

Extending inclusive access and exclusive provision in distance higher education

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ABSTRACT

The vision for the 21st century South African higher education system as presented by Kader Asmal (1999) has crystallised into two priorities for the state:

- (a) *Priority 7: we must create a vibrant further education and training system to equip youth and adults to meet the social and economic needs of the 21st century.*
- (b) *Priority 8: we must implement a rational seamless higher education system that grasps the intellectual and professional challenges facing South Africans in the 21st century.*

The institutionalisation of this vision in higher education has led to (1) the reconfiguration of management structures and learning programme; (2) setting up of alternative means of enabling access into higher education; (3) and in retrospect imposed new challenges in strategies and methodologies of providing higher education that respond to all forms of diversity that the extension of Access invites into teaching and learning. This paper is based on a case study depicting an analytic audit of Technikon Southern Africa of intervention programmes that seek to extend students' academic access (access from outside) to the provision learning programmes and learner support (access and success from within). These 'access from outside' equity programmes are used to benchmark the vision of the seamless higher education that grasps the intellectual and professional challenges facing South Africans in the 21st century. The latter refer to the 'access from within' development programme which are benchmarked against diversity quality assurance, and diversity in expanding exclusive provision as prescribed by the act of extending inclusive access. The study employs an action research model that presents a vision to balance equity and development. It analyses the context of teaching and learning in distance higher education and rigorously reflects on practice of the work in progress at Technikon SA based on diversifying and extending inclusive access as well as expanding exclusive provision and learner support in distance higher education in Southern Africa. This paper also advance the argument for the putting in place academic planning guidelines for staff development programmes to design and provide new programmes and modules and for the improvement of the existing ones as necessary movement to understand and implement the changing higher education legislative context.

INTRODUCTION

The new higher education policies and frameworks in South Africa are underpinned by two fundamental goals, namely that the system should provide mechanisms for peoples' liberation and that it should improve the productivity of the South African workforce which in turn would improve the competitiveness of the economy. Badat (1999) has called this policy tension between the drive to participate in a global economy and equity the 'permanent intractable tension'. To this effect, the Department of Education (DoE, 2001) believes that it is possible to forge both ideals in a unified strategy for the reconstruction and development responding to the imperatives of globalisation. The DoE argues that the enhancement of democracy lays the

basis for greater participation in economic and social life more generally. Higher levels of employment and work contribute directly to political and social stability and the capacity of citizens to exercise and enforce democratic rights and participate effectively in decision-making.

While higher education was previously allowed to impose its own definitions of knowledge on society, society is now demanding that higher education provides more instrumental definitions of knowledge and more operational knowledge products (Council on Higher Education, 2001). In this context, Musson (2002) observes that the new higher education landscape in South Africa is stuck in the grip of the enterprise culture. She classifies South African higher education institutions as market-oriented with a focus on yielding private goods instead of a range of public goods of interest of the South Africa country and the African Renaissance. The concept of the learning age - seeking open and lifelong learning opportunities for all in an inclusive society in which each one teaches one is subjected in South Africa to the economic drive to compete in the international market. Musson argues that the tension in higher education mirrors the tension in the macro-economic policy (Growth Employment and Redistribution - GEAR) – the dominant characteristic of the South African social formation remains the divide between the elite and the poor.

DIFFERENTIATED INCLUSIVE ACCESS

The New Academic Policy (2001) speaks wide about inclusive access and differentiated provision in teaching and learning.

On differentiated access:

“The qualifications framework is premised on a notion of differentiated access, i.e. it is designed to facilitate the judicious placement of learners in a variety of curriculum options, depending on the ‘goodness of fit’ between learners’ past learning experiences and achievements and the entry requirements of their target programmes. This should contribute greatly to the overall efficiency of the system”.

On the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):

“RPL is a way of recognising what individuals already know and can do. RPL is based on the premise that people learn both inside and outside formal learning structures (including learning from work and life experience) and this learning can be worthy of recognition and credit ... RPL is used extensively by those seeking: admission to a course; advanced standing for a course; or credits towards a qualification. It can also be used by those seeking entry to a particular field of employment; promotion or self-development”.

On the academic development programmes:

“Academic development programmes (AD) have developed in South African public higher education institutions in various forms since the early 1980s, when, as historically white institutions began admitting small numbers of black students from Department of Education and Training schools, it became clear that the majority of such under-prepared or disadvantaged students required additional learning opportunities to prepare them to succeed in higher education”.

The academic policy is premised on the belief that “in highlighting the principles of equity and redress, the White Paper expressed the concern that increased and extended access should lead to improved success or graduation rates, especially for black and female students.”

