## Endnotes

1. UKZN is the product of a merger in 2004 of the University of Durban–Westville (UDW); which was established during apartheid to cater for Indians; the University of Natal, which originally enrolled white South Africans; and an incorporated teacher training college. The merger was part of the post-apartheid policy of desegregating higher education, amongst other things. UKZN has five campuses made up of three former separate institutions.



## CHAPTER 6

# Challenges relating to the establishment of comprehensive universities in the South African higher education sector

*Martin Oosthuizen*

The restructuring of the South African higher education system from 2001 onwards introduced a new theme to the second phase of the SANTED Programme. Provision was made for a project on the academic mission and nature of the comprehensive universities, a new type of institution that resulted from a large-scale restructuring of the higher education system in South Africa (DoE 2001; DoE 2002). Thus, in November 2005, the University of Johannesburg (UJ) and the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU), two of the six comprehensive universities that were created at the start of 2005, received an invitation from the director of the SANTED Programme to participate in a project that was funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), in conjunction with the national Department of Education (DoE), with the following broad aim:

*The development of a new academic structure and qualifications profile that brings together career-focused diploma-level programmes, career-focused and professional degree programmes and general-formative degree programmes with appropriate articulation pathways.*

This chapter reviews the SANTED Project at the two universities by considering the national and institutional contexts and challenges, the planning, organisation and implementation of the project, and its outcomes.

## The national policy context

The creation of the comprehensive universities was part of a systematic process to reform the South African higher education system in order to address the legacy of fragmentation, inequality and inefficiency from the previous political dispensation. Since the election of the first democratic government in 1994, key reports and policy documents such as the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) (1996), the Education White Paper 3 (DoE 1997) and the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) (DoE 2001) developed a range of plans aimed at creating a single nationally coordinated system that is equitable, responsive and efficient. The system should be sufficiently diverse to provide all learners with optimal opportunities for access, as well as articulation and progression to higher levels of study. From a political perspective it is clear that one of the ideals of the reform process was to promote seamless mobility for learners between different higher education qualification levels and types.

As part of the reform process, in 2002 the Ministry of Education announced an ambitious plan to restructure the higher education landscape by means of a series of institutional mergers and incorporations (DoE 2002). Perhaps the most striking feature of the restructuring process was the creation of comprehensive universities that would straddle the binary divide between the university and non-university sectors. As is typical of binary systems, the universities focused on general-formative and professional education and basic research, while the non-university sector, which consisted of institutions called 'technikons' (similar in character to polytechnics) had a more applied character, offering vocational and career-orientated education and conducting applied research. While the binary system continued to exist until 2004, the Ministry's intention was that the comprehensive universities should make a unique contribution to the ideals of enhanced access and student mobility by virtue of their ability to offer academic programmes across the full spectrum of higher education qualifications. According to the Ministry, the new institutional type would increase access to career-focused programmes for a greater diversity of students, improve

articulation between career-focused and general academic programmes, and foster greater synergies between basic and applied research (DoE 2002:24). What the ministerial statement failed to do was to provide an explicit academic rationale as to why and how the comprehensive universities would be able to achieve these goals, especially with respect to access and articulation. In this regard, three challenges in the national policy context deserve particular mention.

First, and most critically, the South African higher education system lacked adequate explanatory models relating to knowledge and the curriculum which could serve as a basis for decisions and practices relating to access and articulation. Internationally, little was available by way of actual examples and theoretical analyses that could support the development of such models. As a result, there was no clear basis for translating the ministerial statement from the realm of political aspiration to the practice of access and articulation. In other words, while the political ideals of the restructuring process associated the comprehensive universities with the promise of seamless mobility for students, the extent to which they actually could contribute to such a goal was by no means clear. In this sense, it is interesting to note that the comprehensive universities continue to face a similar challenge to that faced by the dual sector universities in the United Kingdom and Australia (Garrod 2009; Moodie 2009). While the latter institutions bridge the divide between further and higher education, and thus differ from the South African comprehensive universities, they illustrate how difficult it is to develop coherent articulation pathways between different types of qualifications. In principle, the dual sector universities provide a powerful mechanism for challenging the boundaries that separate further and higher education. In practice, however, they often continue to entrench the distinction between further and higher education, thereby failing to realise the promise of articulation between different qualification types and levels (Weelahan 2009:29-44).

A second challenge was the absence of a unified qualifications framework. Despite the dissolution of the binary system through the reclassification of technikons as universities of technology in 2004, and the creation of comprehensive universities, the South African



higher education system continued to be regulated by separate qualification structures for the university and technikon sectors. An integrated qualifications framework, namely the new Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF), was only promulgated in 2007 and implemented from 2009 onwards. The SANTED Project thus found itself in a rather paradoxical situation. In order to develop proposals on a new academic structure and qualifications profile it was dependent on the development of an integrated qualifications framework that could provide some guidance on the possibilities for articulation between different types of qualifications. However, the insights that the project was expected to develop on articulation were integral to the development of that framework.

The preceding remarks illustrate that while the political decision to create the comprehensive universities had already been taken, there was considerable uncertainty in terms of their academic nature and role. The assumptions were that the ministerial restructuring programme attached to them were untested and, in the absence of sound theoretical evidence, largely conjectural. In essence, the South African higher education sector was embarking on an experiment in which the comprehensive universities would have to explore the fundamental questions around knowledge and the curriculum that should form the basis for increased access to and articulation between different qualification types, as well as the development of an integrated qualifications framework. Clearly, the invitation to UJ and NMMU to participate in the SANTED Programme was strongly motivated by the expectation that the project work would contribute substantially to the clarification of these fundamental questions.

A third aspect of the national policy context that contributed to the uncertainty around the academic role of the comprehensive universities, was the need to clarify the manner in which the differentiation of the higher education sector should be achieved, as called for by the Education White Paper 3 (DoE 1997) and, subsequently, the NPHE (DoE 2001). As part of their engagement with the SANTED Project, NMMU and UJ would need to clarify the basis on which they should develop their academic structure and qualifications profile within a differentiated

system. The question was whether differentiation should be based upon institutional types or upon programme profiles. The national policy context provided two views on this question. In 2000, the Council on Higher Education (CHE) produced a position paper that linked differentiation to three distinct institutional types, which in the case of public contact universities were referred to (rather unfortunately) as comprehensive postgraduate and research institutions, extensive masters and selective doctoral institutions, and bedrock institutions (CHE 2000). By contrast, in its response to the CHE report, the NPHE argued in favour of programme differentiation, stating that institutions should pursue different missions based on differentiated qualification and programme profiles that were responsive to national and regional needs and commensurate with institutional capacity (DoE 2001). As part of the SANTED Project, UJ and NMMU would need to clarify whether the fact that they belonged to a specific institutional type was a relevant factor in determining their academic mission and profile, or whether, in the spirit of the NPHE, they, and the other comprehensive universities, should be allowed to determine their own development trajectories without being restricted by pre-determined parameters on the basis of this new institutional typology.

## **Institutional contexts and challenges**

Two general challenges facing NMMU and UJ with respect to their establishment as comprehensive universities concerned the creation of a coherent academic mission, in the context of the continuing influence of the academic cultures of their legacy institutions. A brief outline of the formation of each institution and their enrolment profile during the course of the SANTED Project provides some perspective on these challenges.

NMMU and UJ were founded at the start of 2005 through the merger of traditional universities with technikons, which, as has been noted, were reclassified as universities of technology in 2004. In the case of the NMMU, the merger involved the University of Port Elizabeth (UPE) and the Port Elizabeth Technikon, pursuant to the incorporation

of the Port Elizabeth campus of the former Vista University into UPE at the start of 2004. Similarly, UJ was formed through the merger of Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) and Technikon Witwatersrand, pursuant to the incorporation of the Soweto and East Rand campuses of the former Vista University into RAU at the start of 2004.

During the period from 2006 to 2009, NMMU had an average enrolment of 23 415 students, with 88 per cent in undergraduate qualifications. Of these, 54 per cent were in diploma programmes and the remaining 46 per cent in undergraduate degrees where more than two-thirds of students were enrolled in professional programmes. Thus NMMU maintained a predominantly undergraduate enrolment profile, with a focus on vocational, career-orientated and professional education. It should also be noted that within the reconfigured higher education landscape, NMMU was the only provider of vocational and career-orientated higher education qualifications within its metropolitan area as well and in the western part of the Eastern Cape Province. The metropolitan and regional areas that it serves have strong needs in terms of skills for sectors including the automotive and petro-chemical industries, engineering, manufacturing, construction, logistics, healthcare and environmental management.

During the same period, student enrolment at UJ grew enormously, from just under 43 000 to 49 000 with about 6 500 of these registered for postgraduate qualifications. The growth, in other words, was almost entirely at the undergraduate level with growth in both diploma and degree programmes. Enrolment in degree programmes took 51 per cent of the UJ share in 2006, increasing to 54 per cent by 2009. As at NMMU, approximately a third of these students were enrolled in general formative programmes and the rest in professional qualifications. As important for its future trajectory was its location in Johannesburg, the financial and industrial heart of South Africa, and its inheritance from one of its legacy institutions of a fairly strong research platform.

This brief statistical sketch suggests that both institutions may have found it plausible to consider the provision of career-orientated and professional education as a defining characteristic of their academic mission. At NMMU, this option enjoyed considerable support, at least

during the early stages of its post-merger development. By contrast, UJ chose to maintain a wide range of programme offerings while also pursuing a more intense research mission.

Secondly, each university needed to forge a new culture from the distinct academic values, belief systems and traditions of its legacy institutions. It should be acknowledged that both universities and universities of technology harbour a diversity of academic cultures. Nevertheless, it remains useful to note Harman's (2002) observations on the effect of different cultural traditions within cross-sectoral mergers in Australian higher education. According to Harman, academic staff members from universities and the non-university sector have divergent orientations towards the nature of their academic roles, their professional identities, the importance of research, teaching and learning, and governance. One of the biggest challenges in a cross-sectoral merger is to forge these cultures into a coherent educational community (Harman 2002). The same dynamic of different historical cultures would continue to exert a powerful influence on the work of the SANTED Project at both UJ and NMMU.

The specific academic challenges facing the universities are those that have already been mentioned in the previous section, namely the need to develop an adequate explanatory model or models relating to knowledge and the curriculum, the lack of an integrated qualifications framework as a structure for the development of articulation pathways, and the need to clarify their role within the restructured higher education system with its different institutional types. By way of further elaboration, it is necessary to make some comments about the complexities of the separate qualification pathways for universities of technology and traditional universities. The most contentious and significant issue, which continues to have sector-wide implications, concerned the substantive comparability of the qualification pathways within the two frameworks below the masters degree level. The mere fact that qualification types may be pegged at the same level on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) did not necessarily imply that they were equivalent in terms of the knowledge and skills that they developed. Therefore it was critical to address questions with respect

to articulation possibilities between the separate qualification pathways, and to clarify to what extent they constituted equivalent parallel routes for access to masters degree study. What was needed was a model of knowledge and the curriculum that would make it possible to move beyond naïve and sometimes ideological assumptions about equivalence, in order to explore and clarify the knowledge properties and curricular nature and purpose of different qualification types within particular academic fields and disciplines. As Wheelahan (2009:36) remarks ‘epistemological boundaries must be explicitly navigated, rather than ignored, if students are to be supported in crossing them’.

