Regional Collaboration and the Transformation of Higher Education in South Africa

by

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1. UNLIKELY PARTNERS

1.1 Regional collaboration as a national phenomenon
Before South Africa’s democratic revolution, higher education was characterised by a rigid binary system separating universities and technikons and a high degree of fragmentation along racial and ideological lines. However, the late Eighties saw the emergence of structures of regional collaboration that began to break down these walls of division and suspicion. These regional structures emerged as institutions wrestled with issues of redress and resource sharing demanded by the times. They drew institutions out of their entrenched positions as they worked together to address generic problems, such as library co-operation.

Since 1994 South Africa’s higher education policy has been aimed at overcoming the legacy of apartheid and it has accommodated regional inter-institutional co-operation. Indeed, government policy can be summarised thus. It will not introduce a further formal tier into the governance of higher education by formalising regional collaboration but it recognises and makes use of the valuable role these structures play.

1.2 Crafting new institutional forms
This is the story of the oldest of five regional consortia in South Africa – the Cape Higher Education Consortium, or CHEC for short. We will focus on two developments within CHEC in this paper: the automation of our five libraries, the story of the Cape Library Consortium (CALICO), and our attempts at strategic academic programme collaboration.

First, some background. The political economy of higher education in the Western Cape in South Africa in the Eighties was characterised by inequalities, contradictions and polarities. Together, the three universities and the two technikons offered significantly more places than the regional population warranted, given South Africa’s low HE participation rates. They all saw themselves as national institutions serving different parts of the student market. The two older universities, Cape Town and Stellenbosch, were poles apart ideologically speaking. Stellenbosch was an Afrikaans language institution with strong ties to Afrikaner history and culture. Cape Town was a liberal institution and a bitter opponent of apartheid; it was transforming itself by encouraging black student enrolment, often in opposition to government policy. The University of the Western Cape was created by apartheid policy in the Sixties as a ‘coloured university’. In defiance of government policy it was actively transforming itself into a non-racial ‘intellectual home of the left’. The Cape Technikon was a white institution that developed its city campus in District Six after the notorious Group Areas Act had enforced the removal of all people of colour from this neighbourhood. The Peninsula Technikon, created in the Sixties as a ‘coloured technikon’, was vigorously opposed to government policy and was attempting to transform itself into a quality non-racial institution. Although these five institutions are situated not more than 50 kilometres apart, they had little in common.

But by the early Nineties this situation was changing. All were facing generic problems, with cuts in government subsidy and a weaker currency taking their toll,
along with the adverse effects of the academic boycott. Informal contacts at Deputy Vice Chancellor level began to break down barriers and reveal common needs. The library directors were also in regular contact and found that they were faced with a crisis in library and information services. The stage was set for tentative forays into inter-institutional collaboration, the first being a joint funding proposal to meet the crisis in our libraries which we will describe shortly.

1.3 A vision in the making
In 1993, on the eve of our democratic revolution, the Councils of the five institutions formed a legal body called the Western Cape Tertiary Institutions Trust. The member universities and technikons were to be the ‘beneficiaries’ of the Trust which was established to “facilitate and expand co-operation between the beneficiaries with regard to the sharing of infrastructure, such as libraries, information technology, training of personnel, as well as any other form of co-operation which may be beneficial to any of the parties…” This was their response to the twin challenges of meeting increasing demands with decreasing resources and levelling the playing fields between them.4

Our early sorties into strategic academic programme collaboration, specifically our attempt to establish a regional School of Public Health and our attempt to find a regional solution to nursing education, ended in failure. In the case of Public Health the failure can, in the final analysis, be attributed to a ‘clash of personalities’ between leading public health practitioners! Nursing failed for more substantive reasons that had to do with differing views on holistic health science education and led, ultimately, to the withdrawal of a major player. We will return to nursing later in this paper.

Failure is not a bad place to learn that voluntary, regional, inter-institutional organisations, such as the Trust, are inherently fragile and precarious. They depend for their success, therefore, on crafting rules and conventions for co-operation that bind autonomous, competing and very competitive institutions. In short, we have had to learn by trial and error to balance competing interests, resolve conflict and find diplomatic solutions to difficult problems. In fact, the literature of international affairs, conflict resolution and diplomacy has assisted us more than management literature!

