

**Approach towards the Professional Development of Academics
as Espoused in Institutional Policy Documents
at a South African University**

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ABSTRACT How do institutional policy documents espouse the approach towards the professional development of academics in their role as teachers at one South African University? In order to answer the above question, the researcher conducted a document analysis of the case study institution's documents relating to the teaching and learning agenda focusing specifically on the development of academics as teachers. Using the Archerian social realist theoretical framework, the paper analyses the cultural, structural and agential mechanisms in relation to the professional development of academics as espoused in institutional policy documents at a University. The findings from the document analysis suggest that while an espoused culture exists, structure and agency do exert an influence on the extent to which this espoused culture is translated into reality. The documents show the need to strengthen agency that will work in the domain of culture to effect a paradigm shift in terms of seeing the development of academics as teachers as an integral aspect of an academic's career. In addition the documents suggest a strengthening of the structures responsible for supporting the professional development of academics. The study recommends strengthening of synergy among the various structures and agents that deal with staff development to avoid duplication and the re-inventing of the wheel.