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A Position Paper on the professional Registration of FET College Educators



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Acronyms and Abbreviations Used

BOTA	Botswana Training Authority
CPTD	Continuing Professional Teacher Development
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training, South Africa
DoE	Department of Education
FET	Further Education and Training
GET	General Education and Training
HESA	Higher Education South Africa
HET	Higher Education and Training
NAPTOSA	National Professional Teachers Organisation of South Africa
NATU	National Teachers Union
NC(V)	National Certificate Vocational
NPFTED	National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSC	National Senior Certificate
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PEU	Professional Educators Union
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SAOU	Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwysers Unie
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
TAFE	Technical and Further Education (Australia)
TQFE	Teaching Qualification in Further Education (United Kingdom)
TRB	Teachers Registration Board, Australia
VEOP	Vocational Education Orientation Programme
VET	Vocational Education and Training

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1. Introduction

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996) obligates the state to provide access to education for its citizens. In order to fulfil this obligation, the South African government developed a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) consisting of three bands, namely:

- General Education and Training (GET),
- Further Education and Training (FET), and
- Higher Education and Training (HET)

From 1994, South Africa has had one Department of Education (DoE) straddling across all three bands of the NQF, with each band forming a branch within the DoE. In 2009, following the split of the Department of Education into Basic Education and Higher Education and Training (DoE, 2011), the FET band was placed under the management of the Ministry of Higher Education and Training.

An equivalent of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in other national systems, the FET band includes the post-compulsory phase of career-oriented education, which is offered at several FET colleges country-wide as well as the senior secondary component of schooling. Learners would normally graduate from an FET college after three years with an NQF level 4 qualification, which is equivalent to the National Senior Certificate (NSC). While there is an age diversity range in FET colleges, learners who are enrolled in such institutions could be as young as 15 as admission is open to learners as long as they have successfully completed Grade 9. However, this conceptualisation of the FET sector will soon change following legislative amendments currently under way. We shall return later to this point.

Since its inception, the South African Council for Educators (SACE) has been registering all educators employed under the Employment of Educators Act, 1998 (Act No. 76 of 1998), including FET educators. The Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill (2009) not only moved the FET sector to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), but also restricted SACE's professional registration mandate to school-based educators only.

This paper seeks to outline SACE's position on the registration of FET educators and provide advice to the Minister of Higher Education and Training regarding the same. Based on reviews of available literature, lessons from other national systems internationally, an analysis of the S A FET policy and legislative landscape, as well as interviews with some of the key stakeholders in the FET sector, this paper

provides some propositions on whether FET college educators should undergo professional registration.

2. The policy and legislative context related to the professional registration of FET educators in South Africa

The South African Council for Educators Act, 2000 (Act No. 31 of 2000) articulates the roles and responsibilities of the South African Council for Educators (SACE) with regard to the professional registration of educators. In terms of the SACE Act, an *'educator'* is defined as *'any person referred to in section 3 and who teaches, educates or trains other persons or who provides professional educational services, including professional therapy and educational psychological services, at an institution'* (RSA, 2000: 3). The same definition of an *'educator'* is found in the Employment of Educators Act, 1998 (Act No. 76 of 1998) and the Further Education and Training Act, 1998 (Act No. 98 of 1998) through a number of cross-references.

The SACE Act defines an *'institution'* as *'any school, further education and training institution or adult learning centre'* (RSA, 2000: 3). In other words, people who teach or train in a school, FET college or adult learning centre are recognized as educators in terms of the SACE Act and are as such required to meet the minimum requirements for professional registration with SACE and to adhere to the professional code of ethics for educators as stipulated by SACE.

SACE not only registers educators but also determines minimum requirements for professional registration, and this includes minimum professional qualifications. The SACE Act articulates the importance of the registration for educators. Without professional registration, an individual is not allowed to practise as an educator. In addition to this, the Council offers provisional registration to the educators deemed to be necessary additions to the education system, such as students in their final year of teacher training and those who are employed under learnership arrangements as stipulated by the Skills Development Act of 1998. This type of registration is, however, subject to conditions imposed by SACE, and the Council can impose a period of validity for this category of registrations (SACE, 2011).