Open Inclusive Access in Higher Education

Any attempt to present a critical reflection on issues of access into higher education and how this shapes academic success of those admitted into academic programmes cannot do so without presenting a sufficient reflecting on various forms of access in teaching and learning envisaged in South Africa today. There are various forms of access to teaching and learning; access to space; access to resources; access to knowledge (epistemological access) Jansen (2001); access to skills and competency; access to dialogue: access to workplace education; access to feedback, etc. These forms of access can be clustered into two broad categories, learner invitation (access, admission and placement) and learner hosting (academic provision, service and capacitation). Operating within the franchise of corporationalised and globalised education enterprises, physical access would translate itself to client-learners enticement while academic provision translates itself to product/service delivery by creating space and equal opportunity to enhance capabilities of clients (learners). Not withholding the significance of the critique that higher education institutions as business are not good for business (Singh, 2001) if their competitive advantage and niche focus is biased and phenomenally thinned to the production and utilisation of knowledge by business economies, one can still argue that individual learners accepted into learning programmes are entitled to quality academic provision that reflect value for money in the context of free education viewed non-existent.

The New Academic Policy confesses that the White Paper supported the offering of academic development programmes and extended curricula as a means of achieving this - in its National Plan, the DoE has expressed its concern that the retention rate in some higher education sectors is down by 10%, and that current drop-out rates (an average of 20% for all students and an average of 25% for first-time entering students) is 'unacceptable' (DoE, 2001). Although the reasons for these depressing statistics must be multiple, academic exclusion is undoubtedly one (CHE, 2001). In the context of these realities and shared consented values of policy the call for the increased participation rates to be complemented by increased graduation rates and, in the New National Plan of Higher Education remains the legitimate imperative. In this plan as articulated by the New Academic Policy, the Department of Education exhorts all higher education institutions 'to prioritise and focus their efforts in the next 5 years on improving the efficiency of the outputs of the system' (Refer to National Plan, 2001 and the New Academic Policy, 2001).

The paradigm of 'value for money' paradigm in teaching and learning does not merely find ratification of its common sense value within 'education as a business enterprise' discourse, but it also significantly permeates itself to the core of the 'education for public good' argument. In spite of whether the 'inclusive access' motive being commercial, civil or political, any systemic attempt to balance the inclusive access and exclusive provision equation in higher education planning and practice, is by its principle of accountability and responsibility an act of public good. While such a systemic attempt to balance access with provision is an economic 'demand and supply' phenomenon pillared on the discourse of the internationalisation and the subjecting of education to financial discipline (Ruth, 2001), it also serves the social purpose. This social purpose is the one of providing differentiated interventions rooted on South African constitutionalised democratic values and diverse cultural enterprise, a cultural brand of collective identity that makes the democratic order South Africa boast of itself as a rainbow nation. Opening and extending access by relaxing recruitment and selection criteria, making it more invitational and inclusive, signifies by definition the creation of relative agility in teaching and learning systems in a manner that affords learners extended choice and control over learning itself (Race, 1994). Technikon SA has by making minimum admission requirements a grade twelve certificate with at least five higher grade, standard grade or the combination of the two, or any SAQA and Technikon SA Senate recognised equivalent certificate, or no grade twelve at all, extended access into academic programmes by creating these invitational conditions (Technikon SA, 2002).

The values of extending inclusive access to higher education and paralleling this with expanding exclusive provision are eloquently espoused in the National Plan for Higher Education (2001), as founded on the

White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (1997) which is based on the goals:

- to provide a full spectrum of advanced educational opportunities for an expanding range of the population irrespective of race, gender, age, creed or class or other forms of discrimination
- to promote equity of access and fair chances to all who are seeking to realise their potential through higher education while eradicating unfair discrimination.

Implications for Extending Inclusive Access

As argued above, balancing extended inclusive access with expanded exclusive provision has both economic and public good interest in a sense that it remains a moral, pedagogic, and business imperative in any public and private enterprise. Deviation from this norm owing to financial viability models that currently characterise South African higher education as part of its restructuring and reaction to globalisation and internationalisation of higher education corporate management models has been widely critiqued as failing to advance the social justice agenda through education and training. As observed by Singh (2001), the quality of provision has been placed in jeopardy as large numbers of diverse learners render educator student ratios significantly unmanageable as institutions revitalise from the verge of collapse through survival strategies in the face of fiscal austerity. This stance has been raised as a political concern in the National Plan for Higher Education (2001) where it is clearly stated that increased equity access should match success rates.