Our strategic vision now (2002) reads:

To establish the Western Cape as a strong higher education region in a restructured national system which, through systemic inter-institutional co-operation and academic programme collaboration, will be

- Distinctively responsive to regional, national and international developments in the knowledge economy of the 21st century
- Sensitive to historical realities in promoting equity across its institutions
- Cost effective and of high quality.

The Vice Chancellors of the five institutions signed a public Compact at the end of 2002 in which they committed their institutions to implement this vision and to certain principles that ought to govern their behaviour towards each other. This Compact is displayed prominently in the central administrations of each institution.5
2. ALIGNING VISION, TECHNOLOGY AND ORGANISATION: THE CALICO CASE

We cut our eyeteeth on the Cape Library Consortium (CALICO) as a consortial project. The story is worth telling because of the hard-won experience we gained in clarifying vision, finding technology solutions, and agreeing organisational forms. These have stood us in good stead in other areas of collaboration.

Briefly, the facts are these. In the Eighties our libraries were in trouble because of the combined effects of the knowledge explosion, a weak currency, and the academic boycott. A joint grant proposal to the Ford Foundation led to advice from an expert team from the USA that we were ripe for consortial automation. We set to work to build a library consortium, to develop the technology specifications for a ‘library without walls’, and to create and advocate a vision for a shared library and information system. An ‘early winner’ for the new consortium was the introduction of the CALICO van service – a 24 hour turn-around shuttle service between the five campuses and a 12 hour turn-around in the case of the two medical schools.

Along the way we had to solve the vexed question of finding an affordable way to connect the libraries and satellite campuses. That story deserves a case study of its own. Ultimately, the solution was to create a non-profit company called Tertiary Education Network, or TENET, to manage a custom-built Internetworking contract with the national telecommunications company, Telkom, at a price not previously possible, and for the entire higher education system in South Africa. The end result of this success story is that through TENET all higher education institutions and research entities in the country are today purchasing about twelve times more international bandwidth than they did two years ago.

2.1 The Request for Funding

The Mellon Foundation was impressed with our progress in developing the library consortium and offered to consider a Request for Funding (RfF) for the software and hardware required to implement a shared library information system. We were already developing the technical specifications for the system. A project team was established to write the RfF. Its brief was to convert years of discussion by the Council of Library Directors (CoD) into a coherent proposal that linked vision, technology, and organisation.

The process of writing the RfF was controversial. The project team often had to second-guess the CoD which had never had to come to finality on matters that now needed to be resolved. Decisions had to be made, and these shaped the system in operational terms. For example, did we really want a shared system? How shared? Would students have equal access? Would there be a common circulation policy? Would the system operate off a single computer server? How would we count concurrent users? Would the circulation policies of all five libraries have to be modified, even standardised, to accommodate a shared system?

There were robust debates about whether CALICO would be a library co-operative or a library consortium. What was the essential difference between a voluntary association of libraries and a consortium of libraries sharing a single automated library system? Where would decisions be made that affected the whole enterprise? In short, issues affecting the CALICO mission, technology choices and governance structures were raised in the course of writing and getting the RfF approved. As we
will see, some governance and management issues continued to simmer long after the shared library system was implemented.

It was a momentous day when we learned that the Board of the Mellon Foundation had approved our RfF for US$1.8 million. Up to this point we had been involved in a “what if” exercise; now we had the means to make the dream come true. And the dream was a ‘library without walls’ accessible to some 70 000 users – a levelling of the grossly unequal playing fields that existed at the time as far as library services on our five campuses were concerned.

2.2 Choosing and implementing the technology
We went through the normal process of writing a Request for Information (RfI) and short-listing those vendors that appeared to meet our needs. Finally, after what seemed like an interminably long, complicated, and ‘overly democratic’ process we had narrowed the field down to a ‘vendor of choice’ – the Aleph 500 system from Ex Libris. Given that we wanted to work from a single technology platform that was web based we believed Ex Libris to be at the start of an exciting developmental cycle and appeared to be flexible and accommodating. The ‘functionality negotiations’ were protracted but at last, two years after our RfI, the final contract was signed on 28 May 1998. A reflection of the protracted democratic process is the fact that the software licence agreement itself consisted of eight pages, but there were no fewer than nine Appendices – some 65 pages long!

