
ITL Introduction

Introduction to the HEQC's Improving Teaching and Learning Resources

Each of the seven Improving Teaching & Learning Resources can be read and used individually, although there are cross-references as some are closely related. However, it is important to read this *Introduction*, as it deals with the purpose of the Resources and how they relate to the Higher Education Quality Committee's quality assurance mandate and its quality promotion and capacity development activities.

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FOREWORD

The Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) prioritised quality issues in teaching and learning very early on in the development of its quality assurance systems. Mandated by legislation to conduct institutional audits and programme accreditation and to promote quality and quality assurance, the HEQC initiated a project in 2002 aimed at the improvement of teaching and learning in higher education.

The project on teaching and learning was intended to refocus attention on one of the core functions of higher education in an environment where the restructuring of higher education had given much attention to issues such as governance, financing and the 'size and shape' of the system. The project also reflected the importance of quality-related capacity development in the work of the HEQC, especially in a context where historical disadvantage impacts on the capacities of academic staff to plan and deliver good quality programmes and on the capacities of students to benefit from them. These issues needed to be addressed and to be brought to the centre of the debate about the purposes of a new quality assurance system for South Africa. Moreover, the project fitted in with international debates and developments in higher education, which were prioritising the learning experiences of students as well as giving increased attention to the professionalisation of higher education teaching and to staff development and support.

The HEQC set up the project in a way that would involve a number of role-players. It was important to draw on teaching and learning expertise in higher education as well as to maximise the impact of those involved within higher education institutions. The Resources for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning should be seen therefore as the fruit of an extensive collaboration between the HEQC, a large number of experts and practitioners and a range of public and private higher education institutions.

It is hoped that the Resources will be adapted creatively for a number of purposes and used by higher education practitioners individually and in teams in the process of improving the quality of teaching and learning. Improvements in teaching and learning are essential to give effect to the transformation objectives in the restructuring of higher education, especially in relation to redress and equity and to the responsiveness of higher education to national goals and challenges.

The HEQC looks forward to further cooperation with key partners in higher education in effectively developing and using the Resources. We would like to acknowledge that funding for the project and this publication was made available by DFID and the Carnegie Corporation.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Improving Teaching and Learning (ITL) Resources are the product of collaboration between the HEQC and a wide range of academics based in private and public higher education institutions (HEIs). These included several academics from other countries who assisted with the project or provided advice. The 14 regional workshops at which the draft Resources were introduced and discussed in 2003 were generously hosted by public HEIs.

THE QUALITY PROMOTION AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES OF THE HEQC

The Higher Education Act (1997)¹ gives the HEQC of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) responsibility for the promotion of quality assurance (QA), in addition to the accreditation of higher education (HE) programmes and the audit of QA mechanisms of all HEIs. The HEQC's Founding Document (2001: 10) interprets the HEQC's quality promotion role, which is to:

Promote quality among constituent providers in higher education in order to facilitate the development of quality awareness and quality responsiveness in public and private provision.

The Founding Document (2001: 20) identifies two broad areas of work in recognition of the importance, in the South African context, of both promoting quality and supporting capacity development:

Capacity Development: The development and implementation of initiatives to build and strengthen the capacity for high quality provision at institutional, learning programme and individual levels; and

Quality Promotion: The development of a programme of activities to institutionalise a quality culture in higher education and the commitment to continuous quality improvement.

The HEQC established a Directorate of Quality Promotion and Capacity Development (QPCD) in order to take forward the programmes outlined above. In accordance with Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (1997),² the HE Act (1997) and the Founding Document (2001), the work of the QPCD directorate is based on two closely related principles:

- HEIs have the primary responsibility for quality and for developing effective quality management systems.
- In fulfilling its quality promotion mandate the HEQC will play a facilitating role by developing partnerships with HEIs and a broad range of stakeholders.

¹ Hereafter: HE Act (1997).

² Hereafter: White Paper (1997).

As part of its legal mandate, the HEQC has developed sets of institutional audit and programme accreditation criteria, many of which drew on earlier drafts of the Resources. However, the Resources are both broader and more detailed than the criteria, and represent what a wide spectrum of HE practitioners considers to be good practice.³ The Resources are thus not intended to correspond exactly with HEQC criteria,⁴ and they do not necessarily reflect the views of the HEQC on teaching and learning policies and practices.

THE IMPROVING TEACHING & LEARNING PROJECT

The White Paper (1997) envisages a single, coordinated HE system with a wide range of institutional and teaching and learning contexts. Sub-sectors include universities, emerging universities of technology and comprehensive universities, and a large number of diverse private HEIs.

The ITL project was initiated in 2002 to give effect to the HEQC's prioritisation of teaching and learning in the national QA systems it is implementing from 2004.⁵ A parallel project is promoting quality and building capacity in respect of research, and a Good Practice Guide on the Quality Management of Research (forthcoming in 2005) will be available on the CHE website. A key objective of the ITL project is to provide HEIs with resources for the improvement of teaching and learning – resources that they, as individual institutions and via regional and national networks, may reproduce and use or adapt and develop further, as appropriate.

A related objective of the ITL project is to promote the development, by HEIs, of internal systems and practices that will effect and sustain improvements of teaching and learning at an institutional level. This includes the quality management systems that are the main focus of HEQC institutional audits. At the level of programmes, the project aims to support the development of systems that will enable HEIs to meet and go beyond HEQC programme accreditation requirements.

A working group⁶ was appointed in 2002 with members drawn from Academic Development, Curriculum Development and Staff Development units across the spectrum of South African HEIs. The working group first undertook a scoping exercise in order to define the focus of the work and its conceptual underpinnings. A Needs and Capacity Analysis⁷ was also undertaken in a selected sample of 12 institutions. The findings identified the following as key areas for capacity development in South African public HE:

³ While the criteria are focused on achieving minimum standards, the Resources are aimed at supporting development that goes beyond the minimum.

⁴ This is discussed more concretely below, in the section on Relationship of the Resources to the HEQC's Institutional Audit and Programme Accreditation Systems.

⁵ The systems, which are related, are: institutional audit, programme accreditation, self-accreditation and national reviews. See the CHE website for details: www.che.ac.za.

⁶ The members of the working group, consultative panel and reference group, as well as other contributors, are listed in the Appendix.

⁷ D'Andrea, Gosling and Scott (2002).

- The transition from school to HE;
- Curriculum development;
- Language, numeracy and higher level cognitive development; and
- Professional development relating to teaching and learning and quality assurance.