“The Ministry acknowledges that significant changes have occurred in both the race and the gender profile of the student body in the higher education system. However, these changes have not gone far enough. As the White Paper states, “equity of access must be complemented by a concern for equity of outcomes. Increased access must not lead to a ‘revolving door’ syndrome for students with high failure and drop-out rates” (White Paper: 2.29). Neither must the increased access of black students through distance education programmes and satellite campuses - students who are “neither seen nor heard”, be allowed to parade as a commitment to equity of access. In this regard, the Ministry would like to state emphatically that it is unacceptable that the student profile of some institutions continues to remain predominantly white. This cannot continue.”

Whether student numbers escalate as a repercussion of the execution of unresearched survival strategies or the articulation, prioritisation and realisation of social transformation initiatives, the agenda of quality assurance in higher education can hardly be deemed complete without paying significant attention to the following factors:

- an increase in the size and diversity of institutional student populations (van Aswegen, 2001)
- an increase in levels of efficiency in process of academic provision
- an escalation in degrees of effectiveness of teaching and learning systems
- the alignment of individual learning processes with generic standards and expected outcomes
- realisation of academic obligations shaping individual contracts between learners and institutions
- an emphasis on student stakeholder feedback on learning experiences encountered with academic and administrative systems and processes put in place to shape teaching and learning
- putting in place of teaching and learning strategies, structures, systems and processes that improve meaningful participation of learners and enhance learning potential for all learners
- mentoring of balance between institutional accountability to cutting-edge academic provision, and learner responsibility to academic participation.

Making it possible for distance education institutions like Technikon Southern Africa to realise these quality assurance benchmarks, it is imperative to understand legal imperatives binding the nature of learning contracts concerned parties (learners and institutions) enter into during students registration. Students are financially liable as individuals; academically responsible as individuals; learning occurs in an individual mind; skills and competencies are individually internalised (in spite of the context of learning); and success and failure are conferred individually. If the learning contract from the perspective of the learner is this highly individualised, opening inclusive access should contractually be paralleled with exclusive provision that meets various levels of the needs of learners during teaching and learning. It is critical for provision to realise that individualised learning contracts bear various forms of diversity that make it necessary to have learning differentiation a significant symbol of agility in teaching and learning systems and processes, an imperative that makes business sense while remaining a public good gesture.

As characterised by Matentjie (2001), an effective access framework puts emphasis on diagnostic assessment and has to be anchored on effective learner support and academic development systems where learners at risk are identified and supported through appropriate academic and personal support interventions. As maintained by Matentjie the integration of academic development and support systems into mainstream programmes ensures that the under-prepared learners are allowed access, without compromising institutional academic standards, while on the other hand upholding quality assurance values in teaching and learning.

Barriers in Paralleling Diversity with Differentiation

One of the ways of dealing with the ‘permanent or intractable tension’ between the dual imperatives of education and training (economic development and public good -social redress and equity) is to restructure the institutes of higher learning. Institutes should become centres of excellence in selected niche areas which could respond to the issues emerged from globalisation or to address the challenges arising from the developmental imperatives of equity, redress and reconstruction which are derived from the country’s history. However, there are various barriers to this strategy to deal with the challenges. There are various barriers and challenges that impinge on the construction of agile structures, flexible systems and responsive processes in South African distance education. These barriers are depicted on the April (2002) model provided below.

Why Exclusive Provision fails to match Inclusive Access?

Strategies	Structures	Systems	Processes	Policies	People	Culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -No systemic strategies -Lack of shared vision -Lack of commitment to differentiation -Financial constraints -Isolationist intervention models that fragment systems and processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Cumbersome hierarchies -Responsibility without authority -Top-down management models -Bloated staff functions -Communication discontinuity -Rigid structures backed and hardened by over rehearsal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Oppressive control -Lack of agility -Provider centred -Unabling evaluation and summative feedback Unresponsive practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of fitness for purpose -Provider convenient -Set to prove instead of improving -Parochial and bias -Expert bias perspective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Complex approval cycles -Extensive documentation -Over-reliance on set rules and procedures -Reliance on rigid frameworks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Resistance to change -Fear of failure -Turf protection -Complacency -Short-term focus -Lack of appropriate skills -Lack of willingness to go an extra mile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Rigid norms and tradition -Lack of consensus -Unshared values -Lack of fit - Strong cultures that fail to recognise need for change

Adapted from April 2002

While factors depicted in the April model can be squarely attributed to the functioning of various organisations, some being non-academic, Technikon Southern Africa has over years realised the essence of putting systems and processes in place to ensure that through extended inclusive access, learners are not placed for failure, but success. Whether these systems and processes are adequate, fit for purpose, add value

to teaching and learning, enhance learning and accelerate students success is another question that needs systematic evaluation, which owing to time, scope and latitude of the challenge to match extended access with differentiated exclusive provision, is hardly observed. Looking at high input and low output ratios in terms of student numbers, it remains safe to merely state that our current systems and processes are good in making students disappear. The questions to ponder are 'Why do they disappear?' 'Where do they disappear to?' and 'How can this situation be rescued?'

