

## **LEARNING FOR CHANGE: TANZANIA'S FOLK DEVELOPMENT COLLEGES IN TRANSITION (Report by Professor Alan Rogers, University of Nottingham, UK, May 2017).**

### **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

The Folk Development Colleges are in transition once again and it seems an appropriate time to review their current position and potentialities for growth.

**Background:** Established, at the personal request of President Nyerere, jointly by the Ministry of Education (MoE<sup>1</sup>) and the Swedish aid agency SIDA in 1975, and based on the Scandinavian Folk High School (FHS) tradition, the Folk Development Colleges (FDCs) were supported financially by SIDA for twenty-one years, an unusual feature of international development assistance. Unlike the FHSs, they were government-owned institutions, and were renamed Folk *Development* Colleges to stress their commitment to local and national development plans. Although originally seen as a part of the national adult education programme, they formed a distinct sector in Tanzania's educational portfolio, separate from, and yet containing features of, the other three sectors, adult education, vocational training and community development; thus the term 'Folk Education' entered into educational policy debates.

**Programmes:** During the period of SIDA's assistance (1975-96), the 52 FDCs became embedded within their local communities and developed a group identity which marked them off from other sectors. They were transferred from MoE to the Ministry of Community Development (MCD), with an increased stress on their community development role. Their programme consisted (and stills consists) of long courses (one or two year mainly residential, mainly vocational training), short courses on and off campus, outreach activities, self-reliance projects and a number of special activities. A key distinguishing feature of the FDCs is that, unlike other post-school education establishments, there are no required entry conditions - anyone can go, even primary school 'drop-outs'. As a result, the FDCs provided their own certification of attainment rather than a nationally recognised certificate (though some use City and Guilds).

**1996-2016:** On the ending of SIDA's direct assistance, it was feared the sector would collapse but it did not; it even grew slightly from 52 to 55 FDCs. The government from time to time continued some support but on the whole the colleges were encouraged to fend for themselves. Costs were cut, on staff and especially on buildings and outreach activities; income came mainly from students' fees, and each FDC was free to explore other fund-raising possibilities including other donors. Swedish assistance continued to individual FDCs from individual FHSs. Short courses continued but were mainly provided by other agencies using the sites (and at times the staff) of the FDCs.

**Karibu Tanzania Association/Organisation:** During this period of relative freedom, the sector developed greater coherence. At the heart of this trend was (and is) the Karibu Tanzania Association (KTA), now Karibu Tanzania Organisation (KTO). This provides a link between all the 55 FDCs, and provides a voice to the sector. It has strong links with the FHSs, Swedish supporters of the FDCs. It works very closely with MCD, especially on shared issues such as gender education and practices.

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<sup>1</sup> I have retained a shortened abbreviation for the Ministry of Education and also for the Ministry of Community Development because, over the forty or so years 1975-2017, the exact titles of these ministries changed several times.

**Innovatory activities in and through FDCs:** Through KTA and in association with MCD, the FDCs have developed throughout the whole sector a number of innovatory activities; for example:

- fema (women's learning and action) groups are run in the colleges and in local communities;
- pre-school (kindergarten) groups now feature in half of all the FDCs;
- the Mama programme for helping teenage-mothers to re-enter education from which they have been excluded runs in half of the colleges and has now been accepted as a national educational policy;
- activities to ensure peace at times of elections and other national stress have been organised;
- some pilot programmes in the uses of new technologies;
- the national (and international) movement for women's football has been piloted again in half of the FDCs, receiving national attention.

In these ways and others, the FDCs work together as a sector and provided a unique national arena for the piloting of activities which contribute substantially to the national development goals.

**VETA and the FDCs:** It was during this period that the links between the FDCs and VETA were developed. Established in 1995, VETA grew in influence with government support as more and more emphasis was placed in Tanzanian policy circles on skills for development. VETA came to see itself as the sole body co-ordinating all Vocational Education and Training (VET) in the country, whether provided by government, commercial interests or voluntary bodies; there are over 800 vocational training centres in the country, the very large majority offered by private interest groups or faith-based groups; only some 35 VTCs are directly government-owned, at present under VETA. Although outside this system, some FDCs became centres where VETA trade tests were taken; consequently increasing numbers of students on long vocational courses in the FDCs came to request that they be allowed to take VETA courses. This had started by 2003 and was officially recognised by MCD in 2013. BY 2015-16, nearly half of the FDCs offer only VETA long courses (this is likely to be higher today); others offer what has come to be called Folk Education courses; a few offer both.

