

Transformation Towards Institutional Quality Management: Turning the Tide a Quality Assurance Matter

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ABSTRACT Quality and academic standards is a loaded concept that evokes emotional terms including institutional autonomy and academic freedom, accountability, responsiveness and the quality of educational services. In essence, quality and academic standards have to do with the ability and capability of the academic oligarchy to police itself by putting in place systems and processes. Issues of quality in the erstwhile Technikon were the responsibility of the Certification Council for Technikon Education. Generally, quality and standards in erstwhile technikons were the responsibility of individual institutions until the creation of Universities of Technology where quality and standards are the responsibility of the Higher Education Quality Committee. This paper is on the efficacy of self-evaluation as part of the institutional quality processes and on whether Central University of Technology has any quality assurance framework in managing and building its quality systems. The paper argues that self-evaluation should play an important role in reshaping and informing quality assurance in Universities of Technology before the introduction of the Higher Education Quality Committee. It focuses on institutional self-evaluation as a kind of self-improvement using some divisions and schools in the Faculty of Humanities at the Central University of Technology, Free State. It argues that self-evaluation needs to be promoted as part of collegiality and that recognises the ability of academics to ensure the quality of what they do, with little external interference.

INTRODUCTION

The quality of higher education (HE) is of increasing importance to nations across the world, because these institutions represent valuable resources for their countries; therefore, many countries have taken up the challenge of quality assurance in the form of accountability and improving performance (Moore 2005: 98). It is therefore understandable why HE is subjected to strong pressures of being more accountable to the government. Most of these challenges impact on institutional quality management. The need to identify clearly the quality process for each programme, and the requirement of accountability is crucial. In South Africa, a changing HE landscape was initiated through the National Commission on Higher Education [NCHE] (1996) to respond to the challenges facing higher education institutions (HEIs). These changed views included the quality assurance (QA) of HE and its activities. The NCHE made provision for the Council on Higher Education (CHE) as emanating from the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 (RSA DoE 1997b). In turn, the Council on Higher Education (CHE) formed a subcommittee (Higher Education Quality Committee) with a

specialist group undertaking the external function of the QA.

The initial priority of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) was to develop QA procedures for programmes offered by the HEIs. In this regard, QA is seen as the process of assuring accountability through the measurement and evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the transformed HEIs. In this process, internal self-evaluation forms the basis of QA (Woodhouse 2006:3). In particular, the HEQC states that the primary responsibility of QA rests with the HEI itself. Some preliminary studies suggested that institutions have responded to the HEQC activities, which included institutional reviews and capacity building, just to mention a few, often by giving consistent attention to the development and implementation of QA (Moore 2005: 98).

According to Hoffman (2005: 5), one of the principal features of a university-wide quality culture is coherence in terms of the objective of and deploying the relevant resources that will add value to the university commitment and ensure the quality of the academic offering. She further believes that it is necessary for institutions to establish an effective internal self-

evaluation routine in their organisations because of the high degree of acceptance of ownership, which is brought about by this process. In his attempt to describe self-evaluation, Kowalkiewicz (2007) indicates that many scholars emphasise the process of self-evaluation as it consists of the systematic collection of administrative data, the questioning of students and graduates, and the holding of moderated interviews with lecturers and students, resulting in a self-study report. Self-evaluation is basically a collective institutional reflection and an opportunity for quality enhancement (Vlăsceanu et al. 2004: 38).

The development of the internal QA is a key element in the reform of HE. Hanft and Kohler (2008: 53-55) maintain that there is little evidence that programme self-evaluation is undertaken in some HEIs and furthermore, that it is questionable whether its reports really assist institutions in the development and improvement in the quality of academic offerings. The manner and the procedure in which self-evaluation is conducted is also doubtful. To a large degree self-evaluation is conducted without a clear framework and this has become a pattern in some universities. It is important that self-evaluation must be given its rightful status as it is regarded as the cornerstone of any institutional improvement which is followed by quality improvement.

It is clear that programme self-evaluation is not based on the existing practices at Central University of Technology (CUT); however, other institutional practices are used to guide individual departments within the CUT. There has been no clear framework adopted by the CUT in managing internal QA at institutional level, and this has posed some serious challenges in dealing with quality issues.