At the heart of the merger process at both universities, therefore, lay the challenge of understanding how knowledge and the curriculum work in different types of qualifications, so that the strengths of different qualification types could be maintained or re-established, and so that an adequate basis could be developed for making principled decisions on access as well as articulation and progression routes between qualifications.

### **Limitations and opportunities of the SANTED Project at UJ and NMMU**

This section of the chapter considers the limitations and opportunities of the SANTED Project as a resource for addressing the challenges that NMMU and UJ faced in establishing themselves as comprehensive universities. One tension was certainly that neither institution could wait for the results of the project before making key decisions on their academic identity. However, while it may have been useful for the project findings to have been available at an earlier stage, the project still would have needed to demonstrate its usefulness as a resource in the process of identity formation. The more substantive constraint was that the project was an externally funded initiative, and therefore that it would need to negotiate the delicate balance between the interests of the national Department of Education and Norad, and those of institutional leadership. The risk was that the two universities might view it as an attempt to steer them in a direction that was not commensurate with

their own interests and aspirations. This problem manifests itself at each institution, though at different stages of the project.

From an early stage of the merger process, it was clear that UJ aspired to position itself within the top echelon of the South African higher education sector. This ambition was understandable, in the light of the reputational advantages that leading research universities enjoy internationally and the benefits accorded to them by the steering mechanisms within the national system. In particular, while the South African policy environment sought to promote diversity, it made use of a funding framework that applied equally to all institutions, and which was geared towards the recognition of the programmatic and research activities typically associated with the leading traditional universities. Therefore, it made strategic sense for UJ to adapt its academic mission accordingly, with the result that undergraduate diplomas were viewed more as access routes into university study than as important qualifications in their own right. In the light of the strategic sense-making process at UJ, the SANTED Project was viewed inevitably with some caution by its leadership, because of uncertainty around its underlying assumptions with respect to the academic role and profile of comprehensive universities. The apprehension around the motivations of the external sponsors was an important reason for the insufficient integration of the project into mainstream strategic and academic planning activities at UJ.

At NMMU, at least during the earlier phases of the project, institutional leadership was more open to exploring the possibility of creating a new kind of university. A factor that may have influenced the NMMU leadership was the university's strong presence in undergraduate vocational, career-orientated and professional education, as pointed out in the preceding section. The different stances amongst the institutional leadership of the two universities provide one explanation for the greater extent to which the SANTED Project was embedded at NMMU. At a later stage, as a new leadership took over at NMMU, there was a greater concern to shape the university according to the norms of the traditional academic status hierarchy. Arguably, though the SANTED Project was still seen as a useful endeavour, it became less important in terms of the realisation of a newly emerging academic mission and strategy.

A further risk was that, as an externally funded initiative, the project might fail to have an adequate long-term impact on academic planning. On the one hand, it could be argued that each university could have done more to promote the longer-term integration of the results and perspectives generated by the project into relevant organisational structures and academic policies and process. On the other hand, both institutions have continued to draw on the insights gained from the project in initiatives such as the development of articulation pathways between further and higher education, curriculum development and reform, and the policies and strategies related to teaching and learning that have been informed by much greater understanding of the differentiated programme pathways offered by both of these universities. Perhaps it is necessary to take a longer view of the process by means of which the project findings find their way into institutional structures and policies. It may also be prudent to accept that difficulties with respect to the institutional integration of the project during its lifetime were part of the inevitable contestation around the academic mission and role of each institution, and that the perspectives that it generated constituted critical reference points in this process.

Thus, despite the challenges related to institutional integration, the fact that the project was externally funded had certain advantages. It introduced new voices into the sectoral and institutional dialogue, thereby opening up opportunities for critical engagement and research that could and did challenge dominant assumptions and agendas. For instance, at a sectoral level, critical questions could be raised about naïve assumptions linked to articulation, the steering instruments that are necessary to enable differentiation, and the role of comprehensive universities in a differentiated system. At an institutional level, similar debates could be held with respect to mission differentiation, the value of different types of qualifications, steering mechanisms to promote internal differentiation, and the role of comprehensive universities in promoting social justice by means of enhanced opportunities for access and articulation. An important factor in the successful promotion of such critical engagement was that the SANTED Programme Director regularly met with the project leadership to discuss its practical impact on the academic design of each university,

while both the director and representatives from Norad met on a number of occasions with institutional leaders to engage in a similar discussion. Equally important is the fact that while Norad expected demonstrable project outcomes, it consistently recognised the complexities of the project and gave the two institutions considerable latitude in the manner in which they conducted the project work. The understanding that Norad and its representatives demonstrated in their response to the regular project reports, as well as in meetings with institutional representatives, did much to undergird the project during the rather protracted period of uncertainty and slow progress that characterised the initial stages of its implementation.

### **Initiating the project: Development of a business plan and location of the project at each university**

In response to the invitation from the director of the SANTED Programme, the two universities constituted a joint Project Steering Committee (PSC) to oversee the development and implementation of a business plan. To promote buy-in, the PSC was jointly chaired by a deputy vice-chancellor from each university, and consisted of various senior academic managers, including faculty deans and heads of academic support units. As a further strategy to promote understanding and engagement with the project, the two universities submitted the business plan for approval to their Academic Planning Committees, and in the case of UJ, to its Executive Management Committee, before submission to the SANTED Directorate. While it may not have been strictly necessary for the two universities to submit a joint business plan, the process did allow them to clarify the aims, scope and benefits of the project, to strengthen relationships and to explore possibilities for collaboration.

The business plan defined the aims of the project, which was to run from 2006 to 2009, as being to allow the two universities to:

- define the distinctive characteristics of their qualifications structure and academic profile within the institutional typology of the South African higher education sector;



- develop coherent approaches to curriculum consolidation and reconfiguration and academic programme models;
- develop appropriate access and retention models and strategies; and
- develop appropriate articulation pathways within and between various programmes.

These aims were clearly commensurate with the challenges at the national and institutional level, and provided a coherent framework for the project work. As an implementation framework, the business plan proposed that the project should be organised around three focus areas and a set of ten case studies. The focus areas concerned the academic mission and design of UJ and NMMU as comprehensive universities (focus area A), curriculum models and articulation (focus area B) and access and retention (focus area C). A joint task team consisting of staff members from each institution was charged with responsibility for each focus area.

The ten case studies related to disciplines and fields in which both or at least one of the universities offered undergraduate diploma and degree programmes. These formed the crux of the project, as they provided the platform for the empirical work that would need to be done in order to develop principled approaches to curriculum design, access and articulation. By means of the case studies, the project intended to develop a clearer understanding of the role that different forms of knowledge play within different academic programmes (and their associated occupational fields), ranging from those with a general formative orientation, to those with a professional or occupational orientation. On this basis, the case studies would contribute to the development of a framework for clarifying how knowledge works, or should work, in different types of curricula, especially those that prepare learners for particular occupational roles. In essence, therefore, the case studies intended to develop a coherent basis for comparing different types of qualifications within an academic field or discipline by means of an analysis of their curricular properties.

An important aspect of the work on knowledge and curriculum was

that the case studies should address the effect of academic and vocational drift on the design of undergraduate diplomas and degrees at the two universities.

Academic drift occurs when universities of technology compete with traditional universities in terms of the academic prestige of their qualifications and research, leading, *inter alia*, to a tendency to increase the theoretical content of qualifications that are meant to have a more applied nature. By contrast, vocational drift entails that universities increase the responsiveness of their academic programmes and research to practical needs, which, amongst other trends, may entail that programmes that should have a strong theoretical orientation take on an increasingly applied character (Codling & Meek 2006).

At NMMU and UJ, the result of academic and vocational drift was reflected by a convergence between the curricular character of undergraduate diplomas and degrees in some academic fields and disciplines. While convergence led to some redundancy amongst different qualification types within the same field, it also had negative implications for student success and articulation. Inappropriate curriculum design as a result of vocational and academic drift could lead to poor student performance because, for instance, students with diploma entry could not cope with the complexity of the modules offered in the first year of a diploma, or because a degree with too little theoretical depth provided an inadequate preparation for postgraduate study. Furthermore, the blurring of the distinctions between the content of diplomas and degrees could lead to a lack of responsiveness, as students with a specific type of qualification might not develop the knowledge and skills associated with their qualification profile. As will be observed later in the chapter, the case study work found clear examples of convergence in various disciplinary areas.

The work on the focus areas relating to curriculum models and articulation, and access and retention, were strongly dependant on the perspectives generated from the case studies. Due to the scale of the case study work, it was proposed that dedicated researchers should be appointed to take responsibility for them.

An aspect of the business plan that would pose challenges during the

implementation of the project was the tight model of collaboration that the universities proposed. While the terms of the project stipulated that it should include a collaborative component, the universities interpreted this requirement in a manner that was not necessarily intended by Norad and the DoE. Given the substantial geographical distance between them and the differences in their settings – in terms of specific merger dynamics, cultures and regional higher education landscapes – it may have been better to adopt a looser approach to collaboration. In other words, each institution may have progressed more quickly by using more of its own initiative to work on the project areas and then sharing findings and identifying opportunities for mutual support and collaboration as the work progressed. When the universities eventually moved to this kind of approach in mid-2008 it led to increased productivity in the substantive research work.

Two lessons flow from this point. Firstly, there was an understanding, at least amongst some members of the project leadership, that collaboration should be pursued in as close a manner as possible, while this was not necessarily the expectation amongst the funders. It would have been useful for the institutions to clarify expectations around the collaborative element with the SANTED Directorate and Norad as this may have avoided some tensions that subsequently developed between them. Secondly, collaboration should be managed in a creative and flexible manner and should not impose models that divert energy towards meetings and other forms of consultation that do not contribute to meaningful progress.

With respect to organisational aspects, at each university the project was located within the centre or unit that was responsible for academic planning, namely the Centre for Planning and Institutional Development (CPID) at NMMU and the Office for Institutional Change at UJ. This location made sense in terms of the project's focus on academic planning issues. Both universities also provided effective administrative support in terms of financial administrative systems, office accommodation and other infrastructural requirements such as the use of ICT services and technical services.

