

Adding pearls onto the string” a case study of collaboration providing library services to nursing students at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT)

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Background

In the new South African constitution adopted and implemented in 1996, there was a clear demarcation between the authority vested in the provinces of South Africa, and that retained by the national government. Section 104 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Constitution, 1996) provided for the province to have authority over matters listed in two schedules to the Constitution. These schedules, with regard to Education, stated emphatically that provinces had authority over

Education at all levels, excluding tertiary education
(Constitution, 1996: Schedule 4)

For the education system then in place in South Africa there were three critical areas that provinces had previously been responsible for, but that now had to be transferred to national government. These three were

- Agricultural colleges
- Colleges of education
- Nursing colleges.

This transfer was legislated through the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997. In terms of this act the colleges were to be transformed in several different ways. For nursing colleges, these options were limited: to becoming autonomous, integration into a university, or integration into a Technikon

Although the process of change in control of the colleges was thus already decided in terms of the 1997 legislation, in the Western Cape the process for nursing colleges was only formalised by the 2004 announcement of the Minister of Education, Kader Asmal. This stated that from 2005, the only enrolling institutions for undergraduate nursing training would be the University of the Western Cape (who were offering this at their campus in Bellville) and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) (who were not offering undergraduate training at all, but were offering postgraduate training). (Daniels, 2010: 48)

The process of arranging this training was, as was common, through “a legal agreement between universities and provincial health departments on behalf of nursing colleges.” (Bruce, J.C. & Klopper, H.C., 2010)

This agreement was signed in October 2005. It made provision for an “Agency agreement” between the Provincial Government of the Western Cape (PGWC) and CPUT. In terms of this agreement responsibility for managing the training of nurses at the Western Cape College of Nursing (WCCN) became CPUT’s. This agreement was also seen as a vehicle to achieve

“the transfer by the PGWC to CPUT of the entire enterprise of the WCCN, after due compliance with the relevant statutory provisions.” (Memorandum of agreement, 2006)

It was envisaged that this “Agency Agreement” would be over in 28 months (end of 2007).

From the announcement by the Minister events had moved quickly - the de facto management of the training and the registration of the students as CPUT students had already begun in January 2005, before the signing of the MOU. However after that the process met unexpected challenges, and the originally envisaged 28 months would become 100 before the transfer took place.

In this interim phase two major changes to the mandate of the WCCN occurred. The first change was the expansion of the footprint of the WCCN by opening new campuses. In January 2011 the WCCN opened a campus in Worcester, renting premises from the Boland College, and in January 2013 a further campus was opened in George, again renting premises, this time from the South Cape College.

The second change was wider-reaching. In August 2012 the Provincial Government of the Western Cape transferred the control of all their nursing training in the Province to the College. This meant that, in addition to the WCCN campuses at the Nico Malan College in Athlone, and those new campuses at Worcester and George, WCCN also became responsible for nursing schools at the Worcester Hospital, George Hospital, Groote Schuur Hospital, Tygerberg Hospital and the Western Cape Rehabilitation Centre at Stikland.

In terms of the agreement it is this complex of nursing training sites that will become part of CPUT, and where CPUT Libraries will be responsible for delivering a library service.

CPUT Libraries role

CPUT therefore became responsible for the registration of students as CPUT students from 2005. At the same time, these students could task CPUT with providing the services that all CPUT students enjoyed. Already in 2005, the library at the Nico Malan College (the only site then part of the agreement) was identified by the student body as needing attention.

Due to the problems in the provision of library services identified by the students, CPUT Libraries were asked to intervene and assist at Athlone and have had staff on site since then. Initially WCCN had a librarian as manager of the Athlone library and two library assistants, but it was the resignation of the librarian and the subsequent delay in the appointment of a new librarian, that led to the problems identified. In February 2007 CPUT Libraries sent a librarian, who had been manager at the Granger Bay Branch, together with an assistant from the same branch to take over the management. This librarian was to act as manager and also lead the process of aligning the WCCN library services with those offered by CPUT Libraries.