HEIs in South Africa have incorporated and applied internal self-evaluation practice as one of the QA mechanisms. Since the inception of this approach at CUT, there has not been any in-depth analysis of this process regarding its veracity, how it should be applied, as well as its intended outcomes. There have been a number of external evaluations at CUT, most of which were not favourable to CUT. This paper proposes to investigate the analysis of programme self-evaluation at the CUT.

THEORETICAL RATIONALE

A number of self-evaluation processes have been developed with a considerable metric com-

ponent that focusses on the rigorous engagements between universities, local and regional communities and quality agencies (Murdoch 2005:18). Henard (2007) argue that the current approach of universities' engagement with QA agencies tends to provide a short-term solution, rather than building a sustainable quality culture that can be embraced by entire institutions with clear deliverables. He further suggest that institutions should have a self-evaluation process that can focus on the longer process of continuous improvement and of building an internal quality culture. Hoecht (2006) argue that in most cases if not all, the majority of universities underscore the internal conceptualisation of the QA framework and this creates a gap in the QA structure within institutions.

The wish of any institution is to build a sound internal quality structure, firstly institutional and thereafter cascade the structure at the academic programme level (Murdoch 2005). It has been widely accepted that many businesses, industries and manufacturers, have developed QA frameworks for product improvement and customer satisfaction (Kasozi 2006). It is a fact these QA frameworks are available to HE for adaptation, but before doing so, HEIs must decide what is best for their purposes. Such purposes may vary from merely satisfying the external QA agencies' requirements, to introducing serious mechanisms at institutional level with the purpose of improving internal quality. It is for this reason that the great prominence is laid on the process of internal quality assurance. The establishment of internal quality assurance processes within an institution ensure that it is fulfilling its own purposes and standard, professions and disciplines of HE (Materu 2007).

Quality Assurance Framework

Generally, QA in HE refers to the two key constructs which are accountability and improvement. Attempts to meet these two constructs differ from country to country and even between institutions (Stensaker and Harvey 2004). They discuss frameworks in France, the UK and the USA. The French framework of external reviewers for instance, serves as an archetype for QA directed at answering accountability questions; the external reviewers validate the quality of the educational programme or institution through implicit or explicit comparisons, while the British framework of QA, mainly done through peer reviews, serves the aim of enhanc-

ing programme effectiveness and improving teaching and learning. A distinctive feature of the American framework is its increasing reliance on the assessment of student learning outcomes as an integral part of the quality review process (Stensaker and Harvey 2004).

There are a number of strategic planning processes that can be considered relevant in today's QA culture in HE. While it could be argued that they are overly conceptual and somewhat limited in their application to HE practices, they serve a foundation that can guide further advancement in HE (Jensen 2004: 12-13.). As Stensaker and Harvey (2004) have already referred to a number of frameworks, as well as others highlighted by some authors, the researcher applied common sense principles in understanding how each framework works.

Internal Quality Assurance and Self-evaluation

Although QA appears to be part of the transformational aspects as per White Paper 3 of 1997, less has been done in some universities in developing a QA framework that will help the HEIs to comply with the White Paper (White Paper 3 of 1997). Thus, QA systems in South Africa have been described as a 'mixed model' designed to meet the particular SA context and its transformation imperatives, combining a concern to promote improvement and development, with accountability checking the extent to which the HEIs quality management systems enable the institutions to meet the national goals for the transformation of HE.

It is in the interest of the institutions to demonstrate such quality that intends to meet compliances with the government and the public. One way of demonstrating quality to the outside world is by putting quality management systems in place. QA has been a concept with an unchallenged position in discussions around HEIs since the late nineties, when it was developed and implemented in most institutions (Woodhouse 2006: 22-24).

Inside HEIs, significant changes have since taken place such as the need to transform HE. Along with the transformation from elite HEIs, HEIs have witnessed a different type of student entering the HE sector. Students are more liberated and differently qualified. They ask for a say in the programmes and demand democratic practices in their institutions. Students also demand

quality. Nowadays, some institutions see students as consumers with all the rights and measures of protection afforded to consumers. In these institutions, students have the right to ask for value for money with regard to the quality of their educational offerings (Vroeijenstijn 2001: 66).