## **Implementation of the project**

This section of the chapter reviews three areas of challenge that had to be negotiated in order to promote the successful implementation of the project, namely aspects of its practical organisation, differences in institutional approaches to the case studies, and the lack of expertise relating to the conceptual analysis of knowledge and the curriculum. Lastly, reference is made to arrangements for monitoring and reporting.

A first aspect of the project's practical organisation is that the initial structures that were created for oversight and coordination purposes were over-elaborate. Thus there was a joint Project Steering Committee (PSC) that met on a quarterly basis, a PSC Executive, which was initially intended to meet on a monthly basis, as well as what was referred to as a Broad Academic Task Team (BATT) with the responsibility of coordinating the work of the three task teams on the focus areas. The project structures led to unnecessary duplication and in 2007 they were simplified through the elimination of the BATT, and agreement that the PSC Executive would meet less frequently.

Lack of capacity constituted another practical challenge. In some cases, the multiple commitments of the key institutional leaders who were involved in the project led to slow progress. However, their participation was a critical condition for its success, as only they could make the key decisions and recommendations around mission formulation and curriculum models, and relate the project to the broader process of establishing the new comprehensive universities. A more pertinent challenge was that both universities struggled to make appropriate appointments in the senior researcher positions for the case study work. It took until almost mid-2007 for these positions to be filled, causing a considerable delay in the start of sustained work on the case studies.

While the practical challenges with respect to project implementation could be addressed within the framework of the business plan, the different institutional approaches to the conduct of the case study work could not. The basic model for the case studies was the same at each university, involving the gathering, analysis and synthesis of information for the purpose of clarifying the curricular characteristics of specific

qualifications and programmes, and making proposals on a consolidated qualification structure within an academic field or discipline. At NMMU, concern that the responsible academics should take ownership of the case study process gave it a strong iterative character, with regular interactions between the project staff and participating schools and departments, and an emphasis on curriculum proposals that could be implemented in practice. One unintended consequence of the NMMU approach was that the case studies usually presented the first systematic process for engaging staff members from the two legacy institutions in substantive academic dialogue, thereby contributing to the formation of a new community from diverse cultures – as discussed in the section on institutional contexts and challenges earlier in the chapter. At UJ, by contrast, the case studies were approached as a research project by the project staff, involving the responsible academic staff members at important points in the process, but largely retaining a critical distance from them.

One possible explanation for the different approaches is that, concurrently with the SANTED Project, both UJ and NMMU were involved in another external project that fell under the auspices of the South African Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) with funding from the Finnish Government. The intention of the HEQC Project was to assist newly merged institutions to develop effective quality management systems. While both NMMU and UJ used the HEQC funding to conduct a programme review, the scale of the review at UJ was far more extensive and included recommendations on the development of consolidated qualification structures within academic schools and departments. By contrast, NMMU approached the programme review in a more modest manner and, importantly, emphasised that it could not be used as a basis for making decisions on consolidated qualification structures – as its purpose was not to serve as an explanatory framework for curriculum design and analysis. The result was that at UJ a perception took root that the SANTED Project was to an extent redundant, leading to a resistance amongst some academic managers to participate in it because, in their view, its aims had already been achieved by the programme review process. The

consolidation that took place was effected without the benefit of the deep curricular analysis offered by the SANTED Project and therefore had a technical character that really missed the opportunity that would have been available through greater coordination of these two initiatives. A factor that may have contributed to the different directions taken by the two projects at UJ is that two different organisational structures were responsible for the SANTED and HEQF projects, while at NMMU both projects were located within the same unit, which made it easier to clearly distinguish between their purposes and to achieve a meaningful relationship between them.

Various strategies could have been used to ameliorate the misunderstanding at UJ. At a system level, the DoE and HEQC could have ensured that they communicated adequately with each other with respect to the aims of the two programmes, and what funding was being used for at the participating universities. Secondly high-level institutional leadership at UJ would have been familiar with the developments relating to both projects and could have intervened to ensure a better alignment between them. Be that as it may, the resistance towards the SANTED Project at UJ made it more difficult to engage academic schools and departments in the case study work, and probably was a key contributor to the university's decision to follow a more research-orientated approach, with the main source of evidence for the case studies being derived from the extensive programme review process.

The upshot of the differing institutional perspectives was that at a meeting in May 2008, UJ and NMMU agreed that they should continue to work separately on the case studies, with liaison as appropriate, and that in the final few months of the project they would again collaborate more formally in order to formalise the project findings into a consolidated report. This arrangement also applied to the work of the task teams on the various project focus areas. The SANTED Programme Director played a key role in guiding the institutions through the negotiation of this significant change to the business plan.

The third area of challenge, namely the lack of expertise relating to the conceptual issues around knowledge and the curriculum at both universities, posed the most significant barrier to the realisation of the

project aims. The South African higher education sector has a small pool of researchers in this area, and it was critical to source external expertise to provide theoretical and conceptual guidance to the project work. In this regard, the SANTED Programme Director made a critical intervention by inviting Professor Johan Muller of the University of Cape Town, a leading expert on knowledge and the curriculum, to make a presentation on curriculum and the binary divide at the formal launch of the project in June 2006, and subsequently commissioning him to write a paper, titled *In Search of Coherence: A conceptual guide to curriculum planning for comprehensive universities*, which was made available to the project early in 2008. Muller's work provided a crucial reference point for both the case study work as well as the task of defining a coherent academic mission for the two universities, by pointing to the difference between knowledge gained through action (contextual knowledge) and through reasoning (conceptual knowledge), and the differences in the nature of knowledge in occupational, professional and general-formative qualifications (Muller 2008).

However, as the case study work progressed, the realisation took root that the universities required further assistance in translating Muller's work into appropriate and theoretically justifiable proposals for the development of consolidated qualification structures and articulation models within the various case study areas. Late in 2008, subsequent to the change to the business plan that allowed the universities to work separately on the case studies, NMMU entered into a collaborative agreement with the Centre for Higher Education Development (CHED) at UCT, in terms of which a senior staff member at CHED would assist NMMU in the development of an explanatory model relating to knowledge and the curriculum on the basis of the case study work. This collaborative agreement proved to be the vital turning point in the NMMU project, and was largely responsible for the contribution that the NMMU case study work was able to make to the development of a theoretical model for curriculum design in different types of higher education qualifications.

Finally some brief comments may be made on the monitoring and review of the project. The mechanisms that were used for this purpose

were to a large extent effective. The system of annual reporting to the SANTED office, coupled with a mid-year progress report, ensured that project progress was monitored on a regular basis, and that any problems could be followed up in a timely manner. However, the structure of the progress report could have been simpler with a sharper focus on actual project work without the need to report also on project structures, lessons learned, and other issues which were all part of the annual report. The introduction of a system of bi-monthly reporting by the national SANTED office in 2010 was not helpful, as there is no evidence that it was used effectively.<sup>1</sup> Internally, both universities made effective use of their internal project steering committees for oversight purposes, while the joint PSC played a similar role until mid-2008 as well as during the closing phase of the project. At both NMMU and UJ regular reports were submitted to the Academic Planning Committee and structures such as the Deans' Forum, as a means of promoting awareness and institutional ownership. It must be admitted, though, that institutionalisation remained a challenge, especially in terms of the case studies where further empirical studies would be necessary before adequate frameworks and guidelines for curriculum design and analysis could be developed.

## **Institutional and national outcomes and influences**

An intriguing unintended consequence of the project is that while the two universities have benefitted significantly from their participation in it, in some respects it has had as significant an impact at the national level as at the institutional level. The following remarks will review some of the key project outcomes and their possible implications for the sector, focusing only on two areas of the project work, namely the basis for external differentiation and the development of an explanatory model relating to knowledge and the curriculum.

In order to take the debate on diversity and differentiation in South African higher education forward, more clarity is needed on the current state of diversity and its key drivers. The SANTED Project undertook two analyses of external diversity and differentiation, one on study and research fields, and another on programme types. The notion of 'study



field' was defined as the number of enrolments in various qualification types within the 22 categories of educational subject matter used by the Department of Education, while the notion of 'research field' was defined as enrolments at masters and doctoral levels in the above categories of educational subject matter. The notion of 'programme type' was defined as referring to the three categories of occupational, professional and general-formative programmes. The analysis of study and research fields demonstrated that the sector as a whole is characterised by weak diversity, and that in terms of these criteria the traditional universities are the only clearly definable group of institutions. It also argued that the national debate on differentiation needs to make key decisions on appropriate diversity in terms of study and research field concentration amongst different institutions, taking national and regional needs and regional higher education profiles into account. The analysis of programme types demonstrated that there is considerable fluidity in the profiles of the three 'types' of universities in South Africa, the traditional and comprehensive universities and universities of technology, in terms of this criterion, and that there is no clear pattern of programme profiles according to institutional types.

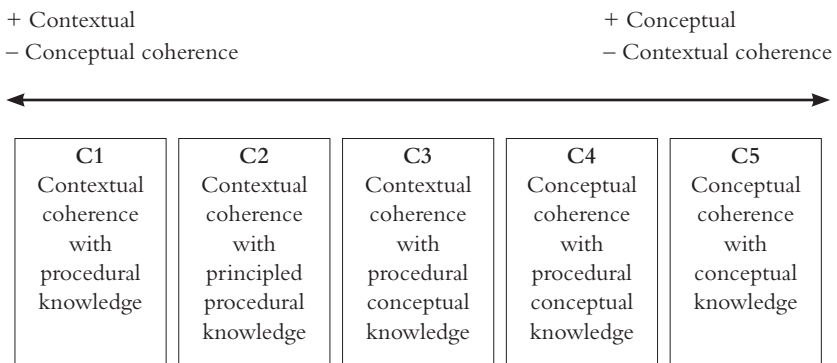
An implication of both analyses is that further policy development around external differentiation should not be based on the current institutional typologies, but should rather use drivers such as study and research field concentration, as well as programme type, to negotiate an appropriate developmental path with each university. Another implication is that an enabling set of steering mechanisms needs to be created to support the realisation of differentiated institutional missions. To promote a higher education system that is sufficiently diverse, the necessary conditions such as diversified funding, support for specific institutional development plans, the recognition and reward of different forms of research, and adaptive systems for quality assurance, need to be in place. The absence of such conditions will tend to promote competition for status and resources within a vertically stratified hierarchy (Codling & Meek 2006; Teichler 2008; Reichert 2009; Van Vught 2009).