The first legislative deviation from the professional registration of FET educators by SACE was the passing of the Further Education and Training Act, 2006 (Act No. 16 of 2006), which gave some degree of institutional autonomy to FET colleges. This Act changed the status of employment of college staff from being the provincial departments of education to being the college councils (RSA, 2006: 27). It is important to note that the FET Act of 2006 has completely removed from its definitions the notion of an *'educator'* and has replaced that concept with the notion of a *'lecturer'* with very significant conceptual ramifications.

The changes in governance arrangements in the FET sector as a consequence of the FET Act of 2006 have given a lot more authority is given to the college councils and academic boards. This new arrangement might have precipitated the argument that FET educators in the same way as university academics should not undergo any professional registration. Whether there should be any connection between autonomy and professional registration is an issue to which we shall return later in this paper.

The second legislative deviation regarding the registration of FET educators was the promulgation of the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill (2009), which, as earlier indicated, was promulgated to give legislative effect and clarity to the splitting of the former DoE into two departments – Basic Education and Higher Education and Training. The Bill made a number of amendments to numerous education-related pieces of legislation, including the SACE Act. In this regard,

Amendment of Section 1 of Act 31 of 2000

16. Section 1 of the South African Council for Educators Act, 2000, is hereby amended by –

- (a) The deletion from the definition of “institution” of the following words –
“‘institution’ means any school[, **further education and training institution or adult learning centre**];”;
- (b) the substitution of the definition of “**Minister**” of the following definition:
“**Minister**” means the Minister of Basic Education”;

As a consequence of these legislative developments, there is no requirement any longer for FET educators to undergo any form of professional registration.

Recently, the Department of Higher Education and Training released the Higher Education and Training Laws Amendment Act (Act No 25 of 2010) aimed at amending the Further Education and Training Act, 2006 (Act No 16 of 2006) through the which came into effect on the 7th of December 2010. The definition of an FET college removed schools which may be offering courses that can be categorised under the FET sector.

3. Registration of college educators in other countries

While it is not always advisable to transpose a system of one country to another, as the contexts might be different, there is always great value in examining education systems of other countries for benchmarking purposes. In a similar vein, education systems and their attendant challenges have country to country peculiarities. Notwithstanding that, a scan of the environment in the African continent indicated similar challenges in certain areas. According to the African Union (2007), VET appears to form a separate system within the broader educational system, hence the difficulty of incorporating FET lecturers into the mainstream educational system. (Parker & Adler, 2005).

In general, vocational college teachers are either under-qualified or unqualified, indicating a significant need to develop mechanisms to ensure improvements in the quality of teachers and education. There is also a common trend in the separation between Vocational Education and Training and Higher Education in general, even though most vocational colleges fall under the jurisdiction of higher education. The separation has resulted in the concentration of funding on higher education institutions and a fiscal neglect of the FET sector.

3.1 Botswana

In Botswana, the inferiority of vocational education and training teacher standards has been a concern of the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs for some time. In particular, the Ministry expressed concern over the low qualifications and lack of industrial experience among teachers in vocational education. The low quality can and has been attributed in part to the lack of clear policy on teacher training and career structures for teachers in the country. On the other hand, vocational teaching staff have consistently expressed dissatisfaction with the poor career opportunities and lack of professional development programmes. Steps have thus been taken by the Ministry of Education in Botswana to provide appropriate training for teachers in the vocational sector through the Botswana Training Authority (BOTA).

With BOTA spearheading the training and certification of teachers, the potential for vocational teachers to transition to the mainstream educational sector as qualified educators is higher. This corresponds with the findings of Booyens (2009) in a study carried out to ascertain the values FET college educators place on teaching qualifications; that most teachers in the vocational education and training sector are keen on acquiring appropriate qualifications, should such opportunities be made available.

3.2 United Kingdom: England, Wales and Scotland

Literature from a selection of European countries and Australia provides specific information regarding the registration for FET educators. In the UK, individuals interested in taking up a teaching profession in the FET sector are required to have sufficient work experience and a strong background in the vocational or subject area they intend to teach (Internal Coursework Guidance, 2007). In addition, FET educators in the UK must possess an appropriate academic, vocational or professional qualification, NQF level 3 and above. In England and Wales, new entrants in teaching in the FET sector are required to undertake further education in teacher training, part-time or full-time (Internal Coursework Guidance, 2007).