A parallel but shorter process was involved in choosing a hardware platform for the (then) new Aleph 500 software. It was driven by the IT Directors and, in the end, the choice went to Hewlett Packard.

It was in the implementation phase that we hit our first real problem. CALICO resolved to implement the Aleph 500 system by means of a seconded team of experts drawn from our own libraries and assisted by a technical consultant. It was not long before signs of strain began to appear and it eventually became clear that this approach was doomed to failure. The reasons are complex and include internal contradictions, confusion about lines of responsibility or refusal to use them, and clashes of personality. In moving from widespread consultation to managing an operational task, we had failed to make the critical distinctions between communication, accountability and responsibility.

We had to abort the implementation team and outsource implementation. Fortunately we were able to engage SABINET Online (Pty) Ltd – a company that had the requisite experience for this complex task. Nevertheless, the implementation phase was fraught with problems. It took from August 1998 until April 2000 to complete the process! Partly, at our end, it was a case of ‘too many cooks spoil the broth’. At the other end, Ex Libris had clearly underestimated the complexities of consortial implementation of a new product. And none of the players had ever done anything as complex as this before with state-of-the-art software.

2.3 Organisational and governance difficulties
The Council of Library Directors was essentially a collegial arrangement that presided over a burgeoning committee system that, at the time of disbanding, numbered no less than twenty-eight! The collegiality index was high but CALICO was a bloated organisation that was neither efficient nor effective. We were a live example of one of Joseph Boisse’s postulates on library co-operation: “The more democratic the organisation you create is, the more difficult the decision making.”

We simply had to find a model that would ensure political ownership at senior executive level – the level of accountability. We needed to position the library directors as ‘customers’ and CALICO as a ‘service provider’.

Library co-operation requires political buy-in at the top. This we achieved by creating a CALICO Board comprising the five Deputy Vice Chancellors responsible for library affairs within their institutions. The Board is accountable to the CHEC Board that is ultimately accountable to the member Councils. A Committee of Library Directors convenes as a users’ group. It nominates two of its members to the CALICO Board. The day-to-day operational management of CALICO as a service provider is vested in the CALICO Director, a senior librarian with management skills, who is responsible to the CALICO Board.

This radical change in CALICO’s governance structure came with a price. The then incumbent CALICO Director was the first casualty. There were others as librarians, from director positions downwards, struggled to come to terms with the new rules of the game. A good deal of ‘scapegoating’ and projection behaviour, and delaying tactics, made life difficult for everyone. But the new system is now bedded down and working well.

At long last we are treating the shared library and information system as an operating system. Its component parts, a wide area network, the Aleph 500-applications software, the hardware platform, and the systems administration are properly being treated as an application system in operating terms. Managers are responsible for running it as an operational system. Accountability rests with the right level of senior executives of member institutions, and the reporting lines are clear. In fact, the system is operating optimally.

2.4 Rigorous external evaluation

In September 2003, some five years after signing the contract with *Ex Libris*, the CALICO Board embarked on a rigorous external evaluation of the *Ex Libris* Aleph 500 shared library information system and of the CALICO library consortium itself. The main driver for this evaluation was the insistence by some of the libraries that Aleph 500 lacked functionality and cost too much in workarounds to offset these functionality deficiencies. At the same time the German office of *Ex Libris* was in the process of taking over from its Israel office support for CALICO; a process that also involved a review of the system.

*Nelinet*, the external consultants appointed to carry out the assessment, were chosen for their expertise and international reputation. In essence, *Nelinet’s* report argues strongly for a concerted effort on the part of the consortium to align vision, technology and organisation. And they provide a series of recommendations to achieve this alignment.

*Nelinet’s* findings are that the Aleph 500 system is operational, but that there are functionalities, such as management reports, that require attention from the vendor. (In fact, *Ex Libris*, in its report, offers a way to solve these deficiencies in functionality.) *Nelinet* also finds that there is considerable client satisfaction. It argues that there are therefore no compelling reasons for changing the system at this stage, even if that could be afforded. On the contrary, they propose a system review after two years, when CALICO would have been using the system for 6-7 years. In support of their findings they argue that CALICO has now built a strong understanding of the system, that there is provision for ongoing staff training, that
there is enthusiasm for the system, and that the telecommunications infrastructures are strong and stable.