Turning to the problem of knowledge and the curriculum, the case study work made a significant contribution to the clarification

of how knowledge works in different types of higher education curricula, taking into account the different purposes that academic programmes have – namely preparation for a defined occupational role, a career in a specific profession, or the development of knowledge and understanding of a more general nature. It did so by developing a provisional curriculum model in which a primary distinction was made between modules or learning components of a programme that have a predominantly contextual or conceptual orientation. Modules with a contextual orientation draw their logic from external reference points such as professional or occupational requirements, while those with a conceptual orientation are based on the logic of the discipline. The primary distinction between a conceptual or contextual orientation was then refined in terms of the knowledge base of which modules consist, namely principles and procedures based on theoretical knowledge, or principles and procedures based on practical knowledge. Flowing from the distinctions between the orientation and knowledge base of modules, the following model of curriculum types was developed to explain how knowledge is re-contextualised into the curriculum. It should be emphasised that this model was based only on the findings of the case study work and therefore is necessarily provisional. The model identified five curricular types, three based on contextual coherence (C1, C2 and C3) and two based on conceptual coherence (C4 and C5).<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 1:** Curriculum typologies:

Re-contextualisation of knowledge into the curriculum



The model acknowledges that there is a continuum in terms of the extent to which conceptual or theoretical, and practical or procedural knowledge is present in different types of curricula, but that the key difference lies in whether their logic is predominantly conceptual or contextual. The assumption is that general-formative programmes consist of a mix of C4 and C5 modules, professional programmes have a combination of C3 and C4 modules as their core, and that occupational programmes in higher education have a combination of C2 and C3 modules as their core. In this latter regard, it is important to clarify the distinction between C2 and C3 modules. The first curricular type has a practical knowledge base, while the latter has a conceptual or theoretical knowledge base. Thus it is possible that some occupational qualifications may have a contextual orientation but a largely conceptual knowledge base because they consist mainly of C3 modules, while others may have a contextual orientation and a largely practical knowledge base because C2 modules predominate.

In order to understand the relationship between different programmes, and the possibilities for articulation between them, it is important to understand their dominant curricular logic based on an analysis of the curricular types of their constituent modules. Programmes with a dominant contextual coherence do not necessarily contain an adequate conceptual base to serve as a platform for progression to programmes that have an orientation to conceptual coherence, but the reverse also applies. Learners who study programmes with a strong theoretical orientation may find it difficult to articulate into programmes based on contextual coherence and procedural knowledge that is rooted in practice. The model also distinguished between different levels of cognitive complexity within modules. However, within the confines of this chapter, it is not possible to provide a further elaboration of the curriculum model. A more extensive discussion of the model can be found in Shay et al. (2011).

The findings of the case studies pointed to the complexities of articulation, but also, and arguably more fundamentally, to the need to ensure that the curricular design of programmes is commensurate with

their stated purpose. Another important dimension of the case study findings, which cannot be elaborated upon here, is that they raised the question of whether all qualifications that are offered in higher education should not have a core of conceptual knowledge. Thus, in terms of the implementation of the integrated Higher Education Qualifications Framework, the case studies made a significant contribution to the work that needs to be done on the development of a credit accumulation and transfer system, but also developed critical perspectives on the curricular character of different types of qualifications that should be used to inform programme development and review activities. A particular aspect of the latter point is that the project contributed to clarifying the characteristics of what may constitute well-designed undergraduate diplomas. Recent national planning documents point to the importance of strong diploma provision for addressing skills needs. Thus, the National Development Plan emphasises that the achievement of its objectives by 2030 requires ‘plans and resources to increase career-focused higher education certificates and diplomas’ (NPC 2012:290), while the National Skills Development Strategy III commits itself to support ‘the production of priority skills in high-level occupationally directed programmes [...] from universities to colleges.’ (DHET 2011:Section 4.2). Understanding the perspectives that contribute to appropriate and coherent curriculum design in diploma programmes is an important condition for achieving the goals of the national planning environment with respect to skills development.

## **Contributions of the project**

The SANTED Project at UJ and NMMU was complex, both in terms of its organisational aspects and the substantive, conceptual problems that it sought to address. Initial progress was slow and hesitant, and various critical challenges had to be addressed along the way. The support of the SANTED Programme, and particularly of the programme director and Norad, was instrumental in allowing the project to achieve the results that it did. The contributions that the project made to the understanding

of diversity and differentiation as well as knowledge and the curriculum have significant implications for both institutions but also for national planning and policy development. The key challenge is how the project work will be taken forward at both of these levels.

## **Endnotes**

1. The change to the external reporting requirements occurred after the resignation of the SANTED Programme Director and the placement of the programme under a part-time administrator. The lesson that flows from this experience is that a programme such as SANTED needs full-time leadership in order to avoid unnecessary forms of bureaucratic oversight.
2. In the curriculum model, preference was given to using the terms 'conceptual' and 'procedural' knowledge, rather than 'theoretical' and 'practical' knowledge.

## CHAPTER 7

# Cross-border collaboration in the Southern African Development Community countries

*Fazela Haniff and Trish Gibbon*

South Africa's relationship with its neighbours is built on the foundation of the tremendous support afforded by those countries to liberation movements during the struggle against apartheid. It was only natural that in the period after the democratic transition, South Africa would seek to maintain and build on those relationships. One element of this was the 1999 *SADC Protocol on Education and Training* through which South Africa committed itself to subsidising Southern African Development Community (SADC) students, who wished to enter its higher education institutions, on the same basis as South African students. In the original discussions around the setting up of the SANTED Programme, both Norway and the South African Department of Education expressed an interest in strengthening and extending this initiative.

From the South African side, there was still a primary commitment to keep the doors of its institutions open to SADC students, but in the SANTED context, to use this specific programme to build the academic capacity of universities in neighbouring countries through enrolling staff in postgraduate programmes at South African universities. SANTED also opened up the possibility of formalising institutional linkages in ways that might be sustainable beyond the period of project funding and could address a variety of other issues. From the Norwegian side, the possibility was seen of using the relative strength and sophistication of some of the South African universities as a lever to accelerate the development of tertiary institutions in the other SADC countries with which it already had some level of engagement.

In hindsight, the Norwegian hopes were perhaps unrealistic: they rested on an assumption of excess capacity within SA institutions, when in reality they were still trying to respond to deep challenges in their own academic environments (such as the under-preparedness of their undergraduate students and subsequent high levels of attrition) and found their own capacity stretched to the limit. They were also overly optimistic about the capacity of the SADC institutions to benefit from the interventions and sustain the outcomes of the projects. What follows is therefore a mixed story of forms of engagement that resulted in successes bound by some constraints, and failures that nonetheless produced valuable insights and understanding.

### **The regional context**

Most universities in the SADC countries other than South Africa focus on undergraduate study, with very few, if any, postgraduate programmes offered. Students are sent overseas or to South African universities for their postgraduate work and the possibility always exists that they will not return to their home countries. Academic salaries are generally lower than in South Africa (sometimes much lower), levels of staff qualifications are low, research output is minimal, and in many instances, resources and infrastructure are out of date, dilapidated and in decay (Kotecha et al. 2012). Within this scenario, the University of Namibia stands out as a reasonably well-resourced institution where the physical plant is maintained in good order. But what this points to more generally is a sad lack of state investment in higher education in the region (Butler-Adam 2012). It would seem that higher education is understood as conferring private benefits on individuals rather than as an essential motor for social and economic development and the public good. More than anything else inadequate government funding of universities determines the limited impact that donor initiated projects such as SANTED have been able to produce for universities in the broader region.

By contrast, South African universities are heavily subsidised by the state, students pay tuition fees, even in the public institutions, and many institutions are able to generate significant third-stream income from

their engagement with business and industry partners and from externally generated investment in research, much of it from philanthropies and foundations (Centre for Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning 2009). South African universities are also diverse and do not exhibit the same characteristics and strengths across the board. A few remain on a par with their peer institutions in the region. However, there are at least six of the current 23 universities that demonstrate significant research strength, and an even greater number that offer high quality postgraduate programmes up to doctoral level in a number of fields (Centre for Higher Education Transformation 2012). In terms of their stature and reach, these universities are dominant in the region. What is more, they are no strangers to collaboration and have wide and deep links to academics, researchers and institutions globally.

This was the kind of capacity that it was hoped could be harnessed to a development agenda for other universities in the region. However, the truth of the matter is that development of this kind of capacity is not a simple affair: it is dependent on a host of factors, many of which are beyond the influence, let alone control, of development cooperation projects. The following stories of cross-border collaboration reveal the complexity of this kind of work.

## **The SADC projects**

Regional, as opposed to national, projects were initiated as part of the first phase of the SANTED Programme. The largest, most important and far-reaching of these was a collaborative venture involving three universities from which the project derived its name – NEW: the University of Namibia (UNAM, in Windhoek, Namibia), the University Eduardo Mondlane (UEM, in Maputo, Mozambique) and the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits, in Johannesburg, South Africa). This, and one other regional project were judged in the 2005 review to be worth continuing into the second phase. A third project from the first phase was finally approved for funding in the second phase on condition of quite radical restructuring of its objectives. A fourth project, relatively small in nature, was embarked upon towards the end of the SANTED Programme.



In each case, the South African universities built on relationships with partner institutions in the SADC region that were already known to them, using the resources made available by SANTED to develop new collaborative projects. A brief description is given below of each of these four projects.

## NEW

The primary objective of the NEW Project was to build academic capacity in the two partner institutions in Namibia and Mozambique, with Wits appointed as the lead institution, which also meant taking overall responsibility for managing the project. The engagement was in three disciplinary areas: biological and environmental sciences, economics and labour studies, and engineering. In the business plan developed for the project (and extended in the second phase), the intention was to meet the following objectives:

- to provide scholarships to students from UNAM and UEM for postgraduate study at Wits;
- to cooperate in the design of academic programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, with a particular aim of incorporating collaborative activities;
- to collaborate in the development of teaching and learning materials and the review of existing curricula;
- to provide resources for the purchase of teaching and learning materials, such as textbooks, computer software and equipment;
- to promote student and staff exchanges;
- to strengthen regional capacity for offering postgraduate programmes with associated research programmes; and
- to develop the capacity to address challenges in the region by exposing students to critical knowledge in a practical and team-based way and to produce graduates with greater experience of and sensitivity to wider regional realities.

Neither UNAM nor UEM had full engineering programmes at the start of the SANTED Project. UNAM had a two-year pre-engineering programme, of which the second year was equivalent to the first year of a full professional engineering degree. After completing this, students were transferred to other universities in the region, mostly in South Africa, to proceed with their studies. What they wanted was to introduce full degree programmes in electrical and electronic, civil, chemical, environmental and mechanical engineering, and therefore needed to develop curricula that met the needs of the local industry while retaining recognition by regional and international engineering bodies such as the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA).

Other needs included shortages of academic and research personnel and of study materials such as textbooks, teaching manuals and software programmes. UNAM's Multi-disciplinary Research and Consultancy Centre (MRCC) needed to develop its research staff to MSc and PhD levels in order to become fully functional.

UEM was in a similar position with an Engineering Faculty that lacked fully trained academic staff and had a shortage of teaching materials in Portuguese. Most of the available materials were in English and had to be translated. It also wished to have its undergraduate degree programme accredited by the ECSA.