The few systems and processes put in place reflect the willingness to differentiate admission criteria into programmes, while putting in place enabling mechanisms to recognise diverse levels of readiness to enter academic programmes and commence learning with success. These systems and processes recognise that every learner is similar and different from other learners on basis of age, marital status, work experience, social values and norms, gender identity, ethnicity, previous education, location and residence, motivation to study, language, socio-economic status, course enrolment, nationality, physical ability, intellectual capability, learning pace, ability to adapt to learning space, subject specialisation, dominant cultural identity, and attitudes (Cele, 1999). This fabric of diversity that informs the need to differentiate teaching and learning experiences of all learners by realising that all learners need to make their own sense out of every presented reality, has been incorporated into some structures, systems and processes at Technikon Southern Africa.

National Policy Frameworks informing Open Access

There is a wide range of policy frameworks and legislation that govern operations of institutions and shape the development of internal policies, the corporation strategy, functional and operational strategies of Technikon Southern Africa. It is not the purpose of this paper to present an extensive analysis of these policy documents and frameworks. However, realising that a study of this nature cannot be concluded without the acknowledgement of these landmark policies in higher education, a list of reference will be drawn. Critical policy frameworks that inform and shape access and provision strategies in higher education are among others the following;

- National Education Policy Act No.27 of 1996
- National Plan for Higher Education (February 2001)
- Education White Paper 3 (July 1997)
- Skills Development Act No. 97 of 1998
- Skills Development Levies Act No.9 of 1999
- Official Languages and Promotion of Multilingualism Bill (2000)
- Norms and Standards for Educators (February 2000)
- Higher Education Act No 101 of 1997
- South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act No. 58 of 1995
- New Academic Policy for Programmes and Qualifications in Higher Education (January 2002)

These policy frameworks and pieces of legislation inform the attempt to redress and transform South African higher education. It is on this premise that holding a balance between extending inclusive access and expanding exclusive provision as argued in this paper, becomes a critical strategy and the political imperative in policy implementation phenomena.

Support Systems and Processes on Admission, Placement and Provision

Technikon Southern Africa connotatively uses an Integrationist approach model to accelerate student success in retrospect of open access and differentiated student placement into academic programmes. With wide open access policy in place, Technikon Southern Africa has put in place two critical systems that enhance inclusive access into academic programmes and systematically accelerates levels of success, Recognition Prior Learning (RPL) and the Academic Development (ADP) Programme.

In characterising Technikon Southern Africa strategies, systems and processes in place to extend inclusive learner access into programmes, Humphrey (2002) becomes blatant and explicit,

“Technikon SA has become known as an access institution and affords access to students who cannot gain entry to residential institutions through financial or academic exclusion. In addition students who reside far from residential institutions are able to enrol in Technikon SA’s distance education programmes. In fact Technikon SA provides an opportunity for students to study for first year courses while working and later transfer to residential institutions”

Systems in place

(a) Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Recognition of Prior Learning is a critical affirmative stance in teaching and learning that seeks to recognise skills and competencies acquired through work, training, reading, parenting, community work and travelling experiences as critical component of education and training. The recognition of these skills and competencies prevents the repetition of learning already acquired; accelerates career mobility; and widens access into learning programmes. In this context Technikon South Africa understands RPL to be the identification, assessment, and acknowledgement of skills, competencies, knowledge, and attitudes obtained through previous formal and non-formal learning, work, and life experiences (Smith, 2002). RPL in teaching and learning serves the following functions:

- *Establish systemic evidence of learning that transpired competencies and skills acquired*
- *Allow learners access into programmes*
- *Provides individual career profiles that inform career guidance*
- *Provides critical individual learner profile and suggest suitable teaching intervention*
- *Placement of learners on different levels in programmes*
- *Provides systemic skills and knowledge profiles as indicators of levels of learner readiness for the development of proper mix instructional design*
- *Establish the context of learning that suites learners most*
- *Allow providers to establish responsive intervention strategies that accelerate learning*