With their arrival, several important problems with regard to library services were identified and addressed. These included the lack of a computerized loan system, the holding of unsuitable material, general lack of collection maintenance, and lack of certain equipment necessary to provide an equitable service, such as printers, photo-copiers, laminators and binders.

A joint decision was then taken that, from a Library Management System (LMS) perspective, Athlone would be treated as a branch of CPUT Libraries. This included the loading of all items in the collection on the LMS system, which, in turn, enabled a general clean-up of the collection from a physical perspective, which included a process of weeding the collection. Simultaneously other problems, such as the physical space, lack of IT equipment and connectivity, provision of general services and the general procedures were all addressed.

An important consideration was that the collection acquisition would be done through the CPUT Libraries Technical services Division. This included the normal monograph and audiovisual resources, as well as e-resources, such as databases. The processing of these was also done through CPUT Libraries, in line with the decision that they would conform to the demands of the LMS.

In 2011 WCCN finally appointed a librarian to take charge of the branch. However CPUT Libraries still maintained their librarian on site. In addition the branch at Athlone had a separate cost code within the CPUT Libraries budget structure, in the same way that all CPUT branches were funded. Collection development was also funded as part of the general collection development budgets. In 2010 there was a student demand for the extension of services at all CPUT Libraries to 22:00. CPUT Libraries then arranged for the funding and appointment of an Evening Services Supervisor, and student assistant to enable this service also to take place at Athlone.

The Athlone branch was also mandated and encouraged to be part of the internal CPUT Libraries management structures, with seating on the Branch Library Forum, Circulation Committee, Librarians Forum and other similar structures.

Concurrent with the opening of the new campuses in Worcester in 2010, and George in 2013, CPUT Libraries were asked through the CPUT Faculty of Health and Wellness to take sole responsibility for library services at these sites. This led to the appointment of staff at these sites, as well as the creation of both of these as additional CPUT Libraries branches in terms of both the budgets (both operational and collection development) as well as the LMS. As there are no WCCN staff members in these libraries, their functioning is solely the responsibility of CPUT Libraries.

From January 2014 with the incorporation of the WCCN, CPUT Libraries will be expected to be responsible for library services to all students. For Worcester and George campuses of WCCN, this will not mean a change; at Athlone the role of the WCCN, as outlined below, will now become CPUT Libraries' role – but the actual response at the other sites will still need to be determined.

WCCN role

Many aspects of the role of the WCCN in library provision at Athlone have already been mentioned above. However, there are three distinct areas that need further discussion: the oversight role, the budget and infrastructure.

CPUT Libraries has managed the Athlone Branch as part of the LMS, and therefore procedures dependent on the LMS such as circulation, acquisitions and cataloguing conform in both standards and procedures according to the CPUT Libraries. However overall governance of the Athlone branch has vested in a Library Committee of WCCN,

chaired by WCCN staff and with no seating of CPUT Libraries management. This has led, particularly since the appointment of the librarian, to issues of service and management being decided locally. In addition, the staff members appointed by WCCN are not subject to any management decisions or approval of CPUT Libraries management.

Similarly, although there is a budget within CPUT Libraries for Athlone, WCCN has had a separate budget for the library, which the committee mentioned above, together with the librarian, has sole control over. Linked to this is the physical infrastructure of the branch which is seen by the committee, and the librarian, as being the sole responsibility of WCCN. Structural alterations to the branch, therefore, are not seen as being subject to any discussion or approval of CPUT Libraries management, and no changes can be made to these spaces by CPUT without the WCCN approval.

At the other two sites established as CPUT campuses, Worcester and George, WCCN has played no role in oversight or infrastructure, and none directly in budget. However, books bought with the WCCN budget and selected by the WCCN librarian, have been supplied to these branches in addition to those purchased through CPUT. Book selection done from WCCN funding for George and Worcester are coordinated centrally by the Athlone campus WCCN Librarian

CPUT Faculty of Health and Wellness Sciences Role

The Memorandum of Understanding as mentioned in the first section was between WCCN, the Province of the Western Cape and CPUT as an institution. However, CPUT management tasked the Faculty of Health and Wellness Sciences and, in particular, the Department of Nursing and Radiography (the Department) to operationally carry out of the memorandum in conjunction with WCCN.