In his view Woodhouse (2006: 23) mentioned that instead of understanding the purpose of the self-evaluation process as essentially a response to externally imposed requirements, its fundamental purpose should be seen as enhancing institutions' capacity to conduct their core academic activities in an optimal manner. The self-evaluation process therefore provides an opportunity for an institution to engage in a thorough consideration and assessment of problem areas and developmental challenges, as well as strengths. When self-evaluation is understood in such a manner, its purpose is integrally related to a process of institutional improvement and development in terms of the quality and QA of its core activities (Coetzee 2002: 18). While the identification of problem areas and strengths is facilitated by the HEQC's audit criteria, it remains the institution's responsibility to interpret and apply the criteria in a manner that is commensurate with its specific characteristics. Therefore, institutions should address the accountability requirements of self-evaluation by engaging in a rigorous scrutiny of their core academic activities, in order to develop authentic and appropriate approaches to the transformation challenges that face the South African HE sector (Jensen 2004: 12-13).

Most HE experts (nationally and internationally) regarded self-evaluation as the very first step in the business of quality promotion at HEIs (Van Damme 2000; Van der Westhuizen 2001; Van Vught and Westerheijden 1992; Strydom 2000; Stensaker and Harvey 2004 ; Stensaker 2007). According to Mammen (2003: 57) self-evaluation is the cornerstone of internal quality management (IQA). South African HEIs are required to prepare and submit satisfactory self-evaluation reports as part of the process of programme re-accreditations or reviews. Ootshuizen (2003: 54) further argues, that most universities in South Africa have established cyclical evaluation processes which are integral to QA. As Ootshuizen (2003: 54) observes, "the heart of the process is self-evaluation."

Self-evaluation may be undertaken at various levels within an institution, that is, at departmental, school, faculty or institutional level. Self-evaluation is often required before external evaluations or reviews can take place (Strydom 2000). The university can rely heavily on internal self-evaluation if there are no external reviews; a higher education institution can organise its quality framework in such a way that the system can still perform its designated task even without external reviews. When well carried out, self-evaluation will generate insight into the strong and weak points of a programme or institutional process and procedure, consequently giving a practitioner a sound start for the formulation and implementation plans for improvement purposes.

Institutional Accountability

The importance of balancing institutional autonomy and accountability has been widely acknowledged as a dilemma affecting universities. While the autonomy of universities has been a point of respect, understanding, discussion and debate for more than a decade, a balance of autonomy and accountability is still a major challenge even today in South Africa HEIs (Jansen 2004: 15).

As transformation of the HEIs has shifted from policy to implementation, concerns and claims that government involvement has shifted from steering to interfering have risen. Issues of quality in education are also linked to issues of accountability. It can further be argued that accountability must, in turn, be linked to issues concerned with the re-accreditation or evaluation of an institution and its staff to be publicly accountable. However, accountability without evaluation, it could be argued, is not an appropriate form of accountability (Jongbloed 2007: 22).

The Historical Perspectives of the South African QA Context

The dawning of a new HE dispensation in 1994 saw, amongst other things, the need for quality assurance mechanisms for the South African HE System to be placed on the transformation agenda by the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE 1996: 13). Consequently, various investigations and policy initiatives

set the pace for major changes in the hope that this would lead to the enhancement of quality teaching and learning at all South African HEIs. According to the NCHE the main issues that needed to be addressed during quality enhancement by all institutions were:

- ♦ What is the institution's idea of quality?
- ♦ Which quality structures does the institution need?
- ♦ Which driving forces are needed for such a process?

As already stated, another important transformation-inspired development was the passing of the Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997). This Act makes provision for the establishment of the Council on Higher Education (CHE). The CHE appointed the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) to oversee quality assurance at both institutional and programme levels.

Unlike traditional universities, former technikons were evaluated by SERTEC for quality assurance purposes. In the beginning SERTEC only looked at programmes but later, the focus was more on institutional quality assurance. Before October 2003 HEIs fell under two categories: Technikons and Universities. The quality assurer watchdog for technikons was the Certification Council for Technikon Education (SERTEC), while universities were largely self-regulated in relation to quality matters.

The Council on Higher Education was established in terms of an Act of parliament in 1986 (Act 88 of 1986). The Act further elaborated on the roles and function that the Council must perform as follows:

- ♦ That it should ensure that corresponding certificates, issued by the Council represented the same standard of education and examination; and
- ♦ To withdraw accreditation of any qualification if required to do so. This would be done if the qualification no longer complied with set norms and standards (SERTEC 1998: 1).