By the end of the NEW Project, UNAM had established an independent Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology offering professional programmes in civil, electrical and electronics, IT, mining, metallurgy, mechanical and telecommunications engineering. UEM had revised and updated its curricula and applied for ECSA accreditation.

In the field of economics and labour studies, the primary focus was on the development of two new degrees at masters level at UEM and one at UNAM. Work undertaken as part of the NEW Project included curriculum development, translation of materials (into Portuguese for UEM) and funding for additional resources including computers, software programmes, and books and journals for the libraries. Towards the end of the project, the University of Botswana became another partner in the project in an effort to create a network of researchers working on common themes and problems.

In the biological and environmental sciences, work was undertaken to review, revise and strengthen undergraduate curricula, provide additional teaching resources, translate materials, purchase equipment, and introduce new areas of study such as biotechnology. In this area, however, the project included a highly innovative component of collaborative team teaching on an annual field trip. High performing students in their second or third year of study from each of the three universities were taken on a two-week field trip to locations where they learnt in depth about particular environments; deserts and rocky shores in Namibia, subtropical coastal and marine life on Inhaca Island off the coast of Mozambique. In each place, an established research station provided the resources for teaching, and the examination of specimens collected and identified by the students. In return, SANTED provided funding for improvement of some of these resources. Teaching was undertaken by academic staff from all three institutions and students worked together in mixed groups and wrote reports on their findings. For all concerned, it was an extremely rich and rewarding experience, but the expense and the complicated logistical arrangements meant that it could not be sustained beyond the period of project funding.

## ZAMANAWE

Unlike the NEW Project, ZAMANAWE was not about building academic capacity. Initiated in the first phase of SANTED, and at that stage called ZAWECA, it involved a collaboration between the University of the Western Cape (UWC) and the University of Zambia. Its focus was on student peer education in relation to HIV and AIDS. When discussions took place as to whether it should be extended into the second phase, the Norwegians were reluctant, arguing that despite its unquestionable importance, it did not fit within the SANTED brief which was to focus on higher education development rather than health issues. The argument was put to them, particularly by the highly committed vice-chancellor of UWC, Professor Brian O'Connell, that AIDS was decimating populations, that HIV prevalence and transmission among youth was high, and that students were not exempt. In countries

beyond South Africa's borders, the situation was even worse, and development of any kind was at risk if the educated youth were to fall prey to the pandemic. What made matters worse was that by this time, a certain AIDS weariness had set in: people were tired of hearing about it and sexual behaviour was becoming more reckless and risky.

The project took a fresh approach, eschewing the use of senior, older, authoritative figures in place of student peers whom it hoped would be able to communicate more directly, effectively and with greater levels of trust with their fellow students. The Norwegians were persuaded, and the decision was taken to extend the project to a further two universities, namely the Universities of Malawi and Namibia. Was it effective? HIV and AIDS are non-communicable diseases so there were no baseline data and no ways of measuring change. But in terms of student enthusiasm for the project, it was highly effective. And one of the outcomes that pleased everyone was that the project developed significant cohorts of student leaders. Senior students had to apply to become peer educators: they were interviewed carefully and those selected were given intensive training. They were encouraged to be creative and innovative in developing strategies and this, together with the organisational skills they acquired, made them sought after for other student leadership positions. In each of the partner universities, the HIV and AIDS peer educators enjoyed heightened status and respect within the student body and acted as role models for others.

There were also huge differences of approach among the peer educator groups. The message of safe sex through the use of condoms, and their wide availability in restrooms across campus at UWC, was completely unacceptable to students from more conservative cultures who argued instead for a message of abstinence or faithfulness. UWC was the lead institution in this project and the project leaders undertook to bring peer educators together on an annual basis. This was extremely important for the students, who had to learn to deal with difference, debate issues, and share experiences about what had worked for them or not. They were also given invaluable insight into the circumstances and conditions under which other students lived and worked through their visits to institutions in other countries.

Because these projects operated on an institution-wide basis, they had to be sanctioned and supported directly by the vice-chancellor of each university and this led to another unexpected outcome which was an annual meeting of the four vice-chancellors for discussions that ranged well beyond the parameters of the project and enabled the initiation of other ventures of mutual interest.

### **UNISA-UAN Nursing Project**

In the post-war period in Angola there has been a dire shortage of trained health professionals and the shortage is particularly acute in rural areas. Training for health professionals is generally undertaken outside the country in either Portugal or Brazil because of very limited capacity within Angola. The University Agostinho Neto (UAN) in Luanda has a School of Nursing, but during the first phase of SANTED, none of the staff had anything more than a first degree. South Africa's primary open and distance education provider, the University of South Africa (UNISA) was given support from SANTED to provide training at masters level to the academic staff of UAN's School of Nursing. This was an arduous undertaking because of the need to employ translation services at every level of activity – administrative, teaching, assessing and examining – but a cohort of Angolan students graduated from UNISA with masters degrees soon after the start of the second phase of SANTED. The question then arose as to whether there should be any further support for the project.

The arguments against continuing support hinged on two factors: enormous effort and resources had produced relatively minor outcomes and there was a question as to whether SANTED funding had not simply been used to support a core function of UNISA – which is to offer distance education nationally and internationally. The circumstances were somewhat different in this instance in that UNISA normally only offers its programmes through the medium of English, and a very particular group of students had been targeted whose enhanced capacity would make an important contribution to the national capacity in Angola for the training of nurses.

Considerable energy then went into meetings with senior representatives from the Angolan Ministry of Health and the senior leadership of UAN, culminating in a workshop to draft a new set of objectives. The aim now was to enable the School of Nursing to offer its own postgraduate programmes through development of the full curricula and all associated learning materials for a masters in Nursing Management and a masters in Midwifery. As equal partners in this enterprise, UAN was asked to draft its part of the business plan which would be integrated into the UNISA side of the plan.

At this stage, Norway and the DoE approved the draft proposal, but there were a number of sticking points before the business plan could be approved. The initial budget received from Angola included everything that might be required to run the School of Nursing, from the purchase of a 4x4 vehicle to office equipment, buckets and mops. Further meetings were required to clarify expectations: SANTED's support would only be for the development of the academic programmes while the normal operational costs of the unit were the responsibility of UAN. This was by no means the last of the hurdles to be overcome and the project proceeded at a painfully slow pace with exceptional commitment and effort on the part of the staff of the Nursing Department at UNISA who had nothing to gain from the project themselves. An unfortunate legacy of the first phase was an expectation that UNISA would take the lead in all things which meant that the Angolan project team was slow to take proper ownership and responsibility for the development of the programmes.

Eventually, however, the work was done and the two new proposed masters programmes were submitted to the UAN Senate for approval. But here again there was an unforeseen delay: the scheduled meeting of the Senate was repeatedly postponed with the consequence that the anticipated first enrolment of students in the programmes had to be delayed by a year. A more positive outcome was that the meticulous writing up of the curricula and development of all their components were seen as exemplary by the UAN leadership and they proposed using these examples as templates for the development of masters programmes in other fields. UNISA agreed to assist with the teaching of the first

cohorts of students until the UAN staff felt confident enough to deliver the programmes on their own.

### **Rhodes-UNAM: the ‘Virtual Classroom’ Collaboration**

Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa, was funded by SANTED in phase two as part of the Multilingualism Project described in Chapter 5. Within this project was a component in the field of computer science. After learning of other SADC collaborative projects, academic staff involved in this component approached the SANTED Director with a request for support for a collaborative project in computer science with the University of Namibia. Namibia had a growing need for highly qualified IT personnel but lacked the capacity to offer advanced programmes to students. The idea was to supplement the curriculum of an existing BSc offered by UNAM in which UNAM students could take computer science as part of a double-major degree. UNAM did not offer any postgraduate programmes in the field and students wished to advance their studies at Rhodes. But the double-major degree did not prepare them adequately for admission into the Rhodes honours programme for which Rhodes students gained admission after the completion of a single major degree (in computer science). Students at UNAM who had the potential and interest to embark on further studies were to be identified and offered a supplementary course that would be taken in addition to their other courses and would bring them up to the required level of knowledge for entry into the honours degree.

This was a small-scale project and on that basis it was approved and initiated well into the start of the second phase of SANTED. The methodology adopted, however, was very interesting and cost-effective. With the purchase of appropriate software, professors at Rhodes were able to conduct virtual lectures online with the selected group of UNAM students in a highly interactive way. Students could see the lecturers on their monitor screens and, in another window, see the learning material. They were also able to ask questions, seek clarification or make comments during the course of the lecture with the ‘active’ student also appearing in a small window. But despite its highly innovative character,

there were numerous logistical difficulties. Sufficient broadband capacity was not always available for uninterrupted transmission, coordination of timetables to find common periods for lectures for both students and teachers was very problematic, and for the students, it meant carrying a considerable additional academic load.

The long-term solution was for UNAM to approve a single major curriculum for a BSc in Computer Science similar to the one offered at Rhodes to allow for easy articulation of students from UNAM into Rhodes programmes. The curriculum was developed but its implementation delayed by six months while it traversed the internal and external approval systems.

## **Hurdle jumping**

The accounts above hint at some of the difficulties encountered in the course of implementing these projects, many of which are manifestations of the broader inequalities mentioned in relation to universities in the region. There were also the kind of logistical difficulties that arise when working across national borders, and what one might call cultural differences that arise from different institutional and national contexts.

### *Disparities in the resourcing of universities and their staff*

In every one of the projects described above, South African project leaders worked with universities that were not nearly as well-resourced as their own. For example, postgraduate training and attendant research require suitable mathematical and statistical software and some specialised hardware, including large amounts of RAM and high processing speeds. Money is required for individual and site licenses for software and small computer laboratories for higher degree students. Within the context of how a project was conceived, some of these shortages and gaps were clearly identified and indeed part of what the project was intended to address. The NEW Project focused on improving academic staff qualifications, supplementing library and laboratory resources, and developing curricula and associated learning materials. But a poorly



resourced university suffers other constraints not always obvious at first, which can have a hugely debilitating effect on project work. In the projects undertaken in this part of the SANTED Programme they included:

- poor administrative and financial systems which caused massive delays in the initiation of activities and disbursement of funds;
- inadequate broadband width, unreliable access to the internet, and computer hardware (including servers) that was too limited in capacity to serve the needs of either communication or research endeavours;
- demotivated academic staff who were poorly paid and took one or two additional jobs to supplement their incomes, and therefore had little time for project work; and
- inefficient academic processes that led to frustrating delays before changes to existing curricula or new curricula could be approved.