To varying degrees the Resources address the above areas, either directly as in the case of curriculum or staff development, or less directly in the case of 'transition from school to HE', through Resource No. 4 on *Student Development & Support*. Areas such as assessment might fall within a broad definition of 'curriculum development' but are allocated a separate Resource because they require specific attention.

Once members of the working group had produced draft *Guides to Good Practice*, the project ran a consultative panel for each of the Guides. Students and senior academics and academic managers⁸ with expertise in the focus area under consideration were invited to share their expertise and to comment on the project's work-in-progress. The rationale was to elicit feedback from the perspective of those who would need to use the Guides for internal review and for improving teaching and learning. A reference group comprising national and international experts was also asked to comment on the Guides, as were members of the HEQC Board. On the basis of the comments received, the Guides were revised and submitted to the HEQC for approval and internal discussion. Thereafter they were used as resources by the HEQC for the development of many of its criteria for institutional audit and programme accreditation. The Guides have since been edited and renamed *Improving Teaching and Learning (ITL) Resources*.

As part of its quality promotion and capacity development work, the HEQC ran 14 regional workshops late in 2003 to introduce these resources to HEIs and to obtain feedback. All the public HEIs and a number of private HEIs sent teams of up to ten people to these workshops, which included the sharing of good practice and developing teaching and learning improvement plans. Participants took the draft resources back to their institutions. On the basis of feedback from the workshops, the Resources were edited once more. Given that these Resources are provided as guides, to be adapted to local conditions and disciplinary contexts at the discretion of academics and academic managers, it is envisaged that they will continue evolving. In reproducing, adapting, using and developing these Resources further in their practice contexts, academic users will be adding value to these existing ITL Resources.

⁸ The names of all those who contributed to the development of the Resources are included in Appendix 1.

AN APPROACH TO QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

Quality management includes arrangements for QA, quality monitoring, quality development and quality support (including sustainability). Each of these elements needs to be evaluated by HEIs in respect of their mission, in relation to inputs, processes, outputs and impact.⁹ The position taken by the working group was that the main focus of any QA system for HE should be on continuous improvement of the quality of student learning. The HEQC has developed an approach to institutional audits and programme accreditation that recognises that in any QA system there is a complex relationship between improvement and accountability, which carries both risks and possibilities. On the one hand, both quality management systems and accountability should be developed, and linked in ways that enhance rather than undermine the capacity and freedom to make academic judgments. On the other hand, there is the need to ensure that basic systems are in place, consistently within and across HEIs, to ensure the rights of students to an acceptable level of quality learning and teaching. The HEQC has developed an integrated national QA system, with programme accreditation based on minimum standards, and institutional audits having a development focus. It should be noted, however, that both systems have strong accountability and development elements and they seek to link quality to issues of equity, redress, access, social justice and development.

Actual improvements in quality depend substantially on the linking of quality management to planning and resource allocation at all levels of an HEI. This principle is built into the HEQC's institutional audit and programme accreditation criteria. As advocated in the Accreditation Framework document, at the level of departments and programmes the findings of self-evaluations need to be sufficiently diagnostic to lead to concrete and detailed plans for improvements in teaching and learning practice. Another implication is that the implementation of improvement plans will depend in part on reflective practitioners having a sufficient understanding of learning; in other words, that HEI staff themselves will need to be involved in developing an empirical and theoretical base to inform their improvement of teaching and learning.

⁹ See the HEQC's institutional audit framework document and criteria documents, also available on the CHE website.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE RESOURCES TO THE HEQC'S INSTITUTIONAL AUDITS AND PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION SYSTEMS

The HEQC has published the criteria to be used for its external evaluations. These criteria are contained in the HEQC's institutional audit and programme accreditation documents (2004). In drawing up these criteria, the HEQC drew on earlier drafts of the Resources as one source of information, although the Resources are more detailed and discursive than the criteria documents:

- Resource No. 1, Resource No. 2 and Resource No. 5 relate closely to the HEQC's audit criteria on teaching and learning, and programme accreditation criteria on programme planning, design and management.
- Resource No. 7 relates to the audit criteria for postgraduate education.
- Aspects of all seven Resources speak to the HEQC's criteria for programme accreditation. However, an important distinction is that the Resources deal with good practices while the programme accreditation criteria are based on minimum standards.

In including Suggested Good Practice Descriptors alongside Evaluative Questions, the Resources provide suggestions for what could serve as indicators of good practice. By using the quality cycle (planning – implementing – reviewing – improving) as an underlying framework for the suggested Evaluative Questions and their indicators (Suggested Good Practice Descriptors), the Resources set up ideal models of good practice. As already emphasised, it is important not to lose sight of the *ideal* nature of these models; they are systematic representations of patterns among variables – simplifications of the 'messy realities' and 'situated practices' found on the ground.

PURPOSES OF THE RESOURCES, AND THEIR INTENDED TARGET AUDIENCES

One specific purpose of these Resources is that they should be used by HEIs alongside HEQC criteria when developing their internal quality management systems, including self-evaluation and review mechanisms. Several HEIs have used earlier drafts of the Resources to improve their self-evaluation systems and instruments. In other cases, academics have used the draft Resources to inform the development or redesigning of specific programmes. From the HEQC's perspective, the Resources serve to remind those who conduct institutional audits and programme evaluations of the complexities of learning and teaching issues. Their ongoing development is part of building a sense of what is current best practice in our understanding of quality.

As mentioned, the Resources aim to set out 'ideal types' or models of 'good practice' for the management and QA of teaching and learning. The models are intentionally heuristic,

illuminating and illustrative. The intention is to set up common reference or starting points for institutions to use in developing and refining their own self-evaluation instruments. A significant audience is thus senior and middle managers, programme directors (or equivalent) and expert personnel such as those who work in QA, academic development units, the library, student development, staff development and other academic services.

The Resources, while generic, are also intended to be used individually and collectively by academics, and in such cases need to be mediated creatively as appropriate to academics' contexts, specific disciplines and needs.

In partnerships with institutions, relevant professional associations¹⁰ and student organisations, the HEQC has initiated a project to promote quality literacy among students and a major focus is on teaching and learning. One objective is to raise levels of awareness of quality issues among prospective students so that they can make informed decisions. Another objective is for HE students generally to become aware and engaged in terms of the quality of teaching and learning and their rights and responsibilities in this regard. Student representatives on bodies such as the Senate could use the Resources to deepen their understanding of teaching and learning issues. Course and faculty representatives could similarly use the Resources to engage more effectively and constructively in the QA and improvement of teaching and learning.