From the library perspective, this meant that where CPUT Libraries had to deal with issues requiring input or support from other CPUT units, this was done largely through the Department. In particular the partnership functioned in the areas of planning, infrastructure setup and funding, collection development funding, support for and funding of staff and travel.

As stated earlier, with the appointment in 2007 there was a shortage of necessary equipment to align services between the WCCN library and CPUT. In addition there was a need for improved shelving and the physical layout of the library to be improved. In all these cases the Department was approached to provide funding, where necessary, and

also to provide support and do the necessary liaison with CPUT CTS and Finance to arrange for photo-copying and printing facilities at Athlone. This same support, for equipment and Printing and photo-copying, was extended to Worcester and George when they became operational.

Collection development funding, over and above the normal CPUT Library collection development allocation, was also provided by the Department for Athlone. As Worcester and George came on line, additional collection development funding was also provided for them.

One of the largest contributions came in the form of staffing funding. As stated above, in 2010 there was a demand for the extension of hours. CPUT Libraries followed the pattern of appointing After-Hours Supervisors at all their sites, and this included Athlone. To assist the supervisors, student assistants were appointed, and these were all paid for by the Department.

When the original request for support came in 2007, CPUT Libraries pointed out that they would need staff to replace those being moved there temporarily. This funding also came through the Department and the post of the CPUT appointed Librarian at Athlone is still funded from that source. In addition the Worcester branch staff members (from 2010 to 2011 one librarian, and from 2012 one librarian and one library assistant) have also been funded by the Department, as has the appointment of a librarian at George from 2013.

The George Campus has also the problem of being some 400km from our headquarters in Bellville. This has led to high costs for travel being expected. Again, the Department has assisted by providing transport and accommodation at their cost for staff who need to go to the site.

In addition to the funding the Department has also been a partner with CPUT Libraries in negotiations with WCCN. Problems arising from the divided governance or particular WCCN practices (outside technical library issues) can be negotiated through the Department with the WCCN management and staff. The Department then also involves CPUT Library in the planning phase. This was particularly true of the setting up of the Worcester and George campuses, and, ongoing in the process of the incorporation of the WCCN into CPUT.

Relationship building – challenges and successes

It is only to be expected, then, that in the provision of library facilities one of the key processes was the building of relationships between these different role-players. In that regard there were on the whole seven aspects that could be seen as challenges and/or successes:

- Structural and Cultural differences
- Lack of clarity of authority and responsibility
- Challenges associated with change
- Organisational learning – sharing insights with others
- Organisational growth
- Improvement of access to services
- Resource Sharing

The structural differences between the WCCN library at Athlone and CPUT Libraries were quite marked. The former was a single library, serving at a single site. The head of the library was not only the librarian in the branch, but with the central administration on the same campus, had access to those responsible for various functions. CPUT Libraries, on the other hand, were a multi-campus entity, with the librarian heading the branches similar to Athlone reporting to a Senior Librarian who had seating on the Library Exco. Thus many functions that were the ambit of the WCCN branch, such as strategic planning, financial management and budgeting and technical collection management, were done outside the branch at CPUT Libraries.

The reverse is also true. The CPUT Libraries' practice is that the library runs the learning commons (for big branches) and computer labs (for medium and smaller branches) on its own with support from IT . However, at Athlone, the library computer laboratory is run by the IT department with support from the library.. This is proving very difficult for the Libraries to ensure that the computer lab in Athlone conforms to the standards expected at all CPUT Libraries computer labs.

The WCCN culture was one of concern only for the immediate site, but with great independence of action as opposed to the CPUT culture of a part of a large organization

with both local and library wide responsibilities, and actions constrained by library wide procedures and processes. From this the second challenge arose: the lack of clarity for authority and responsibility. This problem is elucidated clearly in the sections above on the roles of CPUT Libraries and WCCN. CPUT Libraries has the primary responsibility of service delivery to all CPUT students and users – this includes those at Athlone, whereas the WCCN library at Athlone also has the mandate from the local WCCN management to serve the students and staff. It is in the decisions of how this is performed that tensions arise. These are not present at Worcester and George.