By contrast, for interested teachers in Scotland, a teaching qualification is not a pre-requisite for registration (Internal Coursework Guidance, 2007), but recruits are allowed to begin teaching whilst working towards such a qualification, with the Teaching Qualification in Further Education (TQFE) being one of many options. Moreover, in Scotland, FET lecturers do not need to be registered. The requirement is that the normal work permit skills criteria are met (Internal Coursework Guidance, 2007).

Generally, the UK at present has no specific registration requirements for FET lecturers. However, lecturers are encouraged to gain an endorsed teaching qualification either before or after commencement of teaching duties, or to obtain such qualifications within two to four years of active teaching, dependent on whether one was teaching part-time or full-time (Internal Coursework Guidance, 2007). FET lecturers are seen to meet the required skills criteria with a relevant level 3 teaching qualification and any additional qualification and/or experience (Internal Coursework Guidance, 2007).

3.3 Denmark

The Danish vocational education and training (VET) system requires teachers to have completed a vocational education and obtained a higher education qualification in the subject/s they intend to teach (Undervisnings Ministeriet, 2008). Teachers in the general subject areas are required to have a Bachelor or Masters degree, with at least two years of professional experience. For FET teachers, the requirement is at least five years professional experience in the intended subject of teaching. Teachers who do not have pedagogical training, are expected to undergo such training within two years of appointment to a teaching position, and are expected to continue to enhance their academic and pedagogical knowledge thereafter.

3.4 Australia

In Australia, a vocational teacher is one who teaches one or more subjects within prescribed courses at a technical and further education institute (TAFE), polytechnic or any other tertiary training institute for vocational education and training (Australian Government, 2011). A vocational teacher is expected to possess a minimum of a Bachelors degree, with some form of work experience or on-the-job training (Australian Government, 2011). In order for any teacher to register with the Australian Teachers Registration Board of South Australia (TRB), as of the year 2005, the requirements included an approved teacher education degree, diploma or other qualification awarded after pre-service teacher education (3-4 years full or part-time) (TRB, 2011).

Alternatively, one should be in possession of an approved non-teaching degree or diploma (3 years) or an approved post-graduate degree (1 year) (TRB, 2011). Based on these specifications, one can infer that a lecturer in the FET sector would be able to register with the main teaching board due to the provision that allows for a non-teaching degree as sufficient for registration.

3.5 Former Eastern European Countries

Faudel (2002) compiled a review on the conditions and education and training of teachers and trainers in the then “*Future EU Member States*”(i.e. Lithuania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania and Slovakia). The review assessed the condition of vocational education and training (VET) teachers and trainers in this group of countries. Faudel (2002)’s review revealed that the common qualification requirement for vocational subject teachers in most of these countries was a university degree in a relevant field, with some pedagogical training.

In Bulgaria, there were three types of teachers in vocational schools: general education teachers, vocational subject teachers and practical trainers (Faudel, 2002). General subject teachers were required to possess a Bachelors or Masters degree and a teaching certificate. A vocational subject teacher needed to possess a diploma from an institution of higher learning only, with no requirement of any teacher training qualification; lastly, a practical trainer needs only to be qualified in the relevant field with no pedagogical training requirement (Faudel, 2002).

In the Czech Republic, while a vocational subject teacher was required to also be in possession of a Masters degree in a given field, teacher training was also a prerequisite. Practical trainers were also required to have higher education degrees with an apprenticeship certificate (Faudel, 2002). There was a clear distinction in the quality of educators at FET colleges between the two, although not what one would label as significant.

In comparison, in Lithuania, a vocational teacher needed to only have a qualification that is at least one level higher than the students one will be teaching, with those who have at least a year's experience being preferred (Faudel, 2002). The seemingly low standards were associated with the findings that 75% of vocational teachers in Lithuania had no pedagogical training. In addition to this, more than half of the teachers were unable to plan, teach or improve curricula; they were not able to set teaching goals or define learning objectives or set appropriate assessment criteria (Faudel, 2002).