Significantly, the burden of Nelinet’s recommendations are devoted to building the consortium and ensuring that it has clear and achievable strategic objectives and a focussed and phased operating plan so that CALICO can continue to delight its end-users. In organisational terms, it recommends the addition of technical staff and the reinforcement of the centrality of CALICO for all members. In summary, the message from Nelinet is “you have a state-of-the-art system in place – now you must align vision and organisation to maximise the system in the interest of the end user”. The problem is not the system. The problem is that you are still behaving as though you are five independent libraries using common software. You are not behaving like a consortium. The question that remains is whether the five member libraries have the political will to make this happen.

What remains then, as we try to align vision, technology and organisation, is to behave as a library consortium in each aspect of library functionality. And that is our current agenda. There are exciting possibilities ahead as we recover our nerve and tackle the strategic issues. Our vision was to build a ‘library without walls’ that would accomplish ‘redress without redistribution’ where the playing fields were certainly not level. We envisaged a Western Cape collection that is managed ‘virtually’ so that “the end-user would have immediate access to information about what was available, and rapid access to the documents themselves” Access, not ownership, was our vision. Economies of scale would give us purchasing power when negotiating with vendors, especially in electronic publishing. And we are slowly building a coalition of people who share that vision.

3. ‘FROM SILOS TO COMMON TEACHING PLATFORMS’: WORKING WITH ACADEMIC PROGRAMME COLLABORATION

3.1 Common teaching platforms
The major thrust of CHEC since early 2000 has been in the area of academic programme collaboration. The reason is simple.

All South African institutions bear the marks of apartheid. Universities and technikons are no exception. This peculiar South African history exacerbates a problem higher education institutions experience worldwide. They behave like autonomous, self-sufficient, and highly competitive “silos”. If we were to do some ‘green fields’ research we would certainly not plan three universities and two technikons within a 50 kilometre radius of each other – all offering similar if not the same programmes.

The project to build common teaching platforms is our attempt to overcome the ‘siloeffect’ of the past and to respond to the globalisation of knowledge now that we are once more part of the world of scholarship. We want to build platforms across the silos so that we can move staff, students, electrons, and resources in order to meet strategic teaching and learning needs such as teacher and nurse education.

We think the case we are making can contribute substantially to higher education nationally. Few, if any, countries have attempted a restructuring of higher education on such a massive scale as is being embarked upon by the South African
Government as we speak. Whatever one may think about this endeavour, a critical success factor will be whether there is substantial academic programme rationalisation and the building of common teaching platforms in newly merged institutions, and between institutions. The lessons we learn about this process in CHEC can, we think, serve as an exemplar for other institutions.

3.2 Guiding Principles

Systemic collaboration requires a formal governance mode:- decision-making structures and processes that facilitate intentional and structured collaboration. These need to be founded on agreed principles that balance institutional autonomy against the need for robust collective decision-making without overburdening the system with a costly co-ordinating layer.

Our whole approach is guided by a number of principles\textsuperscript{12}:

- Any system of regional collaboration in the Western Cape must recognise that institutions participating in the collaborative effort are autonomous.
- Therefore, collaboration must benefit the institutions.
- A workable collaborative framework requires that institutions commit to a sustained programme of collaboration across many initiatives and over a long period of time.
- Regional governance cannot impose binding decisions on autonomous institutions; however it can facilitate the development of binding agreements between member institutions by acting as a filter for collaboration opportunities and brokering the terms of collaborative initiatives.
- Even though regional governance has no statutory authority, it must have legitimacy in the eyes of its member institutions. Regional governance must articulate with institutional governance. It is important that the regional governance process is synchronised with the academic year and the institutional governance processes.
- The resource requirements for regional collaboration must be kept to a minimum.
- Regional collaboration should not require government participation or approval.

3.3 Prioritisation Analysis

Potentially, opportunities for collaboration are numerous. How do we prioritise them? What type of collaboration opportunity are we dealing with? And who decides? At the time we had identified no fewer than 39 potential areas of co-operation, some infrastructural and others academic. Government’s programme and qualification audit necessitated a review of some of the academic areas listed. We identified others as being of strategic importance.

