



Study Commissioned by the Council on Higher Education



Teaching Excellence Awards in South Africa: A National Study

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HE Monitor No 13
October 2012

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The Council on Higher Education (CHE) is an independent statutory body established by the Higher Education Act, No 101 of 1997. The CHE is the Quality Council for Higher Education, advises the Minister of Education and Training on all higher education issues and is responsible for quality assurance and promotion through the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC).

Published by:

The Council on Higher Education

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Website: <http://www.che.ac.za>

ISBN: 978-1-919856-87-2

Date of Publication: October 2012

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FOREWORD

Appreciating and rewarding excellence in teaching and learning is increasingly being seen as important in higher education. There is a widespread recognition by South African public higher education institutions that the Council on Higher Education / Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of South Africa (CHE/HELTASA) National Excellence in Teaching and Learning Awards are of value and have the potential to promote high quality teaching or impact on the culture of higher education teaching. As noted by some international writers, however, this is contingent on the broader national and institutional policy environments in which such awards take place.

Advancing quality and excellence as an integral part of the agenda for the transformation of higher education remains as much a priority in 2012 as it did in 1997. Education White Paper 3 notes that:

The pursuit of the principle of quality means maintaining and applying academic and educational standards, both in the sense of specific expectations and requirements that should be complied with, and in the sense of ideals of excellence that should be aimed at. These expectations and ideals may differ from context to context, partly depending on the specific purposes pursued. Applying the principle of quality entails evaluating services and products against set standards, with a view to improvement, renewal or progress (Education White Paper 3, 1997: 1.21).

There are different ways of assessing quality and excellence, for example, trying to measure particular standards set. These are fairly absolute and much easier to assess in competitions where one quantitative factor is being tested, as in an athletics competition such as high jump where the one who gets over the highest bar wins. In another competition, for example a floor routine in gymnastics, there is a qualitative allocation of scores for performance – aesthetic, degree of difficulty, etc. – and it is precisely here where professional difference of opinion makes the task so much more challenging.

When the CHE/HELTASA national awards were begun in 2009, it was recognised that assessing a complex activity such as higher education teaching must take into account a variety of factors:

- a) different perspectives on what ‘quality’ and ‘excellence’ in teaching mean;
- b) profound differences in the context in which the teaching happens (students, resources, programme purpose);
- c) different pedagogical and other approaches taken, from chalk and talk to the most digitally-assisted processes;
- d) the extent to which the teaching translates into quality learning (and what that might mean!);
- e) the amount of teaching undertaken over and against other academic activities;
- f) the appropriateness of the approaches taken in different disciplinary contexts.

While the awards occur in a context of a competition – and as in any competition there are always winners and losers, even though all who are nominated have a recognised level of expertise – CHE/HELTASA continues to explore ways to recognise excellence in teaching and learning, for example by having different categories of awards (as one would in film and music awards, etc.) and ensuring that the criteria do not inadvertently privilege one particular approach to or context of teaching.

Despite these and other challenges, it is important that there is some national recognition for teaching in higher education and raise the prestige value of excellence in teaching in relation to research. Many South African higher education institutions have or are in the process of instituting teaching awards alongside more long-standing research awards.

For these reasons the CHE commissioned the study to examine the existing award systems in order to learn from what is done in other national contexts and use the feedback from those involved in the current scheme to improve the national awards system. It is intended that this publication will allow higher education institution leaders, the CHE, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), academics and other stakeholders to reflect on and enhance the recognition of excellence in teaching and learning at both institutional and national levels.

The CHE is aware that the national teaching awards scheme is one mechanism to improve the quality of teaching across the higher education system. It carries an element of prestige that together with other interventions can contribute to promote higher quality teaching and learning practices at higher education institutions.

Dr Mark Hay
Executive Director: Quality Assurance

October 2012

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THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The National Teaching Excellence awards, introduced in 2009, results from a collaboration between the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa (HELTASA) and the Council on Higher Education (CHE) to raise awareness of the teaching role in higher education through the recognition of teaching excellence in South African higher education institutions. It was agreed that the awards would be conducted for three years as a pilot programme, at which point it would be reviewed.

Each year of the pilot, the aims of the award have been adjusted as a result of lessons learned from the previous year. The 2012 National Excellence in Teaching and Learning Awards (see Appendix 1) aims to:

- show support at a national level for excellence in teaching and learning in higher education;
- generate a cadre of academics who are identifiable and able to provide inspiration and leadership in teaching in their disciplines, institutions and regions;
- generate debate and public awareness about what constitutes teaching excellence.