The Technikon SA's RPL policy is the one that adheres to the international widely acclaimed and accepted standards Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) based in Chicago USA. These benchmarking standards are depicted on the appendix to this paper. These benchmarking standards by virtue of being foreign and first world become detached from the historic context peculiar to South Africa. This on its own creates a particular genre of social redress policy conceit that while seeking to redress political injustices of the past by adhering to uncontextual frameworks, inevitably lands itself to the perpetuation of the status core. In this context the privileged enjoy more privileges and the disadvantaged endure wallowing in that abyss forever. The danger of that genre of policy making framework is that continues blaming the unprivileged for failing to comply with policy, without instituting a critical reflection

on the context of policy implementation and learning from the realities of the South African context. It is in this context that the TSA RPL policy needs to be critiqued and rewritten. However, working in close collaboration with academic programme groups, the RPL unit facilitates the use of various strategies and methods (interviews, portfolios, challenge tests, site visits, standardised tests, submission of assignments and projects, taking of short courses etc) to assess skills and competencies and fast-track learning. RPL processes have proven to provide the most successful assessment and placement strategies that have extended inclusive access to learners into programmes. While very few students have taken advantage of this programme and some have been sidelined by policy itself, the success rate of cases handled is significant.

(b) Academic Development Programme

The Academic Development Centre hosts a number of learner support and students enablement academic programmes that include foundational courses, extended curriculum initiatives, pre-registration assessment, and guidance and counselling, placement in programmes, tracking, and evaluation of success rates.

(c) Foundational Courses

Various discipline based foundational courses are developed for different students who demonstrate lack of expected competence on study and learning skills, cognitive skills, problem solving, and critical thinking skills. These foundational courses are based on different divisional fields of study, which makes these courses differentiated according to discipline demands. These disciplines are Engineering and Natural Sciences; Applied Community Sciences; Management and Economic Sciences; and Public Safety and Criminal Justice (Machika & Dresselhaus, 2001).

(d) Extended Curriculum

Upon analysis of individual student profiles during pre-registration assessment, certain students are recommended for the extended first year level curriculum. The extended curriculum is designed to place students into programmes for success, based on:

- subjects selected for foundation courses
- interventions extended where high drop-out rates are detected
- introductory modules offered for all courses
- foregrounding of academic literacy
- different mainstream subjects selected for student development

The extended curriculum maintains the balance between open and inclusive access and academic readiness for mainstream education. Maintaining this balance is a critical measure in ensuring that social redress, equity and open access policies of the Technikon SA are meaningfully successful and articulate with differentiation of academic provision.

(e) Pre-Registration Assessment (PRA)

The pre-registration assessment programme is designed for first time learners at Technikon SA based on principles of establishing learners' basic numeracy, mathematics, language, and computer competencies. The Pre-Registration Assessment selects all students into programmes by establishing their level of readiness and responding with appropriate intervention strategies as envisaged in the conceptualisation of this programme. This process assists the materials development unit to respond efficiently with relevant learning materials, lecturers embarking on appropriate subject planning and employing relevant intervention strategies, and learners preparing for empowering learning experiences exclusive to their needs and

competence levels. Student profiling through pre-registration assessment and responsive capacity building are linked to student academic development within mainstream programmes (Machika & Dresselhaus, 2001).

(f) Tutor System, Mentoring and Job Placement

As a distance education provider, Technikon Southern Africa has its prime target market spread throughout South Africa and extended to the Southern Africa Developing Community (SADC) countries. At the forefront of teaching and learning is a critical core and cadre of specialists in various fields and experts in teaching and learning. Teaching and learning and interactive engagement between learners and tutors is decentralised to nine regional offices that facilitate learners support delivery, provision and delivery of quality learner-centred courseware. The decentralisation of the tutor system and placement of learners on industries enable the Technikon to reach multi-dimensional learner and respond to the diversity and needs of diverse learners. On the same token it has become obvious that TSA does not have a grant plan that speaks to innovative strategies for co-operative education. Owing to the high unemployment rate stance of the South Africa economy, many students remain without places for experiential learning and workplace education. This condition calls for the inserting of agility in the human capital management policy to respond with the staff profile imperatives and partnership modelling of co-operative education.

While the 'wide web' model of interaction is shaped and monitored by a central critical mass of educators, it also brings a multiperspectival dimension to teaching and learning and initiates dialogue between tutors and learners, tutors and tutors, learners and learners, and learners and prospective employer, learners and lecturers, and lecturers and employers. This multiperspectival approach ascertains that knowledge is not created by the few, disseminated for acquisition from educators to learners, and transmitted for application by tutors without critical thinking processes taking the lead. Debates, dialogues and web-structured communication secure space for the contextualisation of knowledge, personalisation of the internalisation processes and the localisation of skills and competencies acquisition. While this framework at a general critical stakeholder participation level makes it essential that education serves the fundamentals of public good, it also secures the acquisition of skills and competence for contextualised needs of societies. Knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through such a dynamic and multi-perspectival discourse, also balances the discrepancy often perceived between theory and practice, while ensuring that all these forms of knowing and coming to know, can be immediately translated into practical solutions in the real world.