Summary of findings on the professional registration of FET educators in other countries

COUNTRY	PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION OF FET LECTURERS
Botswana	No registration requirement for FET lecturers. Mechanisms for the training of FET lecturers have been introduced.
United Kingdom	No registration requirement. FET lecturers are required to have a higher education qualification.
Denmark	No registration requirement. 5 years professional experience in the subject of choice. Pedagogical competence to be acquired within two years of starting teaching in an FET college.
Australia	FET lecturers to meet the same requirements as ordinary school teachers for registration purposes with the Australian Teachers Registration Board (TRB).
Former East European states	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Bulgaria</u>: No teaching qualification required of VET educators. • <u>Czech Republic</u>: Teacher training was a pre-requisite or a degree and an apprenticeship certificate. • <u>Lithuania</u>: One qualification higher than what the students were studying; no teacher training requirement.

Booyens (2009) points out that in order for one to be seen as qualified to teach, besides the obvious need for formal teaching qualifications, one needs to have some form of specialist knowledge; have relevant work experience and a natural ability to be able to navigate students and make them understand and know that which they are learning. Teaching is therefore something which is learned and, in order for a good quality of teaching to take place, one needs to be in possession of the right qualifications to do so (Booyens, 2009). By employing relevantly qualified teachers, FET colleges may be perceived in a more positive light than they are at present.

4. Challenges around the quality of FET educators in South Africa

The South African FET sector faces a number of challenges many of which have been a subject of discussion in many fora, and more recently at the FET Stakeholder Summit held in early September 2010. This section will only concentrate on those that are related to the purpose of this paper. The Summit was convened in order to bring all FET stakeholders together not only to identify the challenges facing the FET sector in South Africa but to work together in strengthening the FET sector, which 'is critically important for the future of the skills base of the country and would give hope to the people' (DHET 2009, 2).

One of the challenges facing the FET sector is one of perception that FET colleges are inferior institutions producing low-status qualifications (Hoeckel 2007). Despite noble attempts and financial investments made by the previous ministers of education and the current DHET to recapitalise and turn around the FET college sector, the uncertainty remains in the country about the extent to which FET colleges should be viewed as suitable alternatives to higher education (Akojee *et al.*, 2005).

Another challenge facing the FET sector is the fact that a significant number of teaching staff at FET colleges are either 'under-qualified or unqualified' (Booyens 2009). According to available statistics, in 2002, eight percent of FET educators were not in possession of a recognised tertiary qualification (Booyens, 2009). Lecturers in FET colleges with the necessary trade and industry experience generally do not hold formal teaching qualifications (Booyens, 2009). At one FET college in KwaZulu-Natal, 75% of teaching staff had no teaching qualification, with only a few holding academic degrees (Moodley, 2006).

There is a plethora of literature pointing to a correlation between the quality of educators and students and, by extension, the quality of the education system. The opening speech made by the Minister of Higher Education at the FET Summit recognised this challenge when he put it up front that 'quality interventions will include initiatives to improve management capacity, materials development and the introduction of formal qualifications for lecturers (FET Summit Report 2010: 5).

According to the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development (2007), in future new recruits to the teaching profession should possess an REQV 14 qualification, i.e. a Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.) degree. On the other hand, in order to be appointed as an FET lecturer, one must have basic academic competence (i.e. a National Senior Certificate, NC (V) or higher), work experience, a minimum of at least three years (which applies only to vocational lecturers and not to general subject lecturers) and pedagogic competence, that is, one must have attended a specific Vocational Education Orientation Programme

(VEOP) or aim to complete this course within two years of taking up a teaching post (GG August 2009: 21 – 24).

In making recommendations about the situation of VET in the former Eastern European countries, one would need to have at least three years experience in the field of choice and will be required to obtain a pedagogical qualification during the first two years of practice (Faudel, 2002). Such reform will inevitably raise the standard of educators in vocational colleges, and the standard of the students of such colleges.

5. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

As indicated earlier, the autonomy that has been given to the FET colleges in terms of the FET Act of 2006 could precipitate an argument that there should be no professional registration system for FET lecturers. We wish to argue that there is no evident direct connection between institutional or sectoral autonomy and professional development. If anything, autonomy should mean that the FET sector focuses a lot more on professionalising itself so that it is equal to the task of taking forward and making meaningful the autonomy accorded to it by legislation.

An example in this regard is that in the last decade or so, professional standards were developed in the US, the UK and Australia for teachers not only in the secondary education and higher education systems, particularly targeting teacher educators (Koster and Dengerink, 2008: 137). Admittedly, this was a very complex process in terms of ownership and function, as other countries such as the Netherlands learned when they tried to follow suit. It was criticised for not taking into account the unpredictability of what transpires in a teaching and learning milieu, but the value of these professional standards for teacher educators was very crucial.

The reflections by teacher educators who were exposed to this system are very profound. While some educators found little value in these and indicated that they would have learned from their students without these standards, some reflections are very profound from teacher educators who found value in a system that forced them to look at themselves critically and reflect on their own teaching. They admit that without these professional standards, they never would have reflected on their teaching in this way with so much depth.

Another example in the area of higher education is a local one. At the Higher Education Stakeholder Summit held in April 2010, one of the resolutions taken to address the problem of low throughput and attrition in higher education was the development of a teaching and learning charter for higher education in South Africa.

While work in this regard continues and is a subject of ongoing discussion between DHET and the Teaching and Learning Working Group (TLWG) of Higher Education South Africa (HESA), such a charter would be inadequate if it does not foreground the roles and responsibilities of both the academics and students.

It is thus abundantly clear that one of the ways in which the FET college sector in South Africa can be turned around is by focussing on the professionalization of its teaching staff. The quality of educators encompasses a range of skills, competencies and motivation. Specific training is required in order to expect quality services from a teacher or any other skilled professional. The FET Summit Report (2010) makes several observations and recommendations regarding the professional development of lecturers to improve their teaching and their ability to set and moderate their examinations and generally creating appropriate professional profiles.

SACE notes the Minister's commitment in developing formal qualifications for FET lecturers as explicated in the *National Policy Framework for FET Lecturer Qualifications (2009)*, which was emphasised at the FET Summit. In the National Policy Framework, a two-tier system is suggested – i.e. Initial Professional Education (IPE – VE) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD – VE). In fact, the entire National Policy Framework centres around the notion of professionalising FET college lecturers.

The overriding aims of this policy framework are to ensure that:

- FET college lecturers are adequately equipped to undertake their essential and demanding teaching and assessment demands;
- FET college lecturers enhance their professional competence and performance;
- There is a community of competent FET college lecturers dedicated to providing vocational education of high quality with high levels of performance as well as ethical and professional standards of conduct; and that
- FET lecturers are deservedly held in high regard by the people of South Africa.

(National Policy Framework for FET Lecturer Qualifications, 2009)

According to Papier (2009), vocational teacher education around the world appears to be following a trend of standardisation, professionalisation and certification. It is clear that South Africa in its struggle with quality and perception of lack thereof in the FET sector is joining the rest of the world in improving the quality of FET education by improving the quality of its teachers.

An agency outside of a government department will be needed to monitor this envisaged professionalisation and ensure that all who teach in the FET sector have such minimum qualifications. This is the only way in which the Minister's commitment can be realised.

There is much benefit that can be derived from professional registration. One of those benefits is that the professional council responsible for registering professionals stipulates minimum requirements for professional registration and sets minimum professional standards that must be adhered to by all professionally registered candidates. That means that unless a person meets those minimum requirements, s/he cannot practice as a professional. It is therefore our well-considered view that the registration of FET educators should become the core around which the quality of the FET sector is built.

Along similar lines as the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development (NPFTED) does for school teachers, the National Policy for FET Lecturer Qualifications encapsulates the notion of life-long learning for FET educators through a continuing professional development system as the main avenue of improving the quality of teaching and accountability to the profession. The Both policy frameworks envisage that educators will in future engage in endorsed professional development activities for which they will earn professional development (PD) points over successive rolling three-year cycles. SACE will endorse PD activities on grounds of their fitness of purpose and quality, and in so doing ensure that professional development is purposeful and effective.