This study was commissioned by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) to provide a report on the perceived impact of the teaching and learning awards through conducting a limited desktop review of international literature and canvassing stakeholder views of the awards, framed by the following questions:

- what criteria are used for international and national awards systems?
- what is the state of teaching and learning awards in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in South Africa, and what is their perceived impact?
- what implications does this have for the CHE/HELTASA national teaching excellence awards?
- what has been the reception of the awards nationally?

1.2 Research Design

This study has made use of a mixed methods approach comprised of the following elements:

- review of the international literature on teaching awards (processes, criteria and view on impact);
- telephonic and email survey with individuals responsible for professional development at South African public universities and selected vice-chancellors/deputy vice-chancellors;
- description of the awards project and process to date;
- analysis of key trends of award nominations/applications received;
- open-ended questionnaire to all awardees;
- open-ended questionnaire to all recipients of commendations;
- open-ended questionnaire to all unsuccessful applicants.

This study is intended to inform the decision of HELTASA, the CHE Council (at the recommendation of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the CHE) about the future of the awards and its aims. However, this report also provides as a useful reference for higher education institutions (public and private), the (DHET), academics, teaching and learning experts, academic development professionals and those interested in improving and recognising higher education teaching excellence.



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INTERNATIONAL TRENDS

2.1 Introduction

Teaching excellence awards have been in existence since 1957. They were introduced in the United States of America (USA) at the University of California (Layton and Brown 2011) and by 2002 teaching award schemes were implemented by 95% of research-led HEIs and 70% of two-year college and liberal arts colleges in the United States (Carusetta 2002). City University, Hong Kong, was the first university to introduce them to Hong Kong in 1993. The well-known Canadian 3M/Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (3M/STLHE) award was implemented in 1986 for the first time.

After almost six decades, teaching excellence awards have become part of a long-standing tradition in the higher education environment. Much has been written about them and this study will highlight some of the key similarities and significant differences in teaching excellence awards.

The dimensions of *purpose*, *application process* and *awareness* are reviewed. Examples of aspects of the schemes are provided, for those who might wish to benchmark their schemes or to adapt them, and also, to serve as a stimulus for further debate. Special attention is given to the criteria used in various schemes. The section concludes with a discussion on the perceived values of awards as reflected in the selected literature.

2.1.1 Purpose

The stated purpose of various teaching awards appears to be celebratory, motivational or reactive (in response to the stature of research). Whilst some awards schemes maintain their purpose is to “celebrate and reward excellence in teaching” (Halse *et al*, 2007: 730), the unofficial reason attributed to the Australian and British schemes is to “counter the privileged position of research by improving the importance and status of teaching in universities” (Halse *et al*, 2007: 731).

2.1.2 Process

Funding may be provided by the university, the State Department, a dedicated teaching and learning support agency such as the British Higher Education Academy (HEA) or the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) (closed in 2011), by professional development networks such as the Professional and Organisational Development (POD) in the USA and in several instances by foundations, for example the Carnegie Foundation (USA) or companies, for example the 3M award in Canada.

In her large-scale study on teaching awards in the USA, Chism (2006) notes that more detailed evidence is required from applications for awards administered at research-intensive universities in comparison with two-year college and baccalaureate institutions. It must also be noted that the latter provide larger financial awards. Hammer *et al* (2010: 8), with regard to pharmacy faculty awards, notes that awards are made to varying numbers of individuals, including the categories of rising star, new practitioner and senior academic awards.

The POD network is significant in that rather than focusing on lecturers, it offers a series of awards for faculty developers. These awards are for innovation and research, and include an award called the “Bob Pierleoni Spirit of POD Service Award”.

Several national awards, for example the STLHE, have very specific stipulations about how the applications should be prepared. The following is an example of its 3M award:

NOTE—Nominations must be submitted using 1” margins, 12pt font, and not exceed 50 pages, including appendices and graphics. A nomination submitted in excess of 50 pages will not be considered.¹

Schemes make awards for different groups or categories of people. The number of awards made can be quite large. For example, the Carrick Institute award scheme in Australia in 2005 publicised “40 teaching excellence awards (26 discipline and priority area awards, and 14 programme awards) and 210 Citations for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning.”