Often a clear understanding of these disparities, how they will manifest themselves, and their likely impact on project outcomes emerges only in the course of project implementation. The resourcing of the basic operations of a public university is the responsibility of the state and the point to be made is that development cooperation or any other kind of external funding cannot address inadequacies at this level. From a project perspective, what is required is flexibility, creativity, and an ability to work around obstacles and find alternatives. Planned timelines had to be constantly adjusted in the SANTED projects in relation to realities on the ground.

### *Cross-border logistics*

Working across national boundaries requires travel, which is expensive and subject to applications for visas and currency exchanges. While these are commonplace matters, it meant that great energy and attention to detail had to go into the planning of any meeting or workshop to ensure that all the required participants were available, that venues,

suitable accommodation and catering were organised, and this often had to be arranged at a distance with the assistance of staff in the partner institutions. And because of the expense involved, it was critical that document preparation was meticulous from both sides, agendas clear, and participants themselves well-prepared for discussions. This was especially complicated in the team-teaching component of the NEW Project as it involved arrangements for students and staff from three universities, two of which were located in countries other than the host country.

While these matters brought their own challenges, the greatest hurdle to overcome in all the projects was the delays experienced in the transfer of funds from the lead institutions in South Africa to their SADC partners. For universities that have no 'fat' in their budgets, it was impossible to begin any project activities until funds had been received. Aside from the red tape of Treasury regulations, there were also instances where funds were received by an institution, but were not transferred to the project account or relevant department for months. Bank charges and changes in exchange rates also meant that universities sometimes received less funding than anticipated.

### *Different institutional and national cultures*

Underestimating cultural differences is easily done, particularly in a region where many commonalities are assumed. Challenges were expected in the projects that involved partnership with institutions in Lusophone countries – Angola and Mozambique – but the time and costs involved in extensive translation exercises were surprising. Academics in Mozambique have a fair level of fluency in English, but this was not the case for their students. The NEW Project depended on the adequate presence of UEM lecturers on the team-teaching field trips to ensure that UEM students were not at a loss, but this need was not fully met. At UAN English competency was practically absent which meant that twice the usual amount of time had to be allocated to every meeting, workshop and lecture and provision had to be made for the translation of all documents into Portuguese or English including learning materials, exam papers and dissertations.

An unexpected phenomenon was the strongly patriarchal power relations at UAN which manifested itself in the silencing of the women project participants by men in senior institutional positions, despite the fact that the women were running the Nursing Project. This required deft intervention on the part of the SANTED Director.

Fewer differences were anticipated in the Anglophone countries of Malawi, Namibia and Zambia, but even here, as mentioned in the account of the ZAMANAWA Project, different norms and values emerged in sharp relief in relation to openness about sexuality, public discussion of sexual practices, and most importantly, approaches to combatting the spread of HIV and AIDS.

Norms and expectations about communication were also the source of some tension. There were times when recipients of email messages would only respond weeks after the messages had been sent, creating unnecessary delays. Problems in this respect necessitated the establishment of certain 'rules' to govern practice.

Institutions also followed different calendars, with some starting the academic year in September as in Europe and the United States, while for South African universities, the academic year corresponds to the calendar year.

## **Achieving goals**

Some of the strategies adopted in this set of projects were vital to their success and are worth mentioning here.

### *Senior leadership backing*

This is critical and cannot be in name only. Those projects that enjoyed the continued support and active interest of senior university managers were undoubtedly more successful than others. This was true of the NEW Project at both Wits and UNAM where leaders at the level of deputy vice-chancellor were always available to meet with project teams and the SANTED Secretariat. Project teams felt accountable to them as well as to SANTED and were motivated and energised by

the importance accorded to the projects by their own executives. This kind of support was provided at UEM initially, but with changes in personnel, the impetus was lost and the project teams were more or less left to their own devices. Senior leaders can also help smooth the path through university structures when formal approval is required for decisions to be effected. At UNAM, Professor Zach Kazapua, DVC at the time, was instrumental in overseeing and managing the project. He had secured administrative support and provided the NEW team with relevant information about pertinent rules of the institution. However, the Rhodes-UNAM project did not operate through his office, and the lack of a champion was evident when the implementation of a new curriculum was severely compromised because of ignorance of the requirements for its approval.

#### *Adequate delivery capacity*

Assumptions are often made about the delivery capacity of beneficiary institutions because on the one hand, it is hard to test, and on the other, enthusiasm for the project at senior levels may disguise limitations in capacity. In this respect, an important lesson learnt in the course of implementing SANTED projects was that while it is good to mainstream project work, this is not always accompanied by a parallel adjustment of workloads. When this happens, project work comes on top of the normal workload of participants and can then easily be relegated to the side-lines. One of the strategies adopted was to hire additional help which could be for teaching relief or project administration.

#### *Clear expectations and allocation of responsibilities*

The drawing up of business plans by every project team was very useful for clarifying expectations, outlining activities and timelines, assessing costs and allocating responsibilities, as in the case of the UNISA-UAN collaboration. Taking this initial step was at times a lengthy process, but the resulting documents became reference points for the duration of the projects and every substantial change had to be approved. Funding

was released on an annual basis and only on condition that there was clear evidence that outcomes for the previous year had been achieved. If this was not the case, the project might be permitted to proceed on an extended timeline but using already allocated resources.

### *Who needs to be involved*

While the front-line project team is clearly the most important, there are usually a number of other players, such as university administrators and finance officers, who need to be brought on board to understand the nature of the project and the role they need to play to ensure its smooth roll-out and progression. Where this happened, as at UNAM in the NEW Project, there were far fewer delays and obstacles than in other projects.

### *Something for everyone*

In a few of these projects, because of manifest differences in institutional strength, there was a danger that some institutions would be at the receiving end of benefits, and others at the giving end. This was almost certainly the case in the UNISA-UAN collaboration where the only real benefit for UNISA was a few additional graduate outputs. In the other projects, care was taken to ensure that there was something in it for everyone, that needs and interests could be met even for well-resourced universities. Unless attention is paid to this factor, participation runs the danger of being seen as a form of charitable outreach that has an optional character.

### *Calling, calling...*

Keeping lines of communication open and using them regularly was not always easy. Video-conferencing, Skype, email and telephone contact were all used to keep communication alive and to manage any adjustments that were necessary. Implementation had to be treated as an evolving entity which was key to any level of success. And here it must be stressed that

communication needs to be at all levels: keeping senior management informed is as much a support as it is a tool to keep the project on course. But the value of face-to-face meetings cannot be underestimated. Costly as they were, the prospect of a meeting often served to galvanise project teams into activity when they had lost momentum.

## **Conclusion**

The SANTED collaborative projects in the SADC region were relatively minor interventions, but each one left behind a legacy of measurable benefit. The most striking of these was the establishment of a whole Faculty of Engineering at UNAM, and other universities are now in a position to offer postgraduate programmes at masters level in certain fields. Other resources were enhanced, and some staff members were able to improve their qualifications.

The team-teaching aspect of the NEW Project could not be sustained beyond the lifespan of SANTED funding as it was a very expensive undertaking. Similarly, while ZAMANAWA peer education in HIV and AIDS continues, the peer educator training conducted by UWC could not be sustained, and combined student workshops no longer take place. Nonetheless, the vice-chancellors of the partner institutions continue to meet.

In the end, one can conclude that these projects had substantial value, but they cannot compensate for under-funding of public higher education by governments. This is a constraint that will only be lifted when major shifts in policy take place.

## ***Acknowledgement***

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## CONCLUSION

### Learning from experience: Summing up the impact of SANTED and its legacies

*Robert Smith*

The SANTED Programme in its two phases has been described by the Norwegian authorities as ‘the jewel in the crown’ of their assistance to education in South Africa. That this jewel was valuable is clearly demonstrated in the chapters preceding this conclusion. Analysis of the disparate yet connected sub-projects within SANTED reveals some imperfections in this diamond, yet on the whole the tenor of this publication has been positive. The ‘value added’ from a relatively modest financial investment by Norway has proved remarkable. Therefore, what this summarising chapter aims to do is to draw out the most significant issues and principles from which organisational and systemic learning may be derived, identifying key aspects which contributed to success but also noting the challenges encountered along the way.

#### **The higher education sector in South Africa as a key sub-sector for support**

Early in the 1990s, a National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) was conducted to set out the options available to government for the creation of a just, post-apartheid education system. This was followed by the setting up of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) to guide the new South Africa towards a complete restructuring and re-imagining of the higher education sector. Structural changes to the governance of education were not the only priorities. A long history of inequality, limited access and high rates of failure by historically



disadvantaged population groups also had to be addressed. Government *White Paper No. 3* (1997), as described in Nasima Badsha's opening chapter, paved the way for the policy basis on which tertiary education would be reconfigured. It was around this time that Norway, a long-term supporter of change in South Africa, offered specific bi-lateral aid aimed at the higher education sub-sector and, in particular, at achieving the goals of equity, effectiveness and efficiency embraced by the South African Department of Education. In summary it can be stated that the broad policy aim for the higher education sub-sector was a form of restructuring which would not only address historic inequities but also provide a power house for social and economic change. Norway's role was perceived as assisting and supporting tertiary education throughout the change process through a variety of modalities within the SANTED Programme. SANTED was therefore conceptualised during an intense period of policy debate around the challenges of tertiary education as a means of human resource development, high-level skills training, and the production and application of new knowledge. This debate was carried out at a time of serious constraint on resources available to higher education while at the same time there was a strong political commitment to redressing historical disadvantage and restoring greater equity in the education system as a whole.

Norway's approach to the support of education in partner countries was summed up in the publication *Education: Job Number 1. Norwegian strategy for delivering Education for All by 2015* (2003). Although the focus for much of Norway's bi-lateral aid to education in countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh and Tanzania had been at the basic or primary education level there had been a long history of targeted support for specific higher education institutions and initiatives. Organisations like the Norwegian Council of Universities' Committee for Development Research and Education (NUFU) had experience of working with the University of Fort Hare, the University of the North and other South African universities. In addition, the Norwegian government had made available grants for Norwegian tertiary institutions to form links with partners in the South such as the University of Dar es Salaam and the Institute for Development Management in Tanzania. However,

SANTED was the first attempt at a partnership at the tertiary level which would not only pilot key interventions, but which would assist a government in the process of restructuring and re-imagining its tertiary provision. Within this framework it is interesting to note that the focus of SANTED support was not so much at the macro planning level, but at the practical intervention level which would result in better access, retention and success for university students. A significant question underlay the SANTED approach: Could a relatively modest financial input result in measurable and positive change which could provide a set of models and exemplars for the higher education sector at large? This question forms the basis for the discussion which follows. An additional question to be touched upon is whether the learning from SANTED has wider application across educational systems at large, whether in the South or elsewhere.