(g) Academic Staff Development

The Institute for Staff Development (ISD) is positioned as a path to Technikon SA becoming an employer of choice by using training and development to invest on academic human capital. When Technikon SA realised that it needed to secure its "BUILDING YOUR CAREER WHEREVER YOU ARE" competitive advantage in teaching and learning, ISD was established as a critical component of the strategy to entice talent, enhance, retain and extend the academic potential of Technikon SA academic staff. The Institute for Staff Development offers long-term training programmes and short-term training workshops based on annual *Needs Assessment* and the GAP analysis on professional readiness of academic staff. These courses are provided on perceived critical areas of teaching and learning applied competencies which are foundational, practical and reflective as defined in the new roles of educators prescribed by the Norms and Standards for Educators (SA Government, 2000). These roles are:

- Mediation in learning
- Interpreting and designing of learning programmes and materials
- Administration, leadership and management
- Being a scholar, researcher and life-long learner

- Community, citizenship and pastoral role
- Assessor
- Specialist function in learning area, subject, discipline or phase

These short-courses linked to the Education Training and Development Practices (ETDP) Service Education and Training Authority (SETA) accreditation framework, seek to provide work-related training and development that is linked to credits-bearing workshop programmes. On completion of training, participants should receive credits-bearing SAQA recognised certificates for attending these training workshops.

(h) Research and Development

In a quest to retain Technikon SA and its academic staff on the competitive edge of the creation, acquisition and application of knowledge frontiers, the Research and Development Centre provides a combination of proactive and reactive research and consultation strategies and services to Technikon SA structures, systems, and processes, and to external clients as well. To elevate quality teaching, meaningful learning and community service, through Research and Development Centre, Technikon SA staff members are encouraged to critically research and reflect on their practices. Academic Staff are invited to become part of collaborative research groups committed to create more effective, efficient and equitable open and flexible learning environments, learning technologies and learning materials.

The Research and Development Centre also provides individual advice to staff members on reflective practice and learning which encourages conversations with peers and other interested parties on their own innovative practices in teaching, research and community outreach. These 'insiders' talk and reach out to their fellow staff members and concerned stakeholders to expose their discrepancies between their theory and practice, to illuminate their concerns, to explore what others think and to probe to find out what could or should be done to enhance the quality of teaching and realise learning potentials.

DIFFERENTIATED PROVISION

In spite of the advancement of the agenda of public good, it remains the reality that globalisation trends have turned higher education institutions into skills corporations and knowledge malls that have to contribute to the economic well-being of their societies and the bring about the global order. Access to a better life is widened all lifelong through access to quality education. The focus is not on the memorising of knowledge, but rather on how to select and apply global knowledge to local contexts and problems. Only by using knowledge and reflecting on its usefulness in their own context, will people grasp and make it their own and move towards transforming their own lives, after actively reflecting on and active experimenting with that knowledge. Their newly produced knowledge may help to identify and solve their immediate problems in new unique ways and to improve the quality of life for all. Lifelong learning for all is offered by catering for flexible, more open, multi-mode delivery systems and by making provision for the recognition of prior learning, for multiple entry and exit points and for intermediate exit qualifications from multi-year qualifications. The differentiation of inclusive provision by making it mutually exclusive to all, institutions are not glamorising teaching and learning, responding to the social and economic imperatives concomitantly.

Competence expansion through critical cross-field outcomes

In terms of the curriculum, many higher education institutions have responded to the globalisation agenda and to the need to educate for an uncertain or unknown employment future, by emphasising open and lifelong learning skills for all and the teaching and learning of generic skills, competence or 'generic capacity' (Bowden & Marton, 1999). These generic skills, called critical cross-field outcomes are inserted into all qualifications at all levels on the National Qualification Framework (NQF), and it is expected that

the critical cross field outcomes are demonstrated by learners in integrated assessment tasks. (CHE, 2001). All qualifications must include the following critical cross-field outcomes (sometimes called generic outcomes):

- identifying and solving problems in which responses display that responsible decisions using critical and creative thinking have been made;
- working effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation, community;
- organising and managing oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively;
- collecting, analysing, organising and critically evaluating information;
- communicating effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written persuasion;
- using science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and health of others;
- demonstrating an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation;
- contributing to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the society at large, by making it the underlying intention of any programme of learning to make an individual aware of the importance of reflecting on, and exploring, a variety of strategies to learn more effectively;
- participating as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities;
- being culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts;
- exploring education and career opportunities; and developing entrepreneurial opportunities.