2.1.3 Prestige

The high profile of the Australian national award scheme is evident from the selection committee (Halse *et al*, 2007). Award winners are chosen by a selection committee consisting of: the chair and a member of the Carrick Institute Board (this Institute was subsequently restructured into the ALTC, and in 2011 the function has been taken over by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations); a nominee from the Commonwealth’s Department of Education, Science and Training; a nominee of the Minister of Education, Science and Training; a nominee from the Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee; and two current university students. For the Neville Bonner award, the committee also includes a representative of the indigenous community (summarised by Halse *et al*, 2007: 732). Furthermore, according to Halse *et al* (ibid):

Winning a teaching award brings institutional and personal prestige as well as personal financial benefits. In 2005, for instance, individual winners of teaching awards received a grant of \$40,000 (Australian), as well as a certificate and a trophy. The winner of the Prime Minister’s Award for University Teacher of the Year received an additional \$35,000 and a trophy, making a total grant of \$75,000.

Institutional awards also vary according to how much prestige they bestow. At the University of Sydney, a committee convened by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) makes the awards. The committee includes members of a student organisation, the chair of the Academic Board or nominee, director of the teaching development unit, and one other member of staff (summarised by Jackson, 2006: 263).

¹ A list of all web based sources of information is provided at the end of this document. Lengthy quotations are provided in many instances to provide a sense of the “feel” and branding of the awards.

2.1.4 Awareness

Examples of how to publicise the awards abound. Jackson (2006: 268-9) provides a long list of suggestions on how to do this, including:

One example is the display in the foyer of the library at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand. There the recipients of the award are represented with photographs and a short statement of their achievements.

STLHE-Canada has presentations from award winners at the annual conference. The quality of the dissemination materials is evident in an example from its electronic newsletter (see attached, Appendix 6).

An exciting example of publicity and prestige accorded to a national award is from New Zealand, with regard to the National Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards:

The awards are formally presented to awardees at a function at the NZ Parliament Buildings. The Tertiary Excellence Awards Committee (the Committee) is responsible for setting the criteria and selecting the award recipients. Membership of the Committee is endorsed by the Minister for Tertiary Education.

Up to twelve Sustained Excellence Awards, of \$20,000 each, are awarded annually, with provision for a maximum of ten awards under the General Category and two or more under the Kaupapa Māori Category. There is one Supreme Award, the Prime Minister's Award, of an additional \$10,000, awarded to one recipient of a sustained excellence award.

2.1.5 Support

Support for applications ranges from short information sessions for potential applicants to more intensive and customised consultations. At Hong Kong University all staff interested in applying are invited to a 90 minute workshop on the awards. A point raised by Jackson (2006: 269) is the demand for feedback from successful as well as unsuccessful applicants, “The demand for feedback is open ended; there is never enough.” The University of Sydney keeps its criteria aligned with the national award in order to encourage applicants to strive towards that award too. Layton and Brown (2011) discuss as a key form of support at university level the provision of one-to-one conversations and consultations, which proves to be of value both in terms of the success of the applications, as well as in terms of the professional development of the applicants as university teachers.

2.1.6 Criteria

The issue of criteria for awards appears to be fairly vexed at an international level. Criticism on the kind of criteria used in awards schemes is provided by Chism (2006). In her large-scale study on teaching awards in the USA, she says that many call for practical information, some confuse criteria and types of evidence, and many do not define what is meant by “teaching excellence”. She cites the problem with so many institutional schemes being symbolic and token, leading to vague specifications of what is being measured. This, in turn, may lead to “controversy and scepticism”,

which is counter posed by the administrators' need for openness and flexibility. Her comment that "The lack of similar specificity on peer review of teaching and its relatively low emphasis within the evidence requirements of awards programs except through letters of support testifies to the low use of standardized processes of peer review on most campuses" (2006: 606). This set of criticisms points to an issue affecting quality assurance mechanisms more broadly: they rely on consensus about definitions of good teaching and on the maturity of communal discussions about good teaching at universities or in the academic community. Chism recommends that the awards should be "nested within a broader system of evaluation of teaching that rests on consensus about characteristics of excellent teaching" (2006: 208). Chism (2006) found almost no descriptions of teaching standards in her study, while she did find some evidence of marking rubrics. She maintains that if these rubrics were made available to potential applicants this would make it easier for them to demonstrate their achievements. She recommends that award systems should define criteria; which link with evidence; and determine standards.

Examples of types of criteria are provided below in order to be able to compare what is done in South Africa with a wider set of international examples.