The first stage of the analysis would determine which collaboration opportunities have the highest priority, based on an assessment of whether the strategic importance of such collaboration is high or low, and whether the cost and/or efficiency benefits are seen to be high or low.
Where an opportunity scores high on both dimensions (i.e. high in cost benefit and strategic importance), then collaboration in this area would be a high priority, and would be referred for a second stage of analysis.

Where an opportunity is in essence a requirement identified by the Ministry, then this would be referred automatically to the second stage of analysis.

Where an opportunity scores low on both dimensions, it would be taken off the list for the time being.

Where an opportunity scores high on one dimension, but low on another, it could be held over, or referred to a task team for additional feasibility or cost/benefit analysis. (A hypothetical example in this case is the issue of a shared payroll across institutions, which has the potential to offer high cost or efficiency benefits, but may not be of high strategic importance at this stage.)

This approach allowed us to prioritise opportunities for academic collaboration, such as teacher education and nurse training, and to develop methodologies for tackling them.

### 3.4 ‘Structured Dialogue’

We adapted from the business world the use of ‘structured dialogues’. These are an effective way of addressing complex decision situations that require clarity over what is best and alignment of the key participants around the chosen course of action. This will generally be the case where collaboration is not easy to implement and where there is the necessary institutional political will to accomplish it. The essence of a structured dialogue is a series of conversations between knowledgeable experts (the task team) and empowered decision-makers (steering committee). The objective of the dialogue is to create a solution to a problem, understand the strengths and weaknesses associated with it and, ensure that all the participants are committed to its implementation.

We are currently using this process to deal with Nursing Education, where all five institutions plus provincial and national governments are involved in creating a common teaching platform.
A typical dialogue process involves four stages that successively build on one another (see figure 3). At the end of each stage there is a meeting between the steering committee and the task team during which issues are shared and raised, feedback given and agreement reached before proceeding:

1. **Framing** – *What is the Problem?* The framing stage of the dialogue is designed to lead to agreement around the problem that needs to be solved and the process for solving it.

2. **Alternatives** – *What can we do?* Alternatives are potential solutions to the problem and, ideally, will represent the range of opinion amongst the participants.

3. **Analysis** – *What did we learn?* The purpose of analysis is for the group to learn about the sources of value and risk from an examination of the alternatives.

4. **Decision** - *What are we going to do and why?* The final step in the process is a conversation in which the participants decide on the way forward. The object is to create a new “hybrid” alternative that combines the best elements of each of the initial alternatives based on the increased level of shared understanding that has been developed through the process.

### 3.5 From ‘Silos’ to Common Teaching Platforms: The Case Nursing Education

The CHEC institutions are giving effect to a bold vision for a common teaching platform in the region for undergraduate Nursing education leading to official R425 registration, involving our five higher education institutions and the Provincial Government’s Department of Health.

Four imperatives gave rise to the vision. First, the Vice-Chancellors had identified Nursing as a priority for academic programme collaboration. Second, the Ministry of Education had ruled that only the University of the Western Cape (UWC) and the soon-to-be merged technikons should offer Nursing education. Third, the Provincial Government had identified nurse training in all forms as a priority. Fourth, national higher education policy makes provision for the incorporation into higher education of nursing colleges.
CHEC institutions believed that it was possible to craft a common teaching platform for Nursing education in the region that will meet the objectives of national and provincial government whilst making optimal use of their combined strengths.

And so we set to work. Our brief was to develop a cost-effective model to meet current and future needs for nurses, and embody best practice in nurse education. Assuming an intake in time of 1 000 students per annum over a current figure of about 280, we proposed that the majority of students, some 70%, should be doing basic diploma studies leading to registration, and the remainder degree-level studies leading to registration. It took us some 18 months of negotiation and detailed planning and design work to complete the final Memorandum of Understanding.