Differentiation through curriculum design

Curriculum design has become a social process that includes critical stakeholders. In the context of South Africa, qualifications have been based on outcomes that are nationally and globally comparable and are defined into roles/tasks professionals perform. All South African qualifications are placed on a single national qualifications framework (NQF). To give coherence to this single, co-ordinated higher education system, thus facilitating the articulation of qualifications, the transfer of credit and mobility and flexibility across the system needs to be observed. According to the New Academic Policy (2001) qualification refers to the certification of the achievement of the learning outcomes of a coherent learning programme in the following two tracks:

- the **general track**, that refers to a set of proposed qualification types providing learners with a general, formative, academic education which does not necessarily lead directly to particular forms of employment, but might create new work opportunities
- the **career-focus track** that refers to a set of proposed qualification types preparing learners to enter into particular careers, occupation or professions.

Technikons are encouraged to engage in

- the **open and lifelong learning track** that refers to a set of proposed qualification types, called 'learnerships' which integrate theory, practice and work to earn a living while studying in a structured manner to prepare learners for employment or self-employment.

The tracks chosen depend on the consensus of the stakeholder groups. Each qualification should have a rationale referring who are the dominant voices in designing the curriculum, and how the programme will contribute to the graduate personal development and employability (globalisation) as well as the needs of the society (liberalisation). The purpose of the course should indicate what type of graduate profile we aim to achieve from threshold-level to excellent. The construction of the purpose needs to be based on outcomes

analysis like producing functional graduates, global citizens, and situation or tasks analysis of the current profession like best practices of that particular profession. A gap analysis between the two has to be done to define the threshold-level. The expansion of provision implies that all these programme typologies should be menu(ed) in the institution's offerings to cater for the diverse needs of the economy, learners and their communities. To allow the complex nature of programme diversity envisaged for social redress and economic development, innovation has been encouraged through making individual institutions and providers of programmes responsible for designing their educational offerings in order to realise their different visions, missions and plans and to meet the varying needs of the clients, communities and regions that they serve. Some programmes can be deep others broad with a wide range of elective and learning pathways across disciplinary based on Mode 2 knowledge. Gibbons et al (1994) describes Mode 2 knowledge as problem-based and transdisciplinary instead of discipline-based. This is a more democratising, interdisciplinary and emancipating mode of knowledge generation emerging from the context in which the problem arises. The career-focussed track will be most likely build on the Mode 2 knowledge.

Differentiated provision shifts the unit of curriculum planning and design from the individual course, to the programme and its respective qualifications. This in turn demands greater co-ordination and co-operation between the academics teaching on a particular programme, and thus places demands on senior and middle management to ensure that 'programme teams' function. Given that the traditional unit of organisation in higher education institutions is the academic department created to research and teach a single discipline, this is not an easy organisational task, particularly as inter-disciplinary or Mode 2 programmes continue to develop in response to the market. Furthermore, the outcomes-based approach to curriculum design demands a more professional and rigorous approach to the assessment of students. Providers of higher education are now expected to verify that their graduates have indeed demonstrated the learning outcomes specified for particular qualifications. Quality promotion and assurance measures are likely to scrutinise assessment practices to ensure that they are valid, fair, transparent and accountable. The development of integrated assessments across the modules of programmes will be particularly demanding with respect to both assessment practice and academic teamwork. The proposed policy also shifts the dominant perspective from which the curriculum is determined, from that of the academy and the disciplines, to that of the learner and the needs of the broader society; meaning that the higher education curriculum is increasingly driven more by extrinsic than intrinsic concerns and interests. Whilst many, in the universities in particular, may resist this shift, an effort has been made in this report to maintain a balance between these competing interests. While Technikon SA understands these imperatives, the analysis of systems and processes in place reveals that programmes are extremely fragmented with limited coherence and cross-discipline articulation evident.

Learner's profile, community profile and needs assessment

The differentiation of provision cannot be feasible without putting in place feedback systems that are linked to evaluation and needs assessment processes. Meaningful provision differentiation is linked to annual Learner Profile Surveys that provide facilitators with concrete evidence to take systematically response to learners' needs, learning conceptions, strategies and habits to create targeted learning paths. These surveys respond to questions 'who are our learners?' 'where are they?' and 'what are their teaching and learning needs?' This information based on benchmark quality indicators, assist planner of teaching and learning events and processes to monitor learner progress and appoint personalised (fit for purpose) tutors; personalised learning materials; personalised delivery mode; personalised learner support; personalised student tracking and motivation; and personalised communication and dialogues. A community profile could describe which problems are existing, how they are solved and if the new knowledge offered within menu-ed programmes could transform not only the learner, but also the local organisations and the communities. While Technikon South Africa has realised the need to put in place flexible accesses processes, agile and learner exclusive epistemological interaction academic dialogue is thin to the ground.