It is expected that, for merging and restructuring institutions, the Resources could be used to provide starting points for deliberation around the establishment of new policies and systems for teaching and learning and the QA thereof. In its guidelines for merging institutions, the Department of Education (DoE, 2003: 44) provides the following advice:

The Quality Assurance unit (of a merging institution) will need to attend to the development of policy in key target areas such as teaching and learning. The implementation of good practice at the teaching–learning interface is critical to institutional quality and equity of outcomes. Merging institutions would be well advised to establish policies in the primary fields of curriculum development and review, the evaluation of teaching and courses and the assessment of student learning. These will be taken into account in the HEQC audit.

However, these Resources are not intended to be prescriptive, nor are they comprehensive or exhaustive. Owing to the contingent, context-dependent nature of teaching and learning, the Resources cannot pretend to be directly applicable to any particular situation on the ground. They are also not intended to be applied literally or rigidly to specific practices. In short, it is hoped that the Resources will function as useful *guides*, to be contextualised and adapted to specific institutional, departmental, disciplinary and individual needs, priorities and situations.

¹⁰ One such association is the National Association of Student Development Officers (NASDEV).

SCOPE OF THE RESOURCES

In selecting key focus areas of the provision of teaching and learning in HE, the HEQC has attempted to cover all stages of the quality cycle plus key value-adding or transformatory aspects of provision. The following Resources, along with this *Introduction*, have been conceptualised to be used in conjunction with one another:

- Resource No. 1: *Programme Planning, Design & Management*
- Resource No. 2: *Programme & Course Review*
- Resource No. 3: *Access & Admissions*
- Resource No. 4: *Student Development & Support*
- Resource No. 5: *The Assessment of Student Learning*
- Resource No. 6: *Staff Development*
- Resource No. 7: *Postgraduate Research & Supervision.*

The attempts of the working group to articulate what might be considered 'good practice' in teaching and learning were limited in a number of ways. First, the expert group was aware that such attempts have been carried out from within the members' own limited knowledge, perspectives, contexts, interests and values. The interests and values on which assumptions about good practice are based are likely to be contested. Second, 'good practice' is contingent, context-dependent and defies generic description. If these Resources are to be useful at all, those who use them must feel free to reinterpret and re-describe them and make them their own. The Resources are not discipline-specific, and it is particularly important that they be owned, mediated and adapted by subject specialists.

It is noteworthy that there is no Resource on Teaching Approaches, Methods and Delivery. After some debate, the working group decided that, given that this area is particularly context- and discipline-dependent, it would be inappropriate to attempt a generic typification of 'good teaching practice' that is applicable to all contexts. Rather, the working group decided to explain its view of the nature of teaching and learning (see Discussion, and Suggested Reading, below), and also included a number of principles for 'good teaching practice' in the Resources, where appropriate. The view of the group is that these principles should be interpreted and applied appropriately by professional educators to different disciplinary and institutional contexts.

Other omissions from the Resources include more specialised aspects of educational provision, such as distance education, service learning, e-learning, experiential learning, short course provision, library services and the recognition of prior learning (RPL). There already exist national quality-related initiatives in respect of several of these areas, and the HEQC's approach is to encourage relevant organisations and specialists to debate and disseminate good practice. The HEQC is in the process of developing further materials in some of these areas and, in accordance with its usual practice, will involve practitioners and relevant bodies in this work.

FORMAT OF THE RESOURCES

Each of the ITL Resources is structured as follows:

- The **FOCUS AREA** describes the scope of the Resource, indicates the levels at which it applies (institutional, programme or course/ module) and the moments of the quality cycle it addresses (planning, implementing, monitoring or improving). Given that the boundaries between the focus areas are not always clear-cut, links with other, closely-related, Resources are also pointed out.
- The **RATIONALE** develops an argument, with reference to the current policy context, as to why a particular area of learning and teaching is significant and why it should receive attention in respect of self-evaluation and other quality assurance and improvement processes.
- The **DISCUSSION** section was written largely by Kathy Lockett, who coordinated the working group, and it reflects the debates, theories and current contextual issues that emerged in their discussions. It should be noted that the Discussion does not necessarily reflect the policies, views or practices of the HEQC. The intention of this section is to deepen thinking about improving teaching and learning by encouraging debate and discussion.
- The **EVALUATIVE QUESTIONS** are intended to provide prompts or lines of enquiry into the essential elements of the practice under consideration.
- Each Evaluative Question is 'answered' by statements or **SUGGESTED GOOD PRACTICE DESCRIPTORS**. These attempt to describe or indicate, in a generic and idealised manner, 'good practice' as it is widely understood in the current HE context.
- The **SUGGESTED SOURCES OF DATA FOR SELF-EVALUATION & REVIEW**¹¹ provide suggestions for where documented evidence might be found or gathered in order to answer the Evaluative Questions in an evaluation. As far as possible, use should be made of information that HEIs already gather for other purposes. It should be noted that the data sources suggested are limited to documented information. Obviously, the process of an internal review or external evaluation will generate other types of evidence from meetings, interviews, observations, and so on, which will serve to triangulate with the evidence documented in the review reports that HEIs generate to meet internal and external requirements.
- **ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS** are listed.
- **A GLOSSARY OF TERMS** is provided.
- **REFERENCES & SUGGESTED READING LISTS** are provided. Suggestions for further reading are indicative and are largely confined to accessible literature that might be appropriate for staff development.

¹¹ Evidence tables for the institutional audit and programme accreditation criteria are under development and will be published by the HEQC in the near future.

DISCUSSION

For practitioners to be reflective, scholarly and innovative, they need to engage in robust debates that are theoretically informed. **Kathy Luckett**, the coordinator of the working group, was asked to write this section so as to reflect on issues discussed by the working group in the course of developing the first draft of the Resources.

The views and ideas put forward in the following discussion do not necessarily reflect the policies, views or practices of the HEQC.

This discussion is intended to introduce and problematise three issues that challenged the ITL project's working group in the process of developing the Resources. First the working group discussed the nature of teaching and learning in HE. Secondly it looked at some of the challenges related to implementing change in HE, and thirdly it discussed how outcomes-based education (OBE) might be applied to HE, given that OBE is a significant element in the South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

THE NATURE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING GOOD TEACHING PRACTICE

Historically, the primary function of universities has developed from being institutions for teaching (in the Middle Ages), to being institutions for research (post-Humboldt), to currently being institutions for learning (which includes both teaching and research). The idea that HEIs should be places of learning is not new. But what is increasingly of concern in the 'knowledge society' is the question of what *kind* of learning is taking place. In keeping with a conceptualisation of quality as transformation, the ITL working group suggests that one of the central concerns of HEIs in South Africa should be the enhancement of 'transformative learning'. The broader implications of this are discussed below.