**Key Assumptions**
In order to proceed certain key assumptions had to be agreed:

- That all institutions will participate in the new undergraduate nurse-education platform from January 2005 (finally agreed 27 May 2004)
- That by government decree the two technikons will merge from 2005, and be called the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) and that the Provincial college of nursing, called the Western Cape College of Nursing (WCCN) will be incorporated into CPUT in due course
- That UWC and CPUT will be “enrolling institutions” from 2005
- That there will be one core curriculum with different exit points for Diploma, B Tech (Bachelor of Technology), and B Cur (Baccalaureus Curationis) qualifications
- That this new undergraduate nursing platform will enrol first year students in 2005
- That approximately 300 first year students will enrolled by UWC and CPUT in 2005; actual numbers to be determined in consultation with academic and clinical service providers on a needs basis
- That staff and students can move between all the institutions

**Principles for curriculum planning**
In order to develop a flexible, core curriculum adequate for educating and training the modern nurse to meet the health care challenges of South Africa certain key principles had to be agreed:

- Students receive their 1st year instruction from the institution at which they are enrolled. This allows the enrolling institution to develop a strong relationship with their students
- A course of the four-year curriculum will be allocated to only one institution that then becomes the “offering institution”. This implies that only one institution takes responsibility as driver and custodian of this course.
- An offering institution takes responsibility for a course irrespective of where the students are enrolled. This ensures consistency across the platform.
- Although the enrolling institution takes responsibility for the full first year curriculum, they may draw on staff and other resources from the other institutions as required.
- Where courses in consecutive years comprise a theme, one offering institution will take responsibility for the theme in all years.
• Individual staff wanting to be involved in a particular course must be given consideration by the offering institution for the course (this is important for research and career development of individual staff).
• Institutions with responsibility for particular courses (i.e. offering institutions) will be able to draw on expertise residing in other institutions where they do not have sufficient or specialist expertise.

The resultant core curriculum is flexible and reflects modern teaching and learning principles. It makes provision for different entry and exit levels. Responsibility for offering courses is shared by participating institutions on an agreed basis, to be reviewed annually.

**Governance and management**

Some of the principles of governance and management of the platform are:

• The statutorily-established responsibility of Senates and Councils of CHEC member institutions is to be respected, at the same time as the integrity of a “regional governance” system is achieved. Given that effective regional co-operation entails negotiation and some compromises, the substantive autonomy of institutions with respect to academic affairs may in some instances be conditioned by procedural arrangements giving effect to a common teaching platform for undergraduate Nursing.
• The MOU agreed for undergraduate Nursing education serves by way of a “warrant” and authority for such governance structures as are to be established. It is also the mechanism by which each enrolling institution contracts with other higher education institutions in the region, and with Provincial Government, in a CHEC-sponsored contract.
• Governance and management arrangements, as spelled out in the MOU, will optimise appropriate participation and ensure co-ordination. They act as a framework for the specific accountabilities of enrolling institutions with respect to accreditation, quality assurance and management of the regional programme/s.

Governance of the platform is through a “Nursing Academic Board” (NAB), comprising knowledgeable experts representing the five higher education institutions plus the Province, and reporting to the CHEC Board of Directors. The MOU sets out the Composition, Terms of Reference and Powers of the NAB. The MOU proposes two Management Committees to deal with operational matters, one for the UWC and one for the CPUT part of the platform. The Composition, Terms of Reference and Reporting Lines are set out in the MOU.

**Conflict resolution**

The MOU makes provision for the manner in which disputes are to be resolved by the NAB. Technical issues are determined wherever possible by a simple majority. Non-technical issues are to be determined by “sufficient consensus”. The principle of sufficient consensus means, in this case, that the parties to a difference or dispute will approach the issue in accordance with the underlying principle of collaboration and good faith, as spelled out in the *Compact* signed between the five institutions. If neither agreement nor sufficient consensus can be achieved the matter shall then be referred to the CHEC Board of Directors for final determination. The Board may either determine the issue itself, or it may appoint one or more intermediaries with appropriate knowledge and expertise to determine the issue on its behalf, or to
advise the CHEC Board on how the issue may be resolved. Notwithstanding all of the above, the overriding principle shall be that wherever possible issues shall be resolved consensually and with a minimum of formality, cost, and delay. To this end the Board may appoint a mediator at any stage in the process to facilitate and assist the parties in reaching a mutually acceptable outcome.

**Managing the affordability of the platform**

Early on it was recognised that a critical success factor for the platform would be its financial viability. We began from the premise that economies of scale could be achieved by working together to train more nurses than was currently the case with each institution working independently. But the proof would be in the eating.