Criteria for teaching excellence at the University of Hong Kong reveal a neatly packaged combination of domains infused with a philosophy of what constitutes quality teaching. The four listed criteria and the way that they are described suggest clearly the kinds of data one might collect to support each criterion:

- **Adoption of learner-centred approaches, ability to engage/inspire/impact on students,** *which may include understanding how students learn and adopting suitable teaching and assessment approaches that can achieve better student learning outcomes; being able to engage students in learning with enthusiasm; and inspiring and supporting students, with respect for their diverse learning needs, to build confidence and capability (including critical thinking, analytical skills, values, etc.).*
- **Course/programme/curriculum design that can reflect a command of the field,** *which may include demonstrating up-to-date knowledge of the field of study in the design of the curriculum and student learning resources (e.g., textbooks, e-learning resources); and developing appropriate student learning outcomes and adopting innovative approaches to teaching and assessment which can facilitate student achievement of the learning outcomes.*
- **Scholarly activities and approach to learning and teaching,** *which may include adopting teaching practices that are informed by research in learning and teaching; participating in educational research in the field of study; strengthening the teaching-research nexus; and demonstrating educational innovations in the field of study.*
- **Past/present achievements and leadership in teaching and potential scholarly contribution to the development of effective teaching practice with impact within his/her own institution** *and/or in other institutions which may include participation in and contribution to professional activities related to learning and teaching; active involvement in the promotion of teaching excellence within the institution and/or in other institutions; and demonstrating leadership through activities that aim to enhance learning and teaching.*

Another example is taken from Thompson Rivers University (Canada), which provides criteria which have a high value load, referring to “diversity”, “respectful”, “gifted” and “inspiring”. Criteria expressed in this manner could potentially be more difficult to measure.

Student Engagement and Motivation

- *The faculty member is fair, consistent, and realistic in their assessment of student learning while conveying a sense of accomplishment to students;*
- *Is a gifted mentor and role-model who enjoys motivating and challenging all learners;*
- *Supports learning beyond the classroom or laboratory, through consultation outside of class, and guide practicum-based or extra-curricular student activity with energy and experience;*
- *Motivates students to achieve and maintain standards of excellence and imparts an enthusiasm for learning;*
- *Is sensitive, respectful, and responsive to the diversity of students.*

Pedagogy

- *The faculty member clearly cares passionately about the subject matter, the students’ learning, and teaching itself as supported by students and peers;*
- *Employs inspiring, innovative and effective teaching strategies;*
- *Effectively integrates research into teaching through reference to their own research or the scholarly work of others;*
- *Demonstrates and conveys through their teaching an exceptional command of teaching and learning theory and practice;*
- *Contributes to the advancement of their discipline or program through contribution to the pedagogy of their discipline or through ongoing course and program development;*
- *Provides evidence of disseminating information about their teaching to the TRU community and elsewhere.*

Reflective Practice and Scholarly Teaching

- *The faculty member provides evidence of skilled scholarly teaching through recognizing that they, as teachers, are learners themselves, and regularly solicit learners and peers for feedback on their teaching practices;*
- *Brings an inspiring curiosity toward the theory, technique, and practice of their discipline, cultivating creative inquiry and critical thinking on the part of their students.*

A third example is taken from a teaching excellence award per year at the University of Southern California (USC). This list emphasises academic engagement and achievement in a more value-neutral manner than the previous list:

- *Especially high intellectual standards in terms of content, rigor, and integration of the best scholarship.*
- *Depth of concern for the subject; evidence of scholarly and pedagogical growth as new knowledge is discovered and new classroom technology is produced.*
- *Effective and inspiring links between scholarship and teaching particularly in the undergraduate curriculum.*

- *Extremely effective teaching strategies that encourage students to participate in the teaching-learning process, including (but not limited to) innovative uses of technology and/or multi-media to enhance student learning, both in and out of the classroom.*
- *Measures of breadth and/or depth of impact on students' intellectual development, including graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.*
- *Unusual effort to ensure a rich learning experience.*
- *Methods of assessment of student learning and achievement that goes beyond student evaluations.*
- *Contributions to the improvement of the quality of teaching within the university through assistance and encouragement of other faculty.*
- *Other extraordinary, unique, or pioneering contributions to excellence in teaching.*

The USC criteria indicate levels or extremes, with words such as “Especially high”, “Extremely effective” or “Unique, or pioneering contributions to excellence”. In other words, these awards are for the exceptional teacher, not the rule. The awards are worth \$7 000, thus it does not appear that the size of the award bears any direct link to its level of prestige or uniqueness.