### **The SANTED higher education agenda**

As noted earlier, issues of access, retention and eventual student success were key targets for the Norwegian-funded interventions. More macro-level concerns for higher education were also to be addressed in the light of university mergers, as in KwaZulu-Natal, and the establishment of comprehensive universities like the University of Johannesburg and the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. In addition, cross-border cooperation within the SADC region, designed to strengthen academic capacity in partner institutions, was built into the project agenda. Overall, capacity building remained at the heart of SANTED's rationale.

Important strategic management decisions were made early in the life of SANTED. It was agreed that direct support to selected institutions would be the preferred modality although the Department of Education (DoE) would maintain its key role in monitoring and controlling the project. One of the most important aspects of SANTED then emerged – the 'four-legged pot' within which the whole programme would function. The DoE had mixed experience of working with donors and the concept of ownership became a critical concern. The four legs of SANTED were comprised of the DoE itself, the Norwegian donor,

the partner institutions, plus an outsourced management team. This strategy proved very successful but the importance of key individuals in each of the four 'legs' should not be under-emphasised. This aspect of development assistance or system renewal is largely neglected in the literature. Michael Fullan, the arch-priest of educational change theory, has much to say on the concept of leadership and describes the core practices of good leaders (Fullan 2007). But how to find and identify effective people remains a dilemma. All that can be said here is that SANTED was extraordinarily fortunate in the leadership found within each of the four legs described. Successive Norwegian ambassadors and advisers, DoE managers, university 'champions', and project directors at CEPD formed a remarkably coherent and effective team throughout both phases of SANTED. Replicating what might be serendipity is a difficult proposition.

After the year 2000 the higher education sector and research cooperation were identified as priority areas for Norway's cooperation with South Africa. Thus SANTED was seen to fulfil a significant role in turning objectives into reality. The agenda for supporting South African institutions was made clear by the DoE; existing relationships were built upon and a management system based upon real partnership was established.

## **Analysing the experience of the various projects**

### *The project approach*

In analysing the undoubted success of SANTED certain key principles or lessons from experience present themselves. The first of these is that the project approach is not dead. In the broader terms of development assistance we have seen a historic progression from personnel placement through projects to programmes and eventually direct budget support. In the earliest days of bi-lateral development cooperation to education the placing of key personnel in ministries of finance or education was a preferred option. As competence and expertise were built up among national institutions and ministries the project became the most popular

form of development cooperation to education. Discrete, short-term activities designed to leave a legacy of competence were to be found all over Africa and other parts of the developing world. Dissatisfaction with projects which could only tackle a sub-section of an education system, often with limited reference to the rest of the education structure, led to the programmatic approach typified by the World Bank's sector-wide strategies or SWAs.<sup>1</sup> These attempted to unite groups of donors under one umbrella to address the whole of the education sector, or a significant sub-sector, in a given country. Zambia's Basic Education Sub-Sector Improvement Programme (BESSIP) and Bangladesh's Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP) are cases in point. Sector-wide approaches have also received much criticism. If projects, despite their inherent flexibility, often led to disjointed and ephemeral change the imposition of sector-wide reform often led to excessive strain being put on already weak education systems. The next modality to emerge – direct budget support – grew from the growing competence of national institutions to manage their educational systems effectively, sufficient finance being the major barrier to progress. Donors have been happy to analyse national policies and plans and to add their financial weight to the budget of the ministry of education to help achieve the goals set out. However, as with many aspects of development cooperation, a mixture of methods of support probably has the most beneficial effects and SANTED has certainly tested and proved the validity and effectiveness of a project approach, given certain conditions.

### *Policy coherence*

The place of higher education in the priorities of the South African partnership has been discussed above and need not be repeated here, except to say that any analysis of successful development cooperation reveals a close match of policy goals among the partners. The focus on key aspects of higher education provision and practice as the main plank of SANTED gave this policy objective a suitable vehicle for successful change, linked closely as SANTED was with the National Plan for Higher Education (2001) as Badsha's Chapter 1 illustrates.

### *Working with strong partners*

Given common ground over policy the practicalities of implementing change through SANTED resulted in a second essential condition: the selection of partner institutions with capacity rather than attempting to transform those with less articulated strategies for change. Embracing the so-called ‘Matthew Principle’<sup>2</sup>, by which institutions with a relatively successful track record are supported and the less effective are excluded from the intervention, may lead to criticism but the evidence suggests that reinforcing success is normally better than reinforcing failure. Trish Gibbon’s introductory chapter refers to this selection dilemma as the ‘old chestnut’ in development activity of any kind. SANTED further illustrated that the very process of negotiation with partner institutions led to a kind of dynamic which went beyond a simplistic classification of strong-or-weak institutions. However, SANTED tested the general principle by building on existing fruitful strategies in almost all the projects reported on in this publication. Institutions like the University of Fort Hare (UFH) were included because of promising changes in leadership, and the University of Venda (UNIVEN) and the University of Zululand (UNIZUL) were already within the DoE’s programme of support so merited further engagement. Where a project met with limited success, as in the University of South Africa’s (UNISA) Angola intervention,<sup>3</sup> it was precisely because a successful base was not found on which to build this activity.

### *Champions*

Moving on from project-specific issues a fourth principle or pre-requisite which proved itself within SANTED was the importance of strong leadership within the selected institutions – the ‘champions’ principle. An illustration of this was the role of the University of the Western Cape’s (UWC) vice-chancellor, Professor Brian O’Connell, who not only promoted and protected the Equitable Access, Retention and Success Project at UWC, but volunteered as the first subject for HIV/AIDS testing on the university campus, thus promoting a key element

in the ZAMANAWE joint project.<sup>4</sup> Further examples of the place of strong and effective leadership can be found in the preceding chapters; the role of champions cannot be over-emphasised, especially where organisational learning takes place, establishing institutional change long beyond the life of a project.

### *Management structure*

SANTED also tested and proved the management strategy of a ‘fourth leg of the pot’; in other words, the donor, the government and the institutions involved were supported and facilitated by an effective ‘off-shore’ management system. Note has been made above of the significant contribution to SANTED made by the project directors based within the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD) plus their support staff. Chapter 3 of this publication underlines the learning from past experience which led to the fourth leg strategy being adopted.

### *Working with what is known*

The close tying of project interventions to existing institutional policies and practices is a further principle to emerge from the SANTED experience. Strengthening what partners already do well or show they can cope with is a recipe for successful support provided the external inputs are handled sensitively. Where many projects have failed in the past is in the perception that the supporting partners wish to take over. True partnership which avoided paternalism characterised the SANTED experience.

### *Analysis before implementation*

The quality of the initial analysis of the needs and challenges the interventions were designed to address was a crucial part of the construction of the real partnerships described above. For example, addressing student needs for ‘epistemological access’ or understanding of the rules of the game for students new to academia; the concept

of mentoring, the challenges of introducing multilingualism, and the complexities of cross-border cooperation all needed significant analysis and forethought. Colleen Howell's Chapter 4 discusses the cluster of concerns generated and subjected to deeper analysis by the use of Morrow's very valuable concept. As with NMMU's exploration of the curriculum for higher education, the adoption of epistemological access as a driver and justifier of change led to major conceptual and intellectual stimulus for the institutions engaged in SANTED. Those institutions with some previous successful experience on which they had reflected were in the best position to benefit from the support and encouragement provided by SANTED.

Within the project model SANTED proved the necessity to ensure that support activities were discrete, relatively modest and manageable rather than 'big bang'. Although individual sub-projects within institutions were discrete and 'packaged', they were carefully tied into the mainstream of university activities through a variety of mechanisms. UWC drew its project management team from senior staff across the university. The University of KwaZulu-Natal's (UKZN) SUKAR Project focused on transforming the university as a whole, embedding SANTED activities in the mainstream faculty activities of teaching and learning in the institution.

### *Institutionalising*

This leads into the next principle to emerge from the SANTED experience – institutionalising the interventions, creating opportunities for institutional learning, both top-down and bottom-up. This cluster of outcomes ensured legitimacy as benefits to the institutions became clear. As Colleen Howell's chapter illustrates, new communities of practice were established and organisational learning led to new ways of thinking. The SUKAR Project at UKZN focused on 'transforming the university as a whole'. In Chapter 6 Martin Oosthuizen reports on the same phenomenon as senior university staff from the University of Johannesburg (UJ) and the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) explored the meaning of the curriculum for higher education more deeply than ever

before. However, as noted in the Introduction, there were, for example, advantages at NMMU in maintaining the comparative independence of the SANTED Project. Oosthuizen refers to the opportunity SANTED provided for challenging many institutional and even national policy assumptions. Hence, institutionalisation may be a two-edged sword, leading to mainstreaming of an innovation or its use as a new analytic tool.

A further more practical aspect of the institutionalisation issue is that reported by Howell regarding UWC with its record of attracting students from the poorest sections of the community. SANTED influenced strategic change in the university's policies, not least through the project's direct approaches to high schools for recruitment purposes.

This kind of organisational learning can only come from positive buy-in by staff. SANTED again proved the principle that a focus on key personnel with commitment, enthusiasm and energy would have an institutional impact beyond the modest funding made available. There is no doubt that SANTED came at a significant moment for higher education in South Africa and key individuals within the selected partner institutions were ready to join a movement for change. However, reports on the SANTED experience do indicate certain levels of innovation fatigue among staff active within the programme. Buy-in has to be accompanied by recognition of the increased load to be placed on staff and how this can be alleviated or rewarded.

Capacity building of staff has therefore to be followed up by investment in staff. Education capacity building has become a blind alley in which trained and competent people remain isolated from their institutions too frequently in development cooperation. A number of partner institutions within the SANTED Programme created new structures such as the Directorate for Teaching and Learning at UWC, thus providing greater opportunities for staff to build on their experience with SANTED as part of the mainstream of the university. Other examples may be drawn from Rhodes University where the Department of African Languages was revitalised through its multilingualism activities, vastly increasing staff and student numbers. Turning capacity into applied competence remains a challenge in some institutions but SANTED has shown how this can be accomplished.



### *Monitoring and evaluation*

The SANTED experience also indicates that benefits may be both direct and indirect, looked-for and unexpected. Indicators were not part of the monitoring and evaluation matrix prepared for SANTED, perhaps because of the inherently mechanistic nature of such devices. However, certain expectations were entertained in the planning of SANTED. Student access, retention and success rates have been measured and sound progress has been made in a number of the partner institutions. Other quantifiable aspects of SANTED have come through clearly in the annual reports and both the external evaluations conducted after Phase I and Phase II.

SANTED also illustrated the importance of supporting monitoring and evaluation within the programme as well as for the projects themselves. Despite some disappointment with the formal research dimension built into the original plan for SANTED, the annual reports, the two external evaluations, and the plethora of project documents produced by the cooperating institutions underline the importance of 'researching the research'. If we accept the idea of research as any organised enquiry based on an accepted methodology, then each of the activities within the SANTED umbrella can be viewed as research. The publication of the project accounts which precede this summary is an indication of the importance of reporting progress and barriers in attempting to transform a notoriously conservative sub-sector of any education system. Not all universities are willing and able to seek a new ethic more firmly based in the needs of society. Again reference can be made to the changes in admissions and recruitment policy adopted by UWC described in Howell's chapter on the projects.