With the help of consultants we proceeded to build a truly innovative "affordability model" that was revenue driven and which is fully described in the MOU. The following principles were established for managing affordability:

- The model must be revenue-driven; i.e. the revenue received by the platform (through Government subsidy and student fees) determines the amount that the enrolling institution/s can pay to the offering institution/s, in order to deliver a course. And enrolling institutions are also offering institutions.
- The offering institution takes full responsibility for all the arrangements and costs associated with offering a course, with the exception of transporting students to clinical sites. The offering institution determines its own staff and other costs of providing a course.
- Since clinical training is a crucial part of Nurse education, the model sets out a way of dealing with the costs of transporting students to clinical sites.
- Given the time lag in Government subsidy payments, payments from the enrolling institution/s to the offering institution/s will be made when the revenue is received by the enrolling institution/s. This applies to all sources of revenue – student fees, state subsidy, bursaries, and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) monies.
- Since the enrolling institution has overall responsibility for the qualification offered, the model makes provision for an administrative allocation to be top sliced from the revenue generated by the platform for the enrolling institution/s, the ratio to be determined from time to time by the CHEC Board.

The outcome is a 'revenue driven' financial model designed for the 'enrolling' and 'offering' institutions that ensures cost-effectiveness and forms the basis upon which offering institutions have agreed to participate in the platform from 2005.

**Approval processes**

The Minister of Education gave CHEC in-principle approval of the proposals late last year and will shortly receive an updated report on progress to date. A final Memorandum of Understanding that summarises agreements reached on the terms under which all the parties will participate in the platform in 2005 is currently before the Councils of the participating institutions.

The MOU departs from the original concept in one respect. As things stand, the future of the four-year diploma currently offered by the College is uncertain, and the soon to be merged Cape Peninsula University of Technology wishes to offer the BTech in Nursing education and not a diploma. So the platform, as currently
described, has been designed for the BCur at the moment, but is sufficiently flexible to accommodate a BTech as well as lower level qualifications (including a diploma of less than 4 years) if needs be. The future of the College is still under discussion.

4. BLOODIED BUT UNBOWED…

Throughout this paper we have focussed on the practical aspects of regional collaboration that we have learned by trial and error. We will not try to summarise these or repeat them here. By way of conclusion we want rather to highlight some of the things we have learned along the way.

First, without what John Kotter calls a ‘guiding coalition’ of people who share the vision and are willing to give leadership, inter-institutional co-operation cannot succeed. At various stages of the story of CHEC the Vice Chancellors, the members of the Board, and senior managers in HR and IT have provided that leadership.

Second, without the appropriate governance and management structures in place regional collaboration cannot succeed either. We learned that the hard way in CALICO. Crucially, there must be in place structures where political decisions about policy and buy-in are made, and these must not be confused with the management structures needed for operational purposes.

Third, voluntary regional collaboration is inherently fragile and precarious. We hit a number of crisis points in the nursing project that threatened its success and required careful negotiations to overcome. One of the dangers of voluntary collaboration is that of being held hostage to the veto of one. “Collaboration”, someone has said, “seldom walks 50 metres, and never climbs stairs!”

Fourth, the regional structure as organisation – in this case the CHEC Secretariat – must have the necessary project management skills to make things work in a complex, inter-institutional context. It must also enjoy the trust of the member institutions as an ‘honest broker’.

Fifth, at a more philosophical level, inter-institutional collaboration is simply not possible without changing the mental map that says competing institutions cannot co-operate. Competing institutions can, and must, co-operate with each other in a competitive global knowledge market. We have borrowed from game theory the inelegant word “co-opetition” to express this in CHEC14.

Finally, there is no room for ‘short-termism’ in the business of regional collaboration in higher education. There are no ‘quick fixes’ either. By trial and error you balance competing constituency interests, resolve conflicts and hit upon diplomatic solutions. You simply have to ‘develop the art of the long view’ if you are crafting new institutional forms whose future shape you cannot yet discern.