It can be argued that historically technikons were not autonomous and they reported to the National Department of Education. Central control was the main problem. To attain some level of autonomy, the Committee of Technikon Principals felt that SERTEC would assist them (SERTEC 1998: 1). This was done within the process of benchmarking technikons with polytechnics in the United Kingdom.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2007:67-91), the decision to determine which method should be chosen depends entirely on the nature of the research. These choices also inform the method of data collection and the organisation of the study with regard to documental analysis.

This information, together with the information gained in the literature study, will help to formulate a framework for internal quality mechanisms that HEIs need to adopt to improve their internal quality systems.

Methods, Material and Process

This study draws on the data of two schools in the faculty of humanities at Central University of Technology. The internal reviews and external reviews were completed between 2006-2010. The total data set did include almost 12 programme heads.

Conforming with the purpose of this research the study which intends to collectively support the QA in HE and furthermore to develop and analyse the role of self-evaluation (SE), a qualitative research approach was chosen for this study.

In the process of soliciting further data, the researcher was invited to be a panelist during the internal reviews. During the evaluation the researcher wanted to find out what the common factors were that hampered the methodological aspect of QA within the institution. Secondly, how those factors impede on how quality should be designed and organised within the institution and what the guidelines were.

Population and Sample: The population of this study consisted of twelve Programme Heads (PHs) in the Faculty of the Humanities at the Central University of Technology, Free State. It is true that a specific sector of the population was further explored in order to reduce the sample to a certain cluster. These schools were regarded as targets for this particular study, simply because of the institution's previous experience with the SERTEC evaluation that had taken place in these schools in its last tenure of operation. Moreover, these schools were the first to participate in the programme re-accreditation under the HEQC auspices and institutional reviews. Furthermore, this representative sample

is an underlying epistemic criterion for a valid, unbiased sample (Terre Blanche et al. 2006: 49-51). It is in this regard that from a total of twelve PHs, the researcher decided to select eight PHs to participate in the study. Owing to the nature of the study purposeful sampling was used, as the sample of this study did not depend on the available PHs, but on their participation in the quality assurance reviews either internally or externally.

Data Collection and Recording: The particular instrument used in any study depends on the nature of the investigation; in this study documental analysis was used in the form of portfolio of evidence. The researcher can look directly at what is taking place in situ rather than relying on second-hand information (Cohen et al. 2007:462-643). In this research, data were collected and analysed to identify emerging issues from self-evaluation.

The nature of this study also involved the collection of self-evaluation reports from the Quality Assurance Unit. The reason for collecting the reports was based on the purpose of triangulation with the data collected through the documental analysis. The reports from the QA unit assisted the researcher to confirm the validity of the data collected. Lastly, the researcher was able to gather direct information during the HEQC re-accreditations process meeting and internal reviews that were conducted by the CUT.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to provide a transparent and veracious account on the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance strategy or framework at the CUT, various research tools were employed. Such tools, viz. documental analysis and a literature survey were adopted because they would provide first-hand information, and eventually draw different custodians of Quality Assurance into this research project.

In view of their administrative responsibilities in the Faculty, Directors of Schools and Programme Heads are respectively principal stewards in monitoring and applying the Quality Assurance system. Thus, the quality of both management and teaching come under scrutiny in this section of the study. This will include, but will not be restricted to, school arrangement for quality control, including the monitoring and

provision of professional development for staff, the processes for ensuring the rigour and accuracy of assessment decisions, the lines of communication and control in relation to quality management, and the effectiveness of teaching provision. The two schools in the Faculty of the Humanities were reviewed and analysed on the basis of their self-evaluation programme.

Despite the institutionalisation of self-evaluation and the apparent seriousness of attention of quality of academic programmes, it can be concluded that based on the 2010 CHE report on programme re-accreditation many universities still face many challenges as quality assurance is concerned (CHE 2010).

Assessment Criteria for Quality Assurance

A comprehensive checklist was developed in order to effectively track, examine and verify whether all quality enhancement programmes before, during and after quality implementation were being complied with.

Operational Aspects that Guide Quality of Academic Programmes

The two academic programmes that were the focus of the study are offered at both the Bloemfontein and Welkom campuses of the CUT. Language practice its primary aim is to develop students in diverse areas of linguistic competence

in the chosen local and international languages and to expose them to various communication strategies and technologies.