### *Tracking progress*

The tracking of progress, qualitatively as well as quantitatively, has been a further valuable contribution of SANTED. Student throughput has been a major theme of the programme but the qualitative institutional

changes in terms of staff development for multilingualism, renewed analytic capacity to examine the challenges and barriers to effective tertiary education, and the re-examining of curricula and course components in the light of SANTED findings and initiatives, have supported a shift in quality entirely in keeping with the catalytic aims of the whole programme. However, recognition must be given to the different contexts within which institutions and the government may work thus leading to different expectations of outcomes. There arises a necessity to ‘translate’ expectations into the realities of partner institutions and to ensure that those institutions are geared to effective implementation and to learning from project experience. Monitoring and evaluation have to be conceptualised in the light of the needs and expectations of these different constituencies, not to mention the donor organisation itself.

### *Sustainability*

Sustainability is always a crucial concern of both donors and their partners. Usually, sustainability is expressed in terms of the finance to be made available after the donor’s contribution has come to an end. Although this is a significant aspect of the concept there is much more to sustainability than what is to be found on the balance sheet. Institutional sustainability is of more significance and usually subsumes the financial side. Further analysis of sustainability may include the ideas of political, cultural and social sustainability, the extent to which an innovation may fit into the landscape for which it was designed. These issues may be measured in terms of the mainstreaming of activities, finance committed, staff appointed or confirmed in post, significant changes in institutional culture, and the level to which an innovation becomes an orthodoxy. The preceding accounts of SANTED at work at UWC, NMMU and UFH illustrate these issues clearly.

Considerable space has been devoted to an analysis of the positive outcomes from SANTED. But was the story completely devoid of mistakes, barriers and blind alleys?

## What might have worked better?

### *South–South cooperation*

The first lesson to note is that it is dangerous to under-estimate the challenges of South–South cooperation. If ever the Matthew Principle was needed it is in this area of activities. Where there are long-standing and successful histories of cross-border cooperation then this is where investment should be placed. The apparently simple business of translating course materials into another language, training some key facilitators and waiting for positive results to come in does not work. Experience with the African Virtual University<sup>5</sup> (AVU) has shown that contextualisation of study programmes is a pre-requisite for student success, to say nothing of reliable internet access. SANTED cross-border experience with the Rhodes University and Wits stands in stark contrast with UNISA's attempts to create a partnership with Angolan higher education. Although noble in aspiration, these kinds of activities are far more difficult to achieve successfully than they may appear. Success is much more likely where institutions already have a track record on South–South cooperation. A common academic culture is a pre-requisite for success and 'development cooperation cannot compensate for an absence of fundamental state support for higher education institutions' as Gibbon's Introduction expresses it.

### *Innovation fatigue*

SANTED also demonstrated that however soundly designed and strategic an activity may be, the potential for staff overload and 'innovation fatigue' must be recognised and addressed.

Research capacity building was an initial component of SANTED in terms of the external monitoring to be conducted by a Norwegian institution. This aspect of SANTED was not entirely successful, but despite this, it is essential that such interventions are adequately researched, both in the initial analysis and design phase and in the continuing, formative stages. The summative work of reviewers may

identify the lessons learned, but this is obviously too late for adjustment to the programme under review.

## Summarising the legacies from the SANTED experience

That the project approach is still viable and effective has been enunciated above, also the critical importance of building on strong and viable institutions. This may sound like throwing the life-belt to those already in the lifeboat and, as such, would be an inadequate model. Those strong institutions should also be encouraged to share their strengths with weaker partners. As a conditionality, development partners should look closely at the potential for supporting institutions which can become ‘hubs’ or nodal points for the support of less capable institutions which in turn are then empowered to support or extend others around them. The forms of support made available may vary, from staff exchange and joint programme development to sharing of technology and scholarship programmes.

The second principle or legacy to be identified is that relatively modest inputs can create much larger outputs or outcomes. The old development principle of pump priming – creating a start-up process which could then sustain itself – is not necessarily dead. Careful targeting of expenditure on the things which will make a difference – the memory sticks prepared at RU to carry a glossary of legal terms, the modest payments to senior students to mentor junior students at UKZN, the training of peer students at UWC to communicate messages regarding HIV/AIDS – all are examples of strategic targeting.

The identification of key strategic points of intervention is a critical issue in any successful programme for change. That there was such variety across the SANTED landscape within a general framework of access, retention and success speaks to the processes of analysis and project identification carried out jointly by the DoE, the universities themselves and the donor.

Allied to the notion of thorough and realistic initial analysis is the necessity for equally critical self-analysis by the participating institutions themselves. Assessing what needs to be done, the relationship of such actions to wider institutional objectives and overall national policy are

fundamental first steps in planning worthwhile interventions. Facing up to the analysis of problems which may reveal deep-seated weaknesses is salutary but obviously demanding. Learning how to build on what is effective and productive is the other side of the analytic process. SANTED again tested these ideas and found a way to turn institutional analysis into workable strategies as with student retention activities at UNIZUL, UFH and UWC.

Despite the comparative failure of the formal research programme built into SANTED, much new knowledge was generated within and across the various sub-projects. One of the most obvious examples was the work on a typology of forms of knowledge generated by the comprehensive universities of UJ and NMMU, described in the introductory chapter as ‘the most intellectually challenging of the SANTED projects’. Although the model – from contextual knowledge to conceptual knowledge – probably needs a great deal more work, it has proved a useful tool in determining whether such universities can address the challenge of being truly comprehensive. Preceding chapters in this publication underline what was learned by different institutions regarding their students’ epistemological access, the impact of adjusted language policies in the teaching and learning environment, the capacity of universities to manage teaching and learning more effectively, and a range of other professional outcomes. On the more technical side, system knowledge, from student recruitment to the mounting of shared courses with colleagues and students in neighbouring countries, led to significant gains in knowledge and understanding. Reflections on practice were encouraged among cooperating institutions but, as Oosthuizen points out, it may be necessary to take a longer view of how SANTED findings find their way into institutional practice and policies.

Summing up the legacies of SANTED provides an encouraging picture which points the way to greater effectiveness in South African higher education, whether it be as a result of improved approaches to curricula, or greater access, retention and success rates among students. It is certainly no exaggeration to state that SANTED has made a positive difference to the tertiary landscape in South Africa.

## Applying learning from SANTED to education systems at large

Although SANTED had quite specific aims and objectives certain principles emerge from the experience which may be applied more generally across education systems. Building on existing capacity rather than investing in weaker institutions which will not be able to cope effectively with change is an obvious one. This need not be an either-or situation, especially where stronger institutions are able to 'godfather' others, thereby raising competence more generally.

Champions who push through innovation, or better still, create a facilitating environment, are also a key prerequisite for success in any education system. This is not always a matter of individuals in critical management roles. Champions may also be groups and as SANTED has shown, where a university-wide constituency was built up, more rapid and effective progress was made.

Bringing about institutional change rather than changing individuals is almost too obvious a point to labour here. The history of projects has demonstrated that many individuals may have benefited from training or other innovations, but unless there is an institutional buy-in to the programme of change, then little is likely to take root. Islands of good practice in a sea of mediocrity are too often the outcome from projects. The rooting of innovation may only take place over time; it is usually a process rather than an event, but SANTED has shown that taking time to institutionalise and mainstream change pays off.

Top-down and bottom-up approaches designed to complement one another represent another key learning outcome from SANTED which may be applied across systems. Research into change within education systems too frequently shows that good ideas filtering down from the top rarely establish themselves at the grass roots or indeed those good practices moving in the opposite direction. Volan's (2003) study of the BESSIP change process in Zambia demonstrated that teachers felt that innovation had been imposed on them without consultation or involvement. Fortunately the Zambian authorities

later began to engage teachers' organisations in the innovation process. SANTED worked through existing structures, posing the question, 'If this support mechanism came into being, how would it affect you and what opportunities and challenges would it present?' Ownership of the various sub-projects was firmly established among those who had to manage and administer change.

No doubt readers of this publication will find other significant pointers to better practice within complex systems, but a final issue to consider is that of identifying and then enabling the right people to do the right kind of work in the right way. Maybe SANTED was unusually fortunate in its leadership, its champions and its key personnel, but the result became a learning organisation in the classic sense of the term.

## Epilogue

Inger Stoll in Chapter 2 makes the point that SANTED was not meant to be the panacea for higher education challenges in South Africa. It was designed to act as a catalyst for further systemic and institutional development in terms of turning policy into practical applications, encouraging innovation in higher education, and redressing old inequities. SANTED also proved to be a catalyst for more strategic goals in development cooperation. It can be seen as a model of focusing on results, the development of inclusive partnerships, and accountability among the different partners in the enterprise. As noted earlier, the history of projects has not always seen these kinds of outcomes. The isolated intervention which is divorced from the mainstream of policy and practice has given the project approach a bad name. By noting the principles embraced within SANTED the value of a soundly designed and catalytic support mechanism can be better appreciated.

What SANTED achieved has proved remarkable and worthwhile. Although project leadership was lodged with an unusually committed and effective group of people, the principles which emerge from the experience remain valid across a wide range of systems and situations. Reading the accounts of the various sub-projects will lead many to draw

out their own points for reflection and possible application. This would perhaps be the most worthwhile of SANTED's many legacies.

## Endnotes

1. Sector Wide Approach, incorporated in the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* (OECD 2005).
2. The Matthew Principle is based on Matthew 25, verse 29, the Parable of the Talents, in which those who already have will be enriched and those without will lose the little they have.
3. See Chapter 7, Cross-border collaboration in the Southern African Development Community countries, by Fazela Haniff and Trish Gibbon.
4. See Chapter 7, op. cit.
5. See for example the *Daily Nation* (Kenya) of 27 May 2013 (Kairu 2013) for its report on an AVU conference held in Nairobi, and Juma (2006) on the experience of Kenyatta University.



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# Driving Change

## The Story of the South Africa Norway Tertiary Education Development Programme

*Driving Change* tells a story that exemplifies a basic law of physics, known to all – the application of a relatively small lever can shift weight, create movement and initiate change far in excess of its own size. It tells a story about a particular instance of development cooperation, relatively modest in scope and aim that has nonetheless achieved remarkable things and has been held up as an exemplar of its kind. It does not tell a story of flawless execution and perfectly achieved outcomes: it is instead a narrative that gives some insight into the structural and organisational arrangements, the institutional and individual commitments, and above all, the work, intelligence and passion of its participants, which made the SANTED Programme a noteworthy success.

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