Given that teaching is not an end in itself, but exists to bring about learning, it is not surprising that academics tend to teach (implicitly or explicitly) according to how they think learning happens. Traditional approaches to teaching in HE have assumed that the presentation of content (usually via lectures) is sufficient for learning to occur. But increasingly this assumption is being questioned. In his well-known book, *Learning to Teach in Higher Education*, Ramsden reflects on the relationship between teaching and learning:

The best way to improve teaching is to inquire into the effects of one's teaching on student learning ... The nature of teaching is context-related, uncertain and always improvable. Effective teaching refuses to take its effect on students for granted. It sees the relation between teaching and learning as problematic, uncertain and relative. Good teaching is open to change; it involves constantly trying to find out what the effects of instruction are on learning, and modifying that instruction in the light of evidence collected. (1992: 102)

However, teaching is more than a craft. It is also a profession. This means that it should be knowledge or theory-based:

The professional authority of the academic-as-scholar rests on a body of knowledge. The professional authority of the academic-as-teacher should rest on a body of didactic knowledge. This comprises knowledge of how the subject he/she professes is best learned and taught. (Ramsden, 1992: 9)

There now exists an extensive body of knowledge not only on theories of learning and cognition but also on learning in HE, and specifically on the teaching and learning of particular disciplines in HE. These theories offer particular definitions and explanations of learning and, in particular, transformative learning. According to Bowden and Marton:

The most important thing we can do in order to develop, raise or assure the quality of the learning produced in higher education is to reveal the kind of learning we should bring about, the ways of seeing we think it is important for students to develop. (1998: 16)

Most theories that understand learning to be transformative are based on constructivist notions of cognitive development. In terms of such notions, students are understood to build and change their existing meaning and knowledge structures in order to assimilate or accommodate new knowledge. The emphasis is on the student actively constructing knowledge for him/herself through learning activities or 'performances of understanding' and through social interaction or mediation by the lecturer. Some examples of definitions of learning within this school of thought are quoted below:

Learning is a qualitative change in a person's view of reality; it involves conceptual change on the part of the learner. (Ramsden, 1992)

Learning is the internalisation and transformation of social tools of thought which are communicated to the learner through social interaction and instructional conversation. (Tharp and Gallimore, 1988)

Learning is the reconstruction of elements of one's meaning production system which are collective and socially and culturally constructed. This also involves acquiring usage of unfamiliar discourse. (Northedge, 1994).

Many influential adult educationists understand learning to be transformative. For example, while Mezirow's theory of 'perspective transformation' (in Merriam, 1993) suggests that learning occurs as a result of 'critical reflection' on prior assumptions, Freire's critical pedagogy uses 'conscientisation' (in Merriam, 1993) to change the way adult learners see the world and act on it. 'Phenomenography' (see Entwistle, 1988) has contributed an additional perspective on learning in HE, namely, that how students perceive particular learning task demands largely determines whether their approach to learning will be 'deep', 'strategic' or 'surface'. It is only the deep approach to learning that results in transformative learning, for it is characterised by a focus on underlying meaning, the use of a well-structured knowledge base, relating new knowledge to old knowledge, and working conceptually and relationally.

Theories of learning such as these suggest that 'good teaching practice' can facilitate 'deep' approaches to learning and enable students to participate in actively building and transforming their cognitive and knowledge structures. The following principles of 'good

teaching practice' are suggested as a means to this end:

- Making clear to students the purposes and intended outcomes of the learning task;
- Achieving 'curriculum alignment' – i.e. the learning outcomes, selection of content, and teaching and assessment methods all support one another (are coherent and aligned);
- Modelling the epistemic principles and discursive conventions of the discipline and making explicit 'the rules of the game';
- Facilitating the development of students' cognitive structures by 'lending' them one's own cognitive structure, conceptual anchors and strategies, to assist their thinking and acting;
- Developing an appropriate motivational context so that the learning is meaningful to students;
- Creating powerful learning environments that focus on student activity, interaction, variation in task demands and the application of knowledge to real world problems in order to facilitate the building of cognitive structures;
- Providing opportunities for students to test, extend, reflect on and revise their ideas through performances of understanding;
- Questioning to prompt students to undertake cognitive operations that they would not produce unassisted;
- Getting students to make connections with previous knowledge and maximising their awareness of their own knowledge construction;
- Assisting students to build meta-cognitive knowledge about their own thinking processes, approaches to learning and learning needs; and
- Changing students' ways of seeing and thinking about the world.

The constructivist view of teaching for transformative (deep) learning is summed up by Bradbury:

The task for mediation is, therefore, to represent tasks to students in such a way that their epistemic character, which is usually implicit or covert, is heightened or made salient. ... In terms of this approach the locus of the problem which must be overcome, is neither the learner nor the teacher; rather our attention should be focused on innovation within the curriculum and the mediated interaction which occurs between learner and task. The teaching-learning process needs to be constructed in such a way as to modify and change, not just the content of what the learner knows, but rather, to create conditions for restructuring and reorganizing information that will produce a new way of cognizing reality. (Bradbury, 2000: 72)

It is interesting to note that several of the principles for 'good teaching practice' that are listed above have been confirmed by empirical studies based on student opinion data. Such principles include:

- Enthusiasm for one's subject and the ability to motivate students to learn;
- Respect for students and sensitivity to their levels of understanding;

- Appropriate expectations and work-loads for students;
- Competence in one's field;
- Sound preparation, clarity of course requirements and good organisation of the material;
- Clarity of explanation and the ability to support discussion;
- Encouragement of independent thought in students; and
- Fair assessment procedures and constructive feedback. (Webbstock, 1999)

However, excellent teachers have never operated in isolation. Good teaching practice needs to be developed and supported by an institutional environment and culture that are conducive to learning. Discussed below is how managers might work to create the conditions for transformative learning through the formulation and implementation of institutional policy.

POLICY-MAKING AND THE CHALLENGE OF IMPLEMENTING CHANGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

At this stage of the discussion, it might be useful to summarise various approaches with regard to management models and the assumptions they make about policy-making and implementation.

Traditional approaches to policy-making have assumed a rational-purposive, stagist model, in which policy gets formulated, implemented and evaluated. This somewhat naïve approach views policy-making as a top-down intervention, based on causal social laws and with predictable consequences that can be empirically verified. It can be argued that the assumption that policy is unproblematically implemented is based on an invalid theory of change. For example, such a theory assumes, on the part of the implementers, adequate time and resources, complete acceptance, perfect communication and perfect obedience. This traditional approach is mirrored in a top-down management style that assumes that organisational policy and planning stand in a deterministic relation to implementation. Such 'scientific management' tends to focus on efficiency, and assumes that the conditions of implementation are fixed and stable within a closed system.