From Figure 1 it is clear that in terms of the assessment above, the School of Communications Sciences have worked very hard to ensure that there is a *procedure* in place and its *expectations* are clearly spell out. Majority of the responses emanating from the self-evaluation reports indicate that schools are doing well, however the only challenging situation is the justification of the process undertaken as well as the institutional principles shared by everybody. It has comprehensive and realistic business and operational plans to enable it to meet both quality improvement and sustainability requirements. Included in the quality manual are operating procedures which describe the actual process and controls applied to all activities concerned with the attainment of a quality assured contracting service. All these concern and shortcomings no doubt bring to the surface the need to amplify the quality imperative in the academic offerings. Ayiro and Sang (2011), support the researcher observation as captured in the self evaluation reports that systematic issues also affect the quality of the academic programme. Most programmes conceded the pressure of HEQC as the accountability lies with them.

Notwithstanding the achievement above, there is still a problem of inconsistency in how this in-house procedure among the academic in

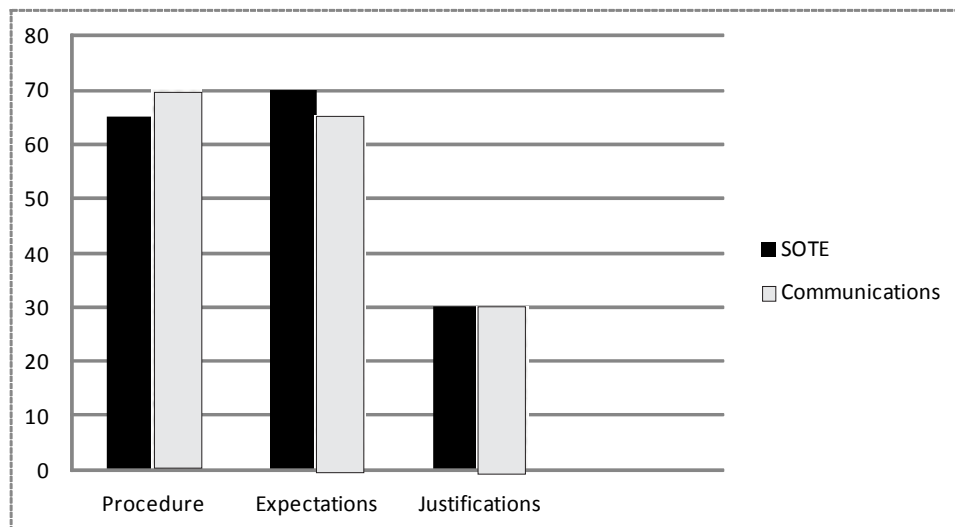


Fig. 1. Quality assurance process

the school. This poses serious challenges in how this procedure is interpreted in various courses. Concerted efforts must be made to ensure alignment and uniformity between the two campuses.

The figure went further to unpack the challenges of quality assurance in teacher education. From the responses it is clear that quality assurance necessitates that an institution that makes the product or delivers the service has the available resources and systems that can deliver the required quality.

Although there is no dedicated quality committee in the School of Teacher Education, the Accreditation Report 2007 indicates that the school has measurable quality assurance processes and procedures which are embedded in the faculty's quality plan. The school has also drafted strategic and operational plans upon which curricula are aligned with science, engineering and technology. Sixty percent of the programme did affirm that there is minimal guidance with regard to quality assurance at the university, there is no clear plan which can be used as an operational framework and guiding tool upon which the faculty's, schools and programme's quality assurance strategies can be aligned to.

An assessment of the documentary report reveals that students are guided on how the different components of the programme contribute to the learning outcomes, and the assessment criteria are clearly communicated to students on the commencement of their studies. However, the self-evaluation reports and reviews indicate that the serious setback is that there is no indication to establish if assessment information is being used to improve the curriculum and learning materials. Furthermore, there is no substantiation as to whether lecturers at the two campuses meet to deliberate on programme-related matters. This issue alone unequivocally suggests that there are no operational strategies for ensuring academic parity and professional interaction in a programme.

Notwithstanding the available procedures and guidelines for institutional surveys, reviews and an impact survey at the CUT, a notable predicament is that most of the programmes in this faculty has not been reviewed internally or externally. In reviewing these programmes, staff members, students and external bodies will be able to contribute meaningfully towards programme development.