The vision of the CPD system is to support and facilitate professional development, to revitalize the teaching profession and to reward those who commit themselves to these goals. The removal of FET educators from professional registration by SACE means that they cannot derive any benefit from the CPTD system.

Another significant point to make is that a number of learners in the FET sector could be minors as young as 15, thus making it important to protect them by having a regulated FET college sector, and it is important that their educators adhere to a professional code of ethics.

The danger of not having official registration requirements for FET lecturers means that the professionalisation of FET lecturers is left to colleges, whose capacity to carry out such a task is not only questionable but varies from college to college.

The National Policy Framework for FET Lecturer Qualifications makes a recommendation about the possibility of creating a separate registration board to take care of the professional registration and professional development of FET college lecturers. This Board would then provide similar stipulations to those who are already in teaching posts in FET colleges, while ensuring that future FET teachers enter into the profession fully qualified.

'A council to regulate the registration of college lecturers must be established under the FET Colleges Act of 2006. Alternatively, in line with the South African Council for Educators (SACE) Act, 2000, Section 3 (e), all FET college lecturers in South Africa should be registered with SACE. Professional registration will ensure that there is quality assurance of continuing professional development activities through the endorsement of providers and through formal monitoring and evaluation by the responsible council' (DHET, 2009).

SACE would strongly advise against the creation of a new body as it is not a viable option, which will be too time-consuming requiring new legislation and too costly requiring a separate budget, infrastructure and human resources and will create an unnecessary burden on the DHET. Besides, it takes time to set up a new organisation.

In light of the above, SACE recommends the following:

1. Following the recommendation set out in the National Policy Framework for FET Lecturer Qualifications, the Ministry of Higher Education and Training promulgates a policy making it mandatory for all FET educators to continue being registered with SACE. In this policy, it should be indicated that all college councils should ensure within three years that all currently employed lecturers are registered with SACE and that one of the key requirements for appointing lecturers in future will be proof of registration with SACE. According to the OECD Report entitled *Reviews of National Policies for Education (South Africa)*, 'SACE has contributed significantly to the teaching profession and has the potential to achieve more' (OECD, 2008). Considering that SACE already exists, reconfiguring SACE would be a better option. After all, SACE has been registering FET lecturers for several years and has amassed much experience as a professional council. The truth is that SACE is still seen as the regulatory body for the FET college teaching profession.
2. While SACE has been registering FET college lecturers for several years, a phased-in approach would be required in the light of all the latest policy and legislative developments. SACE cannot continue where it left off with regard to the registration of FET college lecturers. A realisation needs to be made that the majority of FET college lecturers is not professionally qualified to teach. A grace period might then need to be implemented where this group of educators would be registered with the qualifications they currently hold. Many of the lecturers still hold the old NATED qualifications while an increasing number is getting the new National Certificate (Vocational). There must be a clear understanding of these nuances by SACE.

3. In 'resuming' this responsibility, SACE should, as indicated before, accommodate the peculiarity of the FET college sector and build the capacity of Council and its staff in registration and professional development on understanding the specific needs of the FET college sector. SACE's Research and Policy Unit will also assist by identifying the needs of the FET college lecturers with a view to giving pertinent information to the other departments within SACE. SACE has developed sectoral registration mechanisms. The FET sector will be one sector in that system.
4. SACE should specify minimum standards for FET college lecturers and develop a suite of professional development programmes for them based on identified needs. Considering the context of the FET sector in South Africa, a responsive CPD system would be needed that will ensure sustained development for the benefit of the FET college lecturers and the quality of education as a whole in that sphere. SACE should therefore submit to the Ministry of Higher Education and Training a thoroughly researched professional development strategy for FET lecturers for approval by the Ministry, which will be implemented by SACE.

The role of DHET would be to set aside resources for this as it will be important for rebuilding the image of the FET sector and make FET colleges 'institutions of choice' and it will avoid the clogging of university premises at the beginning of each year. In other words, SACE should do more than register FET lecturers; it must develop a programme of professionalising the FET lecturers through a range of professional development programmes. Such a programme should address the competencies needed in teaching in an FET college context.

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