More recent **interpretive approaches** to policy-making would suggest that policy reforms are akin to 'reasoned arguments' or 'social transactions' (Parsons, 1995). Policy-making is understood to be a process of interaction between goals, intentions, contexts and local interests and perceptions. It is viewed as an evolutionary process that should include democratic deliberation as policy gets re-made in the process of implementation. Interpretive approaches to management tend to view organisations as cultures, socially constructed and maintained by everyday practices, rituals and symbols. Such approaches emphasise the importance of values, images and meaning-making in the change process and argue that organisational change requires changes in organisational culture, identity and discourse.

By contrast, **critical approaches** to policy-making and management emphasise the conflicts and power struggles involved in change processes. They suggest that wherever power is exercised there is resistance. One critical approach is **neo-Marxism**, which understands policy as constructing social reality to suit the interests of the dominant group or class; and thus such approaches question the claim that policy, law or governments can guarantee freedom, democracy or quality for all.

In approaches to policy-making that could be characterised as **post-modernist**, there is a denial of the idea that rationality can be disinterested – and policy discourses get deconstructed to prove this.

As mentioned earlier, a key challenge facing leaders of HEIs is how to go about implementing policy that will create the conditions for transformative learning to occur. One means of attempting to do this is the development and implementation of institutional 'Teaching and Learning Strategies'. This practice is common in Holland, the United States of America (USA), Australia and the United Kingdom (UK) and is government-funded in the last two countries. The idea of a Teaching and Learning Strategy is also currently being implemented in several South African HEIs.

A Teaching and Learning Strategy is essentially a set of specific goals, priorities and targets set at institutional level within a specified time frame for the management and improvement of teaching and learning. It includes setting out responsibilities, resources and review and evaluation mechanisms. It is usually aligned to the institutional mission, strategic plans and quality management system.

In the UK the format for Learning and Teaching Strategies funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) includes the following categories:

- Context (what already exists and what needs changing);
- Process of creation (how 'buy-in' by academics was achieved);
- Goals;
- Targets;
- Strategies to address institutional culture;
- Curriculum development;
- Learning–teaching–assessment practice;
- Quality assurance;
- Quality enhancement;
- Infrastructural changes;
- Implementation; and
- Monitoring and evaluation.

However, when it comes to implementation, it is widely agreed that HEIs are some of the most complex organisations in existence (Clarke, 1983; Kells, 1999; Becher, 1999). HEIs are key organisations of civil society and, in the West, have survived and resisted the

incursions of both church and state over centuries. While the very idea of the university presupposes debate, change and the discovery of new ways of knowing and doing, the systems, structures and cultures of HEIs are notorious for being resistant to change. According to Kells (1999), the reasons for this include:

- HEIs serve multiple stakeholders and therefore have multiple purposes and goals, which are usually poorly stated and attract only minimal or nominal support from academics. This is because there is an inbuilt tension for academics between loyalty to their disciplines or fields of study, and loyalty to their institutions.
- As 'loosely coupled systems', 'networks of networks' or 'constellations of communities of practice', HEIs are characterised by the decentralisation of power and an extensive and complicated delegation of authority, particularly with respect to the core functions of teaching and research.
- The nature of governance in HEIs is a messy mixture of collegial, managerial, bureaucratic and political modes and, as a consequence, decision-making procedures are often fluid, complex and inconclusive. Governance is also often resisted by academics in their pursuit of disciplinary, departmental or individualistic goals.
- The management of HEIs is often hindered by the absence of timely and useful information about the organisation, and limited mechanisms to gather such information.
- It is difficult to measure the achievement of goals in HE, particularly with respect to teaching and learning, because there are not only numerous variables that cannot be isolated but also few, if any, direct cause and effect relationships.
- Academics are socialised to be single-minded, critical and individualistic. They are typically distrustful of authority and resistant to (perceived) infringements of their academic freedom. (Adapted from Kells, 1999: 301-302)

The characterisation of HEIs above would suggest that rational-purposive, top-down management models (which seem to be assumed in much of the discussion on Teaching and Learning Strategies) are generally counter to HE cultures and so are unlikely to be successfully implemented. Likewise, implementation processes are seldom linear or sequential, making it difficult to pinpoint the causes of problems. According to Trowler and Knight (2002), the conceptualisation of institutional change in HEIs is usually carried out simplistically (following the traditional approach outlined earlier) and is therefore often based on wrong assumptions about the nature of the organisations and the process of change. For example, it is often assumed that HEIs are culturally homogeneous and well-coordinated organisations; it is also then commonly assumed that strong leadership, tough, top-down management and the effective use of control and measurement techniques will effect change. But in the rather messier, imperfect and dynamic context of HEIs as characterised above, such approaches to change management would clearly be inappropriate.

Analysing the weaknesses of institutional Teaching and Learning Strategies in HEIs in the UK, Gibbs (2001) makes the following observations:

- Some strategies have remained policies on paper and are unlikely to change everyday teaching practices because of lack of attention to change mechanisms and processes.
- Initially many HEIs focused on simply doing 'more with less' but retained traditional teaching and learning approaches.

- Other HEIs realised the need to change teaching and learning approaches, but focused on changing the practices of individual lecturers. Such an approach has failed to develop critical mass and to effect change to institutional teaching and learning conditions and cultures, and has thus had minimal impact.
- Institutional factors that constrain teaching innovations on the ground and that typically are not addressed include timetabling; the allocation of teaching time for contact hours but not for curriculum development; assessment regulations and practices; the layout and design of classrooms; and lack of support and incentives for innovators (e.g. lack of funding for research into teaching).
- Many Teaching and Learning Strategies are not based on explicit theories of learning.
- Many Teaching and Learning Strategies fail to link directly into the 'quality gaps' identified in evaluation findings.

By contrast, following Kells (1999) and Trowler and Knight (2003), the following interpretive approaches to implementing change strategies in HEIs are put forward here. Given that power in HEIs is distributed and that change gets reinterpreted and socially constituted in locally contingent ways in particular 'communities of practice', it is recommended that the focus for strategies for change be the *academic department or programme team*. Managers should expect diverse results from change processes because those who carry out the change need to develop psychological ownership of the process – usually through collective exploration, negotiation and bargaining. This means that successful change strategies need to be closely aligned to the norms and values of those who must implement them. Change strategies need to be supported by leadership, a sustainable resource base and good infrastructure. Change strategies also require adequate levels of internal motivation and leaders who attend to people's feelings as well as using rational argument to persuade them to change.