Documented activities found their expression not only in the database and archives, but essentially in measures and steps taken to ameliorate difficulties in quality programmes. In 2006 the School embarked upon a programme review with the aim of improving the alignment between the two campuses, and this move has culminated in programme re-circulation.

Management Responsibilities

It was indicated in the beginning that both the Director of School and the Programme Head play a fundamental role in ensuring the maintenance and sustenance of quality management in their respective programmes. This includes transmitting and facilitating communiqués between internal and external stakeholders. Consequently university without strong and competitive academic managers often find themselves having challenges in managing the academic programmes. The end results of the student learning become disastrous, institution and the public money is being wasted.

Table 1 reveals an internal communication breakdown in the Language Practice programme. This is exacerbated by students complaining that the brochure is misleading with regard to career opportunities offered by the programme. It was further recommended in the documental report that the Director of School should introduce modules which would lead to preferred career opportunities such as Radio and Television Presenting, Journalism and Video Production.

Table 1: Management responsibilities in language practice

<i>Management responsibilities:</i>	<i>Done</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Not done</i>
Planning	X		
Internal communication		X	
External communication	X		
Learner/Client focus	X		
Responsibility/ Authority rules		X	

Since the CUT offers a standard type and range of educational services, student satisfaction and quality are achieved by operating in accordance with the documented quality system. Specific student requirements are identi-

fied and documented during the contract review process, allowing these requirements to be communicated and achieved, thereby ensuring the satisfaction of all students' declared needs.

Table 2 shows that management is responsible for implementing and maintaining a policy framework for learning provision, assessment, quality service and clientele care. The successful implementation of this strategic framework is dependent upon management commitment to the development and effective operation of a quality system. The management in the PGCE Unit has established a platform through which students can express their views about the programme. It is clear from Table 2 that the Accreditation Report indicates that alumni and current students have confirmed respectively, that they have pursued and are intending to become teachers because of the delivery mode, time-table and admission criteria in the programme accommodated their specific needs. Furthermore, the Report also points out that policies, procedures, and regulations for the recruitment, selection and admission of students are well documented, accessible, and are clearly communicated to students.

Table 2: Management responsibilities in teacher education

<i>Management responsibilities:</i>	<i>Done</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Not done</i>
Planning		X	
Internal communication	X		
External communication	X		
Learner/Client focus	X		
Responsibility/ Authority rules	X		

Strategic action plans are in place to ensure that the PGCE Unit meets the challenges of learning provision. Some of these action plans are:

- The promotion of *specialism* (Subject Specific Didactics) within the curriculum is under revision; and
- The construction of physical resource infrastructure for the School of Teacher Education is underway.

In summary, the institutional management in general, and the academic unit in particular, are well on track to achieve quality service and programmes.

It is understandable that assessment process is fundamental in any teaching/learning event because is meant to improve teaching and learning and help students to achieve the highest standards they can within their own capabilities and provide meaningful reports to parents on their students' achievements. In spite of this, Table 3 reveals that the standard of the assessment strategy in the Language Practice programme is highly questionable. It is indicated in the self-evaluation report that there is an over-reliance on tests and assignments; there is no assessment policy to guide and promote constructive assessment activity.

Table 3 shows that facilitation and moderation processes leave a lot to be desired. The process of facilitation is particularly important in situations where students are learning independently and lecturers can assist students to make connections between classroom knowledge and the students' own knowledge. Unlike in the Language Practice programme, teaching and learning approaches are not in line with the 'social constructivist' approach adopted by the entire CUT. In essence, constructivism assumes that students learn as they work to understand their experiences and create meaning. In the social constructivist model, teachers are 'knowledge reservoirs' who craft a curriculum to support a self-directed, collaborative search for meanings.

Table 3: Product realisation

<i>Product realisation</i>	<i>Achieved</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Not achieved</i>
Assessment			X
Facilitation			X
Moderation		X	

Moderation should be understood as the internal verification process through which the marking of completed assignments is verified and assurances made that marking across the line of learning is standardised. It involves lecturers and other professionals as is appropriate, working together, drawing on guidance and exemplification and building on existing standards and expectations of the staff and students. However, the documentary report reveals that collaborative partnership in the Language Practice programme is missing; thus, inputs and feedback from moderators are often overlooked.