Assessment criteria and strategy

If assessment criteria are construed as description of learner performance and are derived directly from statements of specific learning outcomes, level descriptors and SAQA list of critical outcomes programmes will enhance high powered competence based teaching and learning interventions in higher education. These performances are assumed to count as evidence that the learner has attained specific learning outcomes at a given level. Assessment criteria should be negotiated with the learners and assessors prior to undertaking the assessment task. This reflects criterion-referenced assessment as opposed to norm-referenced assessment system. A statement of assessment criteria should be included when submitting a programme for approval. Assessment criteria can both come from both the globalisation imperatives and social liberation aspects. These statements normally should refer to economic specification for a product, process and tools to be used (fit for purpose); to interpersonal skills (critical cross-field outcomes) as well as to issues of impact (liberation goals, how much did it make an impact. Integrated assessment involves the design and judgement of learner performance that can be used as evidence from which to infer applied competence. The learning results of one or more modules can be assessed on its own. Integrated assessment is designed to collect evidence to demonstrate that the purpose(s) of the programme as a whole has been achieved. Here the learner demonstrates accumulative learning results using a whole range of formative and summative assessment methods. Assessment at Technikon SA is not differentiated and 'one size fits all' strategies that do not learn from students needs and practical challenges, are in place to decide the fate of student success. More than often, instead of enhancing the output rate and student success, these strategies are based on proving how little of the spoon fed curriculum students know, instead of profiling their success to improve their performance.

DIFFERENTIATED UNIFIED SUCCESS

Success should be mutually inclusive (shared by all) and exclusively individualised in a sense that success rates and exit levels remain specific to individual needs and circumstances. Success should be diversified in among others the following ways:

- Allow learners to play multiple roles in teaching and learning
- Differentiate materials of the same subjects, based on contextual factors
- Use differentiated language mix mode for teaching and learning
- Assess learners when they are ready for assessment
- Different exit levels in programmes
- Paced differently based on individual circumstances
- Exiting programmes with different qualifications
- Preparing learners for different professional focuses and specialisations within the same qualifications
- Ability to transfer competencies and modules to other programme frameworks, etc

An Integrationist approach like a 7's (shared vision, strategy, structures, staffing, skills, systems, styles of leadership) model in human resources management advocates a co-ordinated approach to systems analysis. If systems are conceived as organised bodies of interrelated things, events and processes, sets of relationships connecting different parts of a complex whole, and keeping that whole together, the analysis and feedback system on the existence and success of exclusive provision processes and systems in place can not be viewed from an isolationist perspective, but an Integrationist one. If student progress and success rates are enhanced, such success can not be attributed to a single variable, but to multidimensional variables. To be successful, this rather complex process that suggests the need for spiral and longitudinal evaluation and feedback processes both vertical and horizontal in nature, at least micro evaluation and feedback systems have to be developed. The Academic Development Centre has conducted an intensive systems and processes analysis pilot study for their open access intervention and this is used to benchmark their institutionalisation of the open access admission framework. The Research and Development Centre tracks

and guides research into open and distance education teaching and learning knowledge frontiers, and this is used to inform the system of best practices in teaching and learning. The Institute for Academic Staff Development conducts an annual Gap Analysis on learning facilitation competencies of the academic staff, and this is used to design responsive training and development programmes that are credible and related to felt and detected needs within the Technikon SA teaching and learning continuum.

However there is a need for the tutor programme to be annually reviewed, and the co-operation education for job-placement to be intensified with new strategies, staff development stakeholder driven and research development institutionally co-ordinated and integrated into all systems and processes. The Integrationist approach to the evaluation of these systems should see not only student enrolment increasing, but also the increase in the rate of pipeline students progress, and student output/pass rates improved. The most critical challenge to the Integrationist model used at Technikon SA is that systems change overtime. While this is good for learning organisations, such change needs to be aligned with the vision of the Technikon on teaching and learning, public good mission of inclusive open access, and the viability of investment on exclusive provision that responds to learners' diverse profiles.

CONCLUSION

This paper has presented an analysis of systems and processes in place at Technikon SA and how these inform the vision and practice of extending open inclusive access while maintaining exclusive academic provision that does not brand all learners with the same intervention. It is critical for provision systems and processes to realise that every learner is the same like any other and different from any other - no two learners are exactly the same. The challenge of the Integrationist paradigm on inclusive access and exclusive provision stands in the ability of TSA to enhance students' success and contribute to the National Skills Strategy of South Africa while equally contributing to the moral revitalisation of South Africa through such social curriculum. Learning interventions have to produce functional South African citizens who by all standards are eligible for global citizenship.

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