According to Kells, the quality of support for the implementation process and the degree of discretion granted to those implementing change on the ground appear to have a marked effect on the outcome. He warns that,

Unless the institution is ready, unless a significant number of formal and informal leaders are interested in using the proposed scheme to accomplish high priority items on their agendas, one should not proceed with the intervention. Unless the key working professionals are comfortable with the method because they have helped to design its local implementation, [...] and unless one takes the time to accomplish these things in ways attuned to local needs and rhythms, very little will happen, or that which is introduced will fail in such complex institutions. (1999: 305)

These ITL Resources could be used to stimulate debate and discussion around the formulation of Teaching and Learning Strategies. Such strategies can serve to give authorisation, resources and coordination to efforts to improve teaching and learning across HEIs. The working group recommends the development of institutional Teaching and Learning Strategies, but with certain provisos. International experience suggests that if these policies are to become properly institutionalised, they need to be carefully planned, resourced and supported, integrally linked to the institution's mission and quality management system and, most importantly, collectively interpreted, developed and owned at departmental and programme level. An analysis of the departmental culture and context

should be undertaken, and the real concerns of academics taken into account. Teaching and Learning Strategies should also be underpinned by valid theories of learning. Furthermore, given the current overwhelming demands of the state's restructuring requirements for South African HEIs, it is important that Teaching and Learning Strategies prioritise a few do-able goals within realisable time frames.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE DEBATE AROUND THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK AND OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION

The use of OBE as a method of curriculum design and specification and its place in the QA of teaching and learning in HE is debated internationally, but it has a particular relevance to South Africa given the nature of the NQF.

The NQF was established in 1995 in order to provide South Africa with a coherent qualification system that would underpin transformation by allowing effective progression and articulation and the integration of education and training, as well as by supporting principles such as lifelong learning and the acquisition of critical generic skills and competences. While there was broad support for these objectives from all sectors of South African society, it became evident that the NQF would have to take account of the particular features of the general education and training and further education and training (FET) bands on one hand, and those of the HE band on the other. Thus when HEIs submitted their qualifications in an outcomes-based format to SAQA for interim registration in 2000, they could register whole qualifications and qualifications based on unit standards, as well as unit standards as originally conceptualised. This allowed HEIs to deal with meaningful units of curriculum and it avoided the inordinate fragmentation and atomisation of knowledge and the need to register countless unit standards on the NQF. Academics had mixed reactions to the NQF and the related national standards-setting system. While there were perceived and actual benefits, such as more attention being focused on programme design and outcomes, academics also encountered perceived and actual difficulties, ranging from the organisational to the conceptual.

The HEQC is the accredited 'umbrella' Education and Training Quality Assurer (ETQA) for HE, responsible to SAQA for QA for the entire higher education and training (HET) band and it is committed to working within national policy frameworks, including the NQF.

In 2001 the CHE produced *A New Academic Policy for Programmes and Qualifications Discussion Document*¹² (released by the Department of Education in 2002), which was an attempt to make the SAQA–NQF system more appropriate to the needs of HE. In doing so, the NAP proposed an articulation column between general formative qualifications and career-focused qualifications, in order to provide a 'catch-up' space in the curriculum for students moving across the framework and for those who do not meet formal entry requirements. The NAP also proposed a 'nested approach' to standards-setting. The 'design-down' approach was adopted; namely, that each layer of the standards-setting 'Russian doll' would inform the standard nested within. What this was intended to achieve

¹² Hereafter: the NAP (2002).

was that national standards – such as level descriptors, qualification types and the generic qualification standards registered on the NQF – would inform the design of a set of nested qualifications, which would therefore not need to be registered individually on the NQF.

In 2001 the Departments of Education and Labour set up a study team to review the implementation of the NQF. In its report, the study team recommended a reconfiguration of SAQA's roles and functions, with additional standards-setting responsibilities for the CHE. The study team also emphasised the need to build relationships of trust between the different institutions of education and training in South Africa. In 2003, in response to the study team's report, the Departments of Education and Labour produced further proposals for discussion, in a consultative document entitled *An Interdependent National Qualifications Framework System*, which proposed a third qualifications ladder for trade, occupational and professional qualifications.

However in July 2004, the DoE put out the *Higher Education Qualifications Framework*,¹³ which returned to the original single ladder NQF. Much of the earlier NAP document has been retained, such as the 'nested' approach to qualifications and generic level descriptors, but the proposal to have separate general and formative career-focused qualifications with an articulation route between them has been dropped. Although at the time of publishing these resources the HEQF had not yet been finalised, it nevertheless reflects the current position of the DoE. The draft policy

[...] provides the basis for integrating all higher education qualifications into the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and its structures for standards generation and quality assurance. It improves the coherence of the higher education system and facilitates the articulation of qualifications, thereby enhancing the flexibility of the system and enabling students to move more efficiently over time from one programme to another as they pursue their academic or professional careers.

The new qualifications framework establishes common parameters and criteria for qualifications design and facilitates the comparability of qualifications across the system. Within such common parameters programme diversity and innovation are encouraged. Higher education institutions will have ample scope to design educational offerings to realise their different visions, missions and plans and to meet the varying needs of the clients and communities they serve.

The development of the NQF has stimulated debate around a number of curriculum and teaching and learning issues. Some of these issues are outlined below, together with references to critiques offered by some academics, as an indication of the nature of the debate.

1. The Integration of Education and Training

One of the goals of the South African NQF is to integrate education and training. An assumption made by some advocates of this idea (often using an industrial training model) is that different forms of learning are interchangeable and transferable and that their equivalences can be measured and calibrated on a qualifications framework. Some educationists and policy analysts from the HE sector (Ensor, in Ensor and Ogude,

¹³ *Higher Education Qualifications Framework: Draft for Discussion*, Ministry of Education (2004). Hereafter: HEQF.

2001; Morrow 2001; Shalem, Allais and Steinberg, forthcoming) have objected that this assumption is incorrect, because different forms of knowledge are based on different epistemologies and knowledge acquisition is context-dependent. Furthermore, Ensor (in Ensor and Ogude, 2001) points out that education and training are based on different modes of social organisation, which cannot be regarded as equivalent. Distinguishing between education and training, Ensor argues that educational institutions are set aside to educate; traditionally they were considered to be a 'public good' and education was considered intrinsically worthwhile. Education is provided by expert educators who deal with hierarchical structures of knowledge. On the other hand, training takes an instrumental view of knowledge (it is always for something else), and knowledge in training has a flat, segmented structure, which is suited to the unit standards method of packaging and specifying the curriculum (see below).

The above critique points to the need to deepen our understanding of the different social logics of education and training and of the relationship between them, especially when conceptualising their integration at the level of HE.