Table 4 reveals that most of the academic programmes did not have their own assessment methods; however, they put much emphasis on the institutional policies. In responding to the question of quality assurance with regard to the assessment process, this is what the PH said: "The CUT has an assessment policy which applies to all programmes offered at the institution. Evidence of students' achievements of the programme objectives are conducted through various assessment practices. The assessment practices, however, vary across the specialisations. Assessments consist of continuous assessments, which include assignments and tests, teaching practice at schools, research, exhibitions and summative examinations."

Table 4: Quality assurance assessment

<i>Monitoring of academic programme quality</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	8	100
No	0	0
Missing	0	0
Total	8	100

Although the programme has these assessments, there are no specific assessment criteria. These vary according to modules and lecturers. Assessment criteria are generally outlined in the course packs, which stipulate module expectations and activities. Indications are that admittance to writing final exams is automatic.

Quality Assurance (Monitoring and Evaluation)

To ensure quality, the programme has a moderation policy, which makes provision for all learning activities (assignments, tests, examinations and research work) to be internally and externally moderated. Internal moderation focuses on learning activities such as assignments, tests and other activities, which are moderated by internal peer lecturers in the institution. Examinations are internally and externally moderated by peers in the sector. The PH indicated that they work with other HEIs, as well as people in the Provincial Department of Education for this purpose.

Apart from moderations, PH also evaluates the delivery of the programme modules. Indications are that programme modules are evaluated every quarter, while entire programme evalua-

tions are conducted every three to five years. The persons responsible for evaluation exercises are the programme heads and an advisory committee. In the recent past, they have also relied on the HEQC which has evaluated the M Ed programme.

Although the documentary report indicates that the language practice programme achieved a throughput rate of 85% in 2007, it does not preclude the school from reviewing and upgrading the programme. A worrying finding was highlighted by students' complaining that work-based learning does not exist: an approach to learning which will fully equip and prepare students for their work environment.

Quality assurance is the means through which an institution can guarantee with confidence and certainty, that the standards of its educational provision are being maintained and enhanced. It is also recommended that procedures be developed to ensure annual and systematic impact studies of the programme. In this regard, an ongoing development of students, as well as their professional commitment, will be assured. The realisation of programme transformation will bear testimony to and provide confidence in the quality assurance strategies in the language practice programme and that these strategies are fit for its purpose.

Quality assurance practices call for a service provider to independently audit and monitor quality, and to furnish this assessment outcome to key officials so as to enhance quality. The accreditation review provided a report on the following:

- There are clear assessment policies at the CUT, and the assessment approach in place; there are systems in place to monitor student progress, as well as to identify and remediate students who are struggling to cope with programme requirements;

This conclusion is attributed to the disparities and inconsistencies between the two campuses with regard to programme design, teaching and learning approaches.

CONCLUSION

The review of the two programmes will indeed assist the CUT in shaping its quality process and ultimately providing a basis for discussions and not necessarily for conclusions, considering the current state of affairs in this

largely unexplored subject area at this institution. Institutional factors provide the context of features critical to the success of the quality of academic offerings.

Although there are challenges, in general the self-evaluation process at the CUT has brought the programme a unique quality; its strong point being the accountability process. Other notable phenomena are the expansion of the monitoring of teaching and learning and a proper assessment process by the academic leader. In addition, this programme has instilled in all academics a sense of accountability. In the midst of this particular scenario of not having a proper, or clear quality assurance framework, it is clear that there is still room for improvement and progress.

The study concluded that although there is no quality assurance framework, there is an understanding to initiate the application of the HEQC requirements for self-evaluation purposes. Reframing the current HEQC programme reaccreditation criteria as performance indicators will extend the conceptualisation as the criteria acknowledges programme design, teaching and learning and the human factor. It would be in the best interest of the institution if the framework could be suggested particularly for monitoring and the development of improvement plans.

In conclusion it is important that the CUT must develop a quality assurance framework that will afford the academics an opportunity to provide quality feedback on academic matters at the institution. It should be evident to the University community that such feedback should be acted upon within university practice. It is crucial for the University to recognise the reproductive character of their academic offerings.

Higher education operates in a context of competition, interdependence, interconnectedness and exploitation at unprecedented levels. The CUT should strive towards becoming a competitive institution in the global arena and a quality programme is the key to competitiveness.

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