**The move to the mainstream:** All of this went on, as it were, below the radar: the FDCs, being a very small sector and separate from the mainstream, were largely ignored in national policy debates. But as government pressure for skills development programmes for school-leavers increased, so attention was turned to the FDCs. A first report on them was compiled in 2000, and from that year government funding was increased. The World Bank commissioned a report in 2003 and from then interest in the FDCs grew. By 2011, when the *Education Sector Analysis* was drawn up, it was being urged that the sector, still seen as a separate entity, should be moved back to MoE (this time to the Directorate of Vocational Training); a decision to that effect was made in 2016, and it was implemented (in part) in February 2017.

**Selection of some FDCs to become DVTCs:** However VETA made early movements. Seeking to ensure there was a main vocational training centre in every District, in 2016 VETA reviewed 25 FDCs and chose 15, upgraded to some extent their buildings and equipment, trained some of their staff and declared these as having been transferred to VETA as District Vocational Training Centres (DVTCs). Discussions with VETA (in both Dar es Salaam and Morogoro) left it very unclear whether the Folk Education and other elements involved in the identity of these FDCs would be retained or not.

**FDCs and MoE DVT:** Discussions with the MoE Directorate of Vocational Training (DVT) also left it unclear

- a) whether the sector would be retained as an entity (i.e as 55 FDCs) or be split, with 15 FDCs with VETA and the remaining 40 FDCs with MoE-DVT;
- b) whether the FDCs would be kept separate from or merged into the VET sector;
- c) whether the unique freedom given to the each FDC to initiate activities to meet local needs and to raise resources for these activities, including individual access to donors, would continue;
- d) whether the innovatory activities can continue to be developed;
- and e) whether the role of KTA/O as the link-agent for the whole sector would be retained.

**The distinctive features of the FDCs** which mark them off from VTCs, Adult Education (AE) centres and Community Development (CD) centres, features which may be lost if the FDCs become identified solely as VET centres, need to be identified. The report suggests these features include

- the hybrid nature of the FDCs as combining these three roles in one
- their concern for social change - they are not just training for jobs but to help their students to become agents for change in the country; for example, while they (like the VTCs and other institutions) seek to overcome gender inequalities in student and staff recruitment, the FDCs are concerned for gender transformation in society as a whole
- their flexibility especially of entry requirements - unlike VTCs, they are non-selective of student entry, and as adult education institutions they admit some (admittedly relatively few) older adults
- the use of the sector as a whole for innovatory activities, especially piloting new development ventures

**Possible future developments:** Looking to the future, the report suggests one or two ways in which the potential of the FDCs and the sector as a whole could be fulfilled, while continuing and expanding their vocational training role. The main instruments for this would be the FDC short courses and outreach activities.

The most important way suggested is to help Tanzania with the achievement of the **Sustainable Development Goals**. Every one of the 17 Goals contains explicitly or implicitly adult learning targets; so that every development sector (health, agriculture, gender, poverty, finance, environment, etc) will need to find adult learning partners to help them fulfil their goals rather than try to provide their own adult learning activities. The FDCs, scattered throughout Tanzania, often in unexpected locations, and with substantial assets (e.g. their sites) are uniquely placed to offer such partnerships nationwide: they can provide across the country sites and partnerships for the implementation of the SDGs. In this role, access to the whole sector can be most appropriately obtained through KTO whose role is vital for maintaining and developing the sector.

The report suggest a number of other developments such as

- the use of the college library facilities in some contexts for adult literacy in partnership with ICBAE
- the provision of bridge courses to help those with inadequate school-based skills to access entry to more formal education programmes (e.g. in partnership with bodies like VSO and others)

- the exploration of the implications of the widespread adoption of the new information and communication technologies (including social media), especially in the informal industrial and commercial sectors for vocational training

The report suggests to the MoE-DVT some of the benefits of retaining the sector as a distinct entity: including

- a) the removal of uncertainty which will free staff to plan for the development of each FDC
- b) the continued freedom of the principals and staff of each FDC to initiate (within appropriate guidelines) activities in each site to meet local education, training and development needs, and to raise resources for such activities
- c) the continued enabling role of KTO to assist with the development of the sector.

The full report may be downloaded from

<http://www.uppinghamseminars.co.uk/page3.htm>

Alan Rogers, May 2017

*Alan Rogers, Visiting Professor at the University of Nottingham (UK), conducted in 1995-7 with a team from Education for Development an evaluation of SIDA's assistance to the FDCs (report published); later, he reviewed the position of the FDCs (published 2013). This present report was compiled on the basis of visits to Tanzania and Sweden in 2017. He acknowledges the extensive help of Dr Mpoki Mwaikokesya of the University of Dar es Salaam with the compilation of this report.*

rogalaprof@gmail.com