The Australian Award for University Teaching had the following criteria in 2005, which do not suggest extremes or outliers, but rather, domains and competencies:

- *Interest and enthusiasm for undertaking teaching and for promoting student learning.*
- *Ability to arouse curiosity, and to stimulate independent learning and the development of critical thought.*
- *Ability to organise course material and to present it cogently and imaginatively.*
- *Command of the subject matter, including the incorporation in teaching of recent developments in the field of study.*
- *Innovation in the design and delivery of content and course materials.*
- *Participation in the effective and sympathetic guidance and advising of students.*
- *Provision of appropriate assessment, including the provision of worthwhile feedback to students on their learning.*
- *Ability to assist students from equity groups to participate and achieve success in their courses.*
- *Professional and systematic approach to teaching development.*
- *Participation in professional activities and research related to teaching.*

A short list of criteria is used at the University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE):

- *Demonstrated excellence in teaching and/or supervision at the graduate level (for a minimum of two years).*
- *Demonstrated impact on graduate students.*
- *Ability to foster an enriching teaching and learning experience.*

The University of Waikato, New Zealand, provides an example of an initial list of criteria which read like domains. Of interest to the South African higher education context which takes into account indigenous knowledge, national languages and engaging with cultural strengths would be the manner in which the criteria are then reinterpreted in relation to New Zealand indigenous culture:

Currently for teaching excellence awards these are:

- Design for learning
- Facilitating learning
- Assessing student learning
- Evaluating learning and teaching
- Professional development and leadership

Currently for teaching excellence in a kaupapa Māori context awards these are:

- *Mana* - Leadership and Professional Development
- *Rangatiratanga* - leadership
- *Kaupapa Māori* - Māori concepts
- *Mātauranga Māori* - Māori knowledge
- *Ūkaipōtanga* - Loyalty
- *Whanaungatanga* - Relationships
- *Kaitiakitanga* - Guardianship/Sustainability
- *Whakaakoranga* - Teaching Excellence - Design for Learning, Facilitating Learning
- *Kairangi* - Excellence
- *Pūkengatanga* - Skills
- *Manaakitanga* - Concern for colleagues and learners
- *Kotahitanga* - Collaboration
- *Mātaki* - Assessing Student Learning, Evaluation of Learning and Teaching
- *Ākonga* - Learners
- *Kaiako* - Teaching
- *Taunaki* - Evidence

2.2 Further thoughts on criteria for teaching excellence

Perhaps the word “criteria” is misleading, and one should rather consider “domains” or “dimensions” in terms of which quality should be evaluated. For each domain, one could consider “standards” or levels of achievement. McAlpine and Harris (2002: 12) refer to “expectations, which can be used as goals and also to evaluate progress in either a criterion or norm-referenced manner”. Four dimensions proposed for the University of Galway by Murphy, MacLaren and Flynn (2009) are: course design, interaction with students, overall quality of the student learning experiences and improvement over time. One could also consider whether to use only summative and outcome indicators, or in addition, formative or process indicators. A practical explanation of standards, formative and summative sources of data and how to choose them, derived from a comprehensive reading of the literature, is provided by Berk (2005).

One would expect criteria for teaching excellence awards to be based on definitions of teaching excellence in general. The 2008–2009 Task Force for the Recognition of Teaching Excellence (USA) argues that there is no single definition of teaching excellence, but nevertheless provides six characteristics commonly found in the literature (Hammer *et al*, 2010: 2):

- achievable, yet high expectations;
- respects diverse talents and ways of learning;
- effective communication skills; and
- commitment to teaching well.

The Task Force cites three basic sources of information: students and alumni, peers and the applicant him or herself, and makes the point that the criteria used depends partly on the source of information. It also states that the purpose of the evaluation will determine the criteria to be used.

Elton (1998) argues that measuring teaching quality is multidimensional and extremely complex. He contends that there are three dimensions, namely the institutional, departmental and individual dimensions. Quality within the individual dimension is the only one of the three that can easily be measured. He makes the important point that measurement of teaching quality should be undertaken in relation to learning outcomes desired and philosophy of teaching and learning: “teaching excellence should be defined in terms of a declared philosophy of learning and the objectives of student learning resulting from it” (Elton, 1998: 4). This emphasises the problem with attempts to measure quality teaching, when there is no consensus of what quality teaching means in the academic community. He makes the distinction between general competencies for all lecturers, and indicators of individual teaching excellence, such as:

- being a reflective practitioner;
- being an innovator;
- designing curricula;
- providing a teaching service to the community;
- researching into the teaching of one’s discipline;
- conducting pedagogic research, and
- being a scholar in one’s discipline (Elton, 1998: 6).