31 July 2004

END NOTES
In South Africa the 16 “technikons” are higher education institutions established to address the high level vocational training requirements of the country. They have traditionally concentrated on the application of scientific principles to practical problems and on the development, implementation and practical application of technology. In international terms, they are akin to polytechnics. With the advent of South Africa’s democracy Government has initiated wide-ranging changes in higher education. One of the outcomes of this restructuring exercise is that some technikons are in the process of becoming universities of technology, whilst others are being merged with universities to become “comprehensive” institutions that are intended to offer both vocational and university education. There is controversy about the nature and role of these “comprehensive” institutions.


There are now regional structures in the Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Kwa-Zulu Natal, Free State and Gauteng. The word “regional” is used in this context to denote a geographical area that roughly coincides with the provinces of South Africa. For a recent history of regional co-operation see Trish Gibbon and Angina Parekh, Uncommon Wisdom: Making co-operation work for South African Higher Education (CHET 2001)

The Trust has since been dissolved and replaced with a non-profit company which is deemed more appropriate for our purposes.

See our website for details of the Compact at http://www.chec.ac.za/


See the TENET website for details http://www.tenet.ac.za/


Colin Darch quoted in James Leatt (2001)

At the heart of the CALICO project from its inception was the bold vision of shared library and information system – a ‘library without walls’ or a ‘single, pooled library system’ that would link collections housed separately through an computerised system. Students and staff would then have identical access to all parts of the co-operative library. In this way the historical inequities that exist between the five libraries would be overcome – ‘redress without redistribution’.

All five institutions are primarily undergraduate teaching institutions. We have concentrated on undergraduate academic programme offerings because that is where the negative aspects of the ‘silo effect’ are most telling. There is, in fact, a great deal of collaboration at postgraduate level and in research between academics and academic disciplines.

Leatt et al “A Practical Approach….“ pp6-7

See the final memorandum of understanding on undergraduate nursing, known as “the MOU”, that is currently before the Councils of the five institutions for formal approval , entitled “Integrated Planning Framework and Memorandum of Understanding: A Common Teaching Platform for Undergraduate Nursing Education in the Western Cape”, CHEC 28 June 2004, 111 pages.

See for example BJ Nalebuff & AM Brandenburger, Co-opetition (HarperCollinsBusiness) 1996

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:
James Leatt is currently chief executive officer of the Cape Higher Education Consortium (CHEC). He joined the University of Cape Town (UCT) in 1976 as a lecturer in Religious Studies. His interest in applied ethics led to his appointment to the first chair in Social Ethics at a South African business school in 1983. In 1985 he was appointed a Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice Principal at UCT, and in 1991 he took up the post of Vice Chancellor and Principal of the University of Natal.

His educational background covers banking examinations; theology and social anthropology at Rhodes; Honours in social anthropology and a PhD in social ethics at UCT. He consulted for Shell, Anglo American, CapeNewspapers, and the National Union of Mineworkers. He is the author of many journal articles, chapters in books, and is editor-in-chief of and a major contributor to Contending Ideologies in South Africa (David Philip, 1986 & 1989). Dr Leatt is a Senior Member of Robinson College, Cambridge University. He is married to Jenny, a remedial teacher. They have two children, Christopher and Ann-Marie. His hobbies include jazz, art, and reading detective and spy thrillers.

Tyrone Pretorius is Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-rector (Academic) at the University of the Western Cape as well as Senior Professor in Psychology. His educational qualifications include two doctorates (one from the University of the Western Cape and one from the University of Free State), masters, honours and bachelors, in addition to a post-doctoral fellowship at Yale University.

He has published extensively in the area of coping and stress, statistics and research methodology, and has done pioneering work in the area of Psychofortology (Psychology of Strengths). He is a past Associate Editor of the South African Journal of Psychology. His contribution to psychology in South Africa was recognised by the Psychological Association of South Africa in 2001 when it awarded him a “lifetime achievement award”.

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His professional involvement includes membership of various professional associations, both in South Africa and abroad. He is a member of the Research Committee of the South African Vice-Chancellors Association and the Special Advisory Committee on Humanities and Social Sciences of the National Research Foundation.

He is the Minister's representative on the Statistics Council of South Africa - a council advising the Minister of Finance. He serves on the South African Qualifications Authority Standards Body, and is a past Chairperson of the Ministerial Committee for Mental Health and Substance Abuse, and the Chairperson of the Ministerial Investigating Committee into Malpractice and Abuse in Psychiatric Institutions.