2. Separation of Educational Functions

As indicated above, the NQF system sets up separate systems for the following tasks:

1. Curriculum design (standards-setting);
2. Educational provision or delivery; and
3. Curriculum evaluation (QA).

It is only for the second function that responsibility is delegated to 'providers' or HEIs, while responsibility for the conceptual work involved in the first and third functions is delegated to groups of representative stakeholders, centrally appointed: National Standards Bodies (NSBs) and Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs) for standards-setting, and ETQAs for QA.

Some academics have criticised simplistic statements of learning outcomes, particularly at HE level, because learning is specified in a decontextualised form. The critique is that this ignores the social and institutional nature of learning and the role of human agency in learning, which is always socially and culturally mediated. The latter understandings of learning imply that no amount of detailed specification of statements of learning outcomes, assessment criteria and so on will enable 'outsiders' to fully understand the intentions or effects of learning (Shalem, Allais and Steinberg, forthcoming). That is to say, it is only 'insiders' – disciplinary or professional experts – who can provide the content and context required to make statements of learning outcomes and assessment criteria meaningful. And this would suggest that, at the level of complexity demanded by HE and professional practice, primary responsibility for the design and evaluation of curricula should remain in the hands of those who teach – members of disciplinary and professional communities of practice that share a common epistemic culture, norms and discourse.

However, the problem remains of the need for the HE sector to try, albeit within the limitations of language and inter-subjectivities, to describe its curricula to external stakeholders.

3. Unit Standards and Outcomes-based Approaches

In recent decades, the university curriculum has been widely criticised for being constructed around the nature of the disciplines and for its isolation from and irrelevance to the world of work. In the quest for greater transparency and accountability in education, HEIs have been required to make explicit the knowledge and skills that they intend students to develop. In attempting to fulfil this requirement, HEIs have translated competence-based approaches from training to education. The competence-based approach is derived from the task analysis of an occupation – an analysis that leads to the explicit and precise description of observable workplace performances (performance standards). Learning outcomes are then derived from these workplace performances, as in turn are assessment criteria, range statements and so on. In SAQA's NQF system, these specifications were to be registered on the NQF as unit standards. As mentioned above, in 2000 SAQA made a concession to HE to register 'whole qualifications' – as opposed to unit standards – on the NQF. However, the SAQA system was originally designed using unit standards as its basic building blocks, and this methodology of curriculum design had an influence on the HE sector.

The assumptions underlying the unit standard methodology are that knowledge can be broken up into small, discrete units described primarily by learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Where, by whom and how these units get taught and learnt is irrelevant to the quality of learning. Instead, national systems of standards-setting and QA linked to assessment and based on the outcomes-based method are established to ensure the consistency and reliability of quality across the system (Ensor, in Ensor and Ogude, 2001). In such an approach to curriculum design the learning outcomes stand in a privileged relation to other elements of the curriculum and are supposed to determine its content, teaching methods and assessment. This idea is linked to the 'design-down method', whereby the final, exit-level outcomes of a programme or qualification are meant to determine the learning outcomes of smaller units of learning (unit standards or modules) that a student undertakes in order to get there. This logic is built into the 'nested approach' to qualifications design, whereby the more generic standards (e.g. level descriptors) are supposed to determine the more specific standards nested within them (e.g. qualification types and then generic qualification standards), which in turn stand in a prescriptive relation to specific programme and module designs.

Critiques from the HE sector of this methodology, especially in its simplistic 'strong' form, have pointed out that it is generally incompatible with the discrete and hierarchically structured nature of disciplinary knowledge and, to a lesser extent, with the disciplinary clusters that are found in professional fields of knowledge. In a collection of unit standards, learning is assumed to be additive, the parts equalling the whole. In HE, however – which is supposed to prepare students for an unknown rather than a known future – learning outcomes are often experienced as over-prescriptive and cumbersome, leaving little space in the curriculum for innovation, creativity and excellence. Furthermore, outcomes-based approaches have been criticised for marginalising both discipline content and the process of learning. Shalem, Allais and Steinberg (forthcoming) insist that, in considering and judging the quality of learning, all of the following need to be taken into account: the content of the curriculum; its conceptual frameworks; its order and logic of acquisition; and the context and process of learning. Other critics have noted that unit standards tend

to describe objectified, decontextualised behaviours or performances that oversimplify the nature of practice (Morrow, 2001). Unit standards or statements of learning outcomes cannot account for the conceptual and theoretical frameworks (powerful ways of seeing) offered by the disciplines and professions, and which are critical for transformative learning to take place. Shalem, Allais and Steinberg (2004) also argue that learning requires 'cognitive distancing' from the immediacy of practice, which allows the student to locate an issue within a conceptual web and knowledge base and to see it in new or different ways.

A final critique of the outcomes-based method is its naïve view of language linked to an empiricist epistemology (Morrow, 2001). In other words, this method assumes that knowledge is simply 'out there' – transparently available for all to observe and describe objectively and precisely, through language that corresponds directly and unproblematically to reality. Such a 'correspondence' view of language underpins the assumption that any knowledge and practice can be sufficiently described in language (the unit standard) for any stakeholder to understand, whether or not s/he belongs to the community of practice concerned. However, a more sophisticated understanding of language would suggest that reality is always mediated and interpreted by language; that is, language is discursive and is linked to particular ways of seeing and talking about the world.

In conclusion, it must be pointed out that 'strong' forms of outcomes-based approaches (including the use of a unit standards format) may have led to an improvement in programme design at FET level, particularly in respect of vocational education. The impact on HE has been more uneven and has been subject to various critiques, which indicate why it is important to use the unit standards format only where appropriate. In general, 'weak' forms of outcome statements may be more appropriate in HE, particularly above NQF level 5. Whatever critiques emerge of inappropriate forms of OBE, there are good reasons as to why curriculum and programme developers need to attempt to make their aims and objectives clear to students, staff and the public. These reasons encompass issues of accountability, the efficient use of resources, social relevance and learning and teaching effectiveness.

4. Generic Skills

One of the underlying principles of the NQF is the promotion of generic skills across the curriculum offered at all levels of education. Thus every qualification is required to include the achievement of 'critical cross-field outcomes' in its design. The underlying principles are that this will develop and empower South Africans to be critical citizens, engage in lifelong learning and respond flexibly to a rapidly changing society and economy. While these principles enjoy broad support, as in the case of OBE, a number of critiques have problematised their application, particularly in respect of HE.