Research has been conducted on what constitutes successful teaching, according to teachers themselves. Perhaps this can shed light on the issue of criteria. According to Pollio and Humphreys (1996), in a study on award winning lecturers, the key concept discussed by lecturers was a desire for connection, including relevance and excitement. Elton argues that teaching experts should judge the teaching excellence of others. Murphy, MacLaren and Flynn (2009: 228) make several useful points about measuring teaching quality in relation to criteria:

- each faculty should design criteria most relevant to their needs;
- the more confidence academics have in the quality system, the more likely they are to pay attention to the data;
- there should be a match between criteria and data sources, for example:

Relationship Between Performance Criteria and Assessment Source		
	Criteria	Primary Source of Information
I	The Design of Courses	Course design materials
II	Teacher-student interaction	Student questionnaires, Observations
III	Quality of student learning	Samples of student learning materials
IV	Getting better over time	Teacher self-report, Documentation

McAlpine and Harris (2002) also provide a useful overarching set of constructs, beginning with the categories of subject matter expertise, design, delivery and management skills, mentoring students, personal/professional development and departmental development.

The manner in which teaching excellence is measured differs in relation to philosophy of teaching and philosophy of measurement (including the constructs used). Discussing teaching excellence is complicated, for one has to consider the complexities of social difference, privilege and inequality, (including resourcing, institutional identity and type, institutional culture, and geographical location) which influence education in South Africa. If one were to engage with the concepts in such an award system with extremely detailed and complicated systems, they could potentially alienate prospective participants or others within the higher education community that one would have liked to encourage to engage more thoughtfully about quality teaching. Kember (1997: 77) argues that the greater the complexity of a quality enhancement scheme, the greater the cost, and that “the returns in the level of quality will not increase in direct proportion to the level of investment in quality measures”.

2.2.1 Context and expertise

A discussion on expertise by Berliner (2001) presents some interesting points for consideration. Berliner cites research on teaching in general in the USA, which is also worthy of consideration in relation to higher education. He argues that “it is probably the power of context followed by deliberate practice, more than talent, which influences a teacher’s level of competency” (2001: 466). This sounds an alarm: if context (which he links to ‘culture’) is so significant, how can one judge academics from a variety of contexts with one set of criteria? Berliner’s comments on the significance of context are echoed in the literature on good teaching in higher education for example by Lea and Callahan (2005). Structural features such as the discipline, with its messages about knowledge, culture and learning, have a strong influence on teaching (Lee, 2009) and the department or workgroup also influences approaches towards teaching and learning (Trowler, 2008). In a comparative study on two institutions in the United Kingdom (UK), Crawford (2010) argues that historical background of an institution is less influential as a constraint on academics’ development than misaligned priorities and policies at an institution, i.e. how policies are interpreted. The Crawford study found disciplinary and professional networks to be influential too. Less has been written in the literature on professional development about the significance of the material aspects such as funding and resources, possibly because in the environments giving rise to this literature from the developed world, these material elements are taken for granted. Furthermore, Leibowitz *et al*, (2011) have discussed how academics’ own biographies, including their social and cultural capital, influence their approaches to teaching.

This section has discussed the importance of context and of enabling and constraining factors. It is worthwhile noting that all kinds of institutions, both advantaged and disadvantaged, may display features which encourage or discourage good teaching. Factors that encourage and discourage academics from participating in professional development opportunities are part of a current National Research Foundation (NRF) supported project ‘Structure, Culture, Agency’. The research team is working across eight South African universities and is led by Brenda Leibowitz. One of its early findings is that whilst the different universities all experience constraints and enabling mechanisms, they may vary in type, degree and impact. In several of the South African formerly historically advantaged

institutions (HAIs) that are research led for example, the constraints are generated by amongst others, the lower status of teaching in relation to research. In several of the formerly historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) examples of salient constraints cited are inadequate infrastructure and frequent change in leadership. Most of the universities listed student academic under-preparedness and lack of adequate facilities for teaching and learning as constraints. However the depth and reach of these phenomena varies from one institution to another.

The direct link between context and even levels of expertise is illustrated with reference to the idea of time, and Berliner's (2001) idea that deliberate practice influences competence. In the 'Structure, Culture and Agency' study, an interviewee from a previously disadvantaged university argued that a key disabling feature at his university was the revolving door syndrome, as academics did not stay for long. The surrounding town has few resources such as good schooling or attractive shopping facilities.