In the same way, Worcester and George do not have the normal problems associated with change management, as in both cases they were started from new. However, the changes that Athlone has undergone (and is still undergoing) have led to tensions between the staff of WCCN and CPUT. There are uncertainties both for the CPUT Libraries and WCCN staff. In some instances outside the library, CPUT 's presence at Athlone is seen as a hostile takeover of the College. Some of these tensions spiral to the library. As a result, both WCCN and CPUT Libraries have experienced high staff turnover. For a branch with only 5 full-time employees, there have been 9 changes of staff in four years

But there is an upside to the challenge of different cultures, ways of doing things and change. The whole process has led to an opportunity for each to learn from the other. The Athlone staff members have been an integral part of the CPUT Libraries forums regarding branch management and circulation, for example. At these forums their input has led to an enrichment of experience and, ultimately, adaptations to existing processes and procedures within CPUT Libraries, to the benefit of all concerned. This is, then, not an imposition by one organization on the other, but a mutually beneficial relationship in which the best of each is built on. As CPUT Libraries had undergone a major change with the amalgamation of the two former Technikons in 2005, there was an understanding of the way of managing change so as to enable this retention of the best.

In the case of CPUT Libraries and WCCN, the partnership has resulted to instant growth and wider exposure for both organisations. The realization by the role-players of WCCN and the Department that CPUT Libraries were able to harness and retain the best practices of support for nursing students was a prime motivation for the use of CPUT Libraries in the growth of provision to students at other sites. The organizational support for nursing students in particular and CPUT students generally has grown both at the Athlone site, and by an extension of services to campuses in Worcester and George.

Access to services for nursing students is offered not only at the sites, but with the support of CPUT Libraries a wide range of virtual services are also offered. Leveraging the strength of consortial buying, as well as the economy of scale offered by a larger organization, students and staff have access to over 32000 online journals, and 111 different databases. In addition services such as Libguides, on-line reference queries, interlibrary loans and on-line Information Literacy training gives improved access. On a physical level, with support by the Department and CPUT Libraries students have access to photo-copying, laminating, ring-binding and printing services.

The greatest advantage is in the access to collections through Resource sharing. Reference has already been made to the access to the databases and on-line journals. Since the co-operation began CPUT Libraries have specifically added databases such as EbscoHost's Nursing Reference Centre, Jaypee Digital and CINAHL with full text to cater for the students. In addition, through the existing collections at other sites, access is given to the nursing collection at the Bellville Branch, as well as other collections covering Medical Sciences at Cape Town, Tygerberg, Groote Schuur and, at a more basic level, Mowbray and Wellington. This increased sharing of resources has been to the benefit of the students at Athlone, but also to those at the previously mentioned sites as they now have access to the holdings at Athlone

Students from other faculties have also benefited from this partnership in that those who are closer to any of the WCCN-CPUT Libraries' campuses can now use resources and services in those campuses as part of a wider CPUT network of libraries. Other students from higher education institutions in the Western Cape can also make use of these sites as part of the CALICO consortial agreement between CPUT and the Universities of Cape Town (UCT), Stellenbosch (US) and the Western Cape (UWC). During 2012 visitor's statistics show that both Stellenbosch and UWC students physically used the Athlone branch. Lecturers and students from the WCCN branches have, in return, made use of resources and services from all three Calico partners.

However, access to e-resources has been a challenge as CPUT staff numbers and passwords are required to access these. The WCCN have not been given these by CPUT, and so for access the library has to use a system of allowing the staff members requiring access to use library log-ins. In many cases the WCCN staff member does not wish to do this, and so their access to this large source of information is limited

Conclusions

In offering library services to students at an institution there is usually only one role-player involved. However in the case of the CPUT students studying at the WCCN there are three main role-players. The co-operation between these has proved to have both negative and positive aspects. However, through a continued process of consultation, communication and good faith by all involved, the successes outweigh any perceived negative consequences.

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