One critique is linked to arguments against the instrumental view that links education, including HE, directly to the employment market and specific jobs. The argument is

that the simplistic promotion of general, transferable skills cannot broaden the notion of education, as is claimed. What is being critiqued is the decontextualised depiction of such skills as problem-solving, communication, the ability to learn and work in teams and so on, and the assumption that acquiring these generic skills will allow graduates to flexibly adapt to novel situations. The empirical basis of the critique is that much educational research disputes the existence of generic, transferable skills (Ashworth and Saxton, 1990; Bowden and Marton, 1998). This suggests that skills are necessarily embedded in content and are developed primarily through experience of the professional field to which they are meant to relate. Skills are therefore not generic, because problem-solving means different things in different contexts, and they are transferred only with difficulty, even by experienced students. The importance of the acquisition of such skills is not questioned, but the critique implies that the complexity and contextualisation of the process should be taken into account particularly in respect of discipline-based professional knowledge at HE levels.

Conclusion: An Interpretive Approach to Outcomes-based Education

The HEQC, and all institutions and academics, work within national frameworks, such as the NQF, and these frameworks were broadly endorsed by wide sections of our society after lengthy consultations. The paradigm that appeared to be adopted by most members of the working group is that effective implementation of these frameworks in the HE sector requires an interpretive¹⁴ as opposed to technical¹⁵ approach. With respect to interpreting the NQF and OBE, the discussions of the working group were informed by their notion of principles underlying good practice in learning and teaching in general, and by their particular application to HE. The following captures the main points of the discussion.

1. It is important that the detail of what happens within a programme is controlled by those who teach it. Furthermore, curriculum knowledge and skills should not be understood as self-evident and given. Academics need to be assured of the authority, discursive space and discretion to deliberate in programme teams or with external peers on the nature of the curriculum and its effects on student learning. At programme level, academics – as disciplinary experts and professional educators – should continue to take responsibility for curriculum design and development; this includes selecting content, setting learning outcomes, and determining teaching–learning methods and methods of assessment. Academics should also take primary responsibility for the evaluation of the curriculum through self-evaluation. As suggested above, external evaluation should be used to validate self-evaluation and expert peers should be relied upon in this process.
2. Curriculum knowledge should be underpinned by social institutions, epistemic cultures and social networks of expert practice. Traditionally these have been located in the disciplines and professions, and different disciplines and fields have different cultures, norms and epistemic assumptions. These differences should be taken into account when designing QA systems.

¹⁴ The interpretive paradigm is informed by Habermas's practical or hermeneutic knowledge constitutive interest, which is governed by communicative rationality (see Grundy, 1987).

¹⁵ The technical paradigm is informed by Habermas's technical knowledge constitutive interest, which is governed by instrumental rationality.

3. Standards-setting and QA in HE, and the evaluation of teaching and learning in particular, should take into account the knowledge base and conceptual framing that a programme offers its students. Again this means relying on the opinions of expert peers, who are members of the community of practice under consideration, when making judgments about quality.
4. Learning outcomes should be derived from the knowledge base of the curriculum and the demands of the discipline as well as from the needs of the profession or career. They should be understood as useful planning tools to guide students and assessment procedures. However, learning outcomes should not stand in a prescriptive or deterministic relation to other elements of the curriculum. They should be used only to guide and shape pedagogy, teaching-learning activities and assessment. Assessment, in particular, requires an interpretive approach, in which professional judgment is used to make context-dependent decisions about the quality of learning achieved. In a properly aligned curriculum, all its elements, learning outcomes, content, pedagogy and assessment are mutually supportive, providing students with an optimal learning environment.
5. It follows that national standards such as level descriptors, qualification types and generic qualification standards registered on the NQF should also be used descriptively rather than prescriptively – for both curriculum design and QA; they should be used to guide and advise curriculum development and evaluation at programme level. National standards should not be used to prescribe the curriculum or to determine accreditation judgments. The system should allow space for the latter decisions to be made on the basis of context-dependent, professional judgment.
6. It should not be expected that stand-alone, generic skills be taught in the HE curriculum. Rather, the achievement of academic and professional skills should be explicitly built into the curriculum and taken into account in assessment.
7. A high quality programme should provide students with a solid knowledge base, with opportunities for conceptual development and transformation and the ability to apply this knowledge appropriately in real world contexts. The emphasis on either the knowledge base or the application to professional contexts will depend on the nature of the programme but, in either case, students should be forced to go beyond surface, rote learning of content and understand the relations between content and concepts and between content and context.

The position advocated here – of understanding curriculum from within an interpretive paradigm – has implications for how users should read and understand the set of ITL Resources. It must be reiterated that the Resources are provided as guides for self-evaluation practice, and are to be adapted to local conditions and disciplinary contexts at the discretion of academics and academic managers. The Resources are intended to be used descriptively and not prescriptively. In Resource No. 2 on *Programme & Course Review* academic and programme teams are encouraged to develop their own criteria for self-evaluation, using these and any other resources available to them. In this way self-evaluation can produce useful knowledge for reflection and improvement and contribute to curriculum innovation and creativity. The need for reflection and deliberation by those who teach should be recognised and encouraged by institutional managers as well as by the HEQC and other ETQAs in exercising their external quality assurance mandates.

ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

CHE	Council on Higher Education
CTP	Committee of Technikon Principals
DIT	Durban Institute of Technology
DoE	Department of Education
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurer
FET	Further Education and Training
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HEQF	Higher Education Qualifications Framework
HESDI	Higher Education Staff Development Initiative
HET	Higher Education and Training
ITL	Improving Teaching & Learning
MEDUNSA	Medical University of South Africa
NAP	New Academic Policy
NASDEV	National Association of Student Development Officers
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
NPHE	National Plan for Higher Education
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSB	National Standards Body
OBE	Outcomes-based Education
QA	Quality Assurance
QPCD	Quality Promotion and Capacity Development
RAU	Rand Afrikaans University
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SAUVCA	South African Universities Vice-Chancellors Association
SGB	Standards Generating Body
TSA	Technikon South Africa

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APPENDIX: CONTRIBUTORS TO THE PROJECT

In 2002 the first phase of the ITL project was led by Ms Sheila Tyeku, then HEQC Director of Quality Promotion and Capacity Development (QPCD) and managed by Ms Kathy Luckett, of the then University of Natal (now University of KwaZulu-Natal).¹⁶ Ms Nikki Groenewald of the HEQC provided organisational and administrative back-up. The second phase of the project was led by Dr John Carneson, then Acting Director of QPCD.

The HEQC would like to thank all those from the academic community who contributed to the development of the Resources, as members of the working group, the consultative panels and the reference group:

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¹⁶ Note that many of the names of HEIs have changed, owing to ongoing restructuring of the sector.

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Other Contributions	Institution
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