An important distinction cited by Berliner is between "good" and "successful" teaching:

Fenstermacher and Richardson (2000) have distinguished between these qualities as the difference between "good" and "successful" teaching. Good teaching is judged through reliance on standards applied to the tasks of teaching and related to norms for professional behavior; including moral considerations. Successful teaching is about whether intended learnings were achieved. Judgements of successful teaching are concerned not with the tasks of teaching or professional behavior, but with the achievement of ends. (2001: 468).

Berliner cites research that teaching requires five years, to move from "novice" to "expert" (2001: 479), which suggests that indeed one might want to consider length of service when looking at the kinds of awards the CHE/HELTASA scheme might want to make. Time is a significant issue in the South African setting. From another study in which Leibowitz is engaged in, a key informant from a rural HDI cites turnover of professional development staff as well as of lecturers as a key constraint facing capacity development of lecturers at his institution.

Another distinction discussed in the literature is between product and process. According to Kane, Sandretto and Heath (2004) underlying the dimensions for good teaching that they identify, namely personality attributes, interpersonal relations, the research-teaching nexus and pedagogic skills, lies substantive cause for reflection. Trigwell (2001) notes that the process of *being* a good lecturer is not that distinguishable from the process of *becoming* a good lecturer.

Kreber (2002) makes a useful distinction between teaching excellence, teaching expertise and the scholarship of teaching and learning. About teaching excellence she writes:

Excellence in teaching is usually identified on the basis of a judgment made about performance. Students, peers, and in some cases faculty members themselves describe how they perceive the performance. Awards for teaching excellence, for example, are ordinarily not adjudicated on the basis of how much someone knows about teaching. Indeed, for the effective practice of teaching and, by implication, the quality of student learning, an assessment of how much someone knows about teaching may even be perceived as irrelevant (2002: 9).

For Kreber (2002), a sub-group of excellent teachers are the teaching experts. In reference to Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993), she writes that teaching experts:

...continually reinvest the mental resources set free by the process of pattern learning and automatization in problems they encounter in their work. Thereby they approach these problems at increasingly higher levels of complexity, which, in turn, leads them to develop more sophisticated skills and knowledge (2002: 13).

Teaching experts' learning about teaching is self-regulated and they are expected to possess pedagogical content knowledge, which is a combination of knowledge about the discipline and knowledge about teaching.

Kreber implies that a scholar of learning and teaching should have the following characteristics: to be excellent, an expert, and a scholar. What does this imply about the excellence awards, and given the relevance of context, to what extent can one expect lecturers to be scholars of teaching and learning? And is the South African national teaching excellence award rewarding excellent teachers, or only expert teachers? Do we only consider how effective a teacher is, or the effort taken by a lecturer to *become* excellent? This effort in particular, may vary across contexts.

2.2.2 Alternatives to Teaching Excellence Awards

There are various alternatives to teaching excellence award schemes. Warren and Plumb (1999) found four types of traditional award schemes:

- traditional award schemes (i.e. prizes);
- teaching fellowship schemes;
- educational development grant schemes; and
- promotion/bonus schemes.

An example of a professional development grant scheme - which has met with mixed reaction - is the UK based Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), which awarded 74 Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs), in order to “reward excellent teaching practices and to invest in that practice in order to increase and deepen its impact across a wider teaching and learning community.” Turner and Gosling (2011) evaluated the scheme by interviewing CETL fund recipients. Their conclusion points to the limitations of many awards schemes:

...there were limits to the extent to which reward-systems were able to change strongly held behaviours and values (Henkel, 2005, Wright, 2010). HEFCE, through the CETL initiative, attempted to create separate reward systems that would challenge established practice which has principally recognised research outputs. Respondents continued to be concerned about the exclusion of CETL research outputs in RAE submissions and felt that promotion criteria continued to be dominated by measures of research performance rather than teaching excellence. The lack of significant change in institutional recognition and reward systems for teaching and learning suggest that one-off policy initiatives, no matter how well-funded, cannot by themselves significantly impact on well-established academic identities.

The CETL's bidding processes, in particular, encouraged uncooperative and competitive behaviour, rather than the kind of collaboration one would expect to see in teaching and learning contexts (Gosling and Hannan, 2007).

The precursor to the CETLs, the National Teaching Fellowships Scheme (NTFS) administered by HEFCE, made 20 grants of £50 000 to national fellows to conduct a development project each year (Skelton, 2004). Benefits recorded were that the scheme made the discourse on teaching excellence more widely available; it had a positive effect on the identity and career trajectory of some participants. Limitations were that the dissemination and wider impact of the projects were hampered by the nature of the projects, the academics' level of expertise in educational research and their tendency not to work together as a group. Similar positive findings were derived from an evaluation of an institutional fund at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, called the Fund for Innovation and Research into Teaching and Learning (FIRTL), which led to a large number of research outputs. Participants' professional identities were enhanced (Bitzer and Menkveld, 2010). The Stellenbosch FIRTL scheme is complemented by an annual teaching and learning conference and award of an opportunity to attend an international conference on teaching and learning for the best presentation at the conference. In this way it is bolstered by strong institutional support.

Another alternative is membership-based fellowship schemes, such as the one administered by the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA). One becomes a member by paying an annual fee and submitting a portfolio with the specified contents. Members wishing to become fellows are entitled to support for portfolio development and are entitled to benefits of the scheme, such as participation in professional development opportunities. STLHE (Canada), in collaboration with 3M has administered a fellowship scheme since 1986. The benefits of this scheme are outlined as follows:

- *Up to 10 Fellowships are presented annually.*
- *The Fellowship includes lifetime membership in STLHE.*
- *Recipients are formally announced in a special university undergraduate student issue of Maclean's Magazine.*

Recipients attend an expense paid, 4-day scholarly retreat at the Fairmont Le Château Montebello to celebrate exceptional achievements in teaching and to provide an opportunity for outstanding teachers to share experiences and ideas.

HEA has a fellowship scheme for all those who have completed a certificated course in higher education teaching. It makes a maximum of 55 awards a year at the following levels:

AFHEA – Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy;
FHEA – Fellows of the Higher Education Academy;
SFHEA – Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy;
PFHEA – Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

These acronyms can be added to one's name and are portable across the country and demonstrate that one's standards are aligned with the Professional Standards Framework. The 2011 list reveals most of the fellowships were granted at the level of Doctor, Professor, Senior Lecturer or head of a unit, and a significant number who are academic development practitioners. The various levels of the framework, called "descriptors", comprise professional values, core knowledge and areas of activity. These are said to be useful in describing what one should be able to do, in a shared language across the country.

It could also have the advantage that it could set a common language for professional development, and serve as the basis for discussions on criteria for teaching excellence.

The HEA fellowship scheme is primarily about a set of labels or descriptors. This can be distinguished from the kind of fellowship provided by the Foundation for the Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER) which has a strongly developmental approach, as is evident from the description below.

In 2000, the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG®), located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in the United States, established the Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER®) with the intention of helping to improve global health by improving health professions education. FAIMER concentrates its efforts in developing regions in South Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and focuses on three specific strategies: faculty development, targeted research that informs health workforce policy and practice, and development of data that advances educational quality improvement decisions.



In 2001, as part of its commitment to health professions educators, FAIMER established the FAIMER Institute, a two-year, part-time fellowship for health professions educators that focuses on the development of educational, leadership, and management skills and knowledge, as well as the development of a professional community of practice. Building on this program, FAIMER has collaborated with key individuals and institutions at the local level to develop FAIMER Regional Institutes, centers of activity where ongoing exchange among educators is intended to improve local health professions education systems. FAIMER currently has one Regional Institute in Brazil and three in India, as well as the Southern Africa-FAIMER Regional Institute (SAFRI). All of the Institutes offer fellowship opportunities for faculty who have the potential to play key roles in improving health professions education at their schools and in their regions.

The Frontier Centre in Canada has made an interesting proposal for a performance-based reward system designed to improve undergraduate teaching, where departments would be rewarded based on an average of all teaching performances within the department. This proposal is based on the idea that awards to individuals and workshops do not improve teaching. The concept of awards to departments requires all lecturers to collaborate for the benefit of overall improved learning.

2.2.3 Perceptions of the Value and Impact of Teaching Awards

Responses to rewarding excellence and awards more generally are mixed. Skelton (2004: 454) provides a caution of the contradictory potential of giving awards:

... the introduction of awards for 'teaching excellence' is consistent with the view that teaching and learning need to be restored to the heart of university life (Nixon et al., 1998), with the 'scholarship of teaching' becoming just as important as 'blue skies' research or the 'scholarship of discovery' (Boyer, 1990, 1994). Teaching awards may also open up new professional identities as an emerging cadre of academics become teaching and learning experts within their own discipline (Healey, 2000). Alternatively, awards for teaching could become a 'poisoned chalice' for many academics, since the take-up of an emphasized 'teaching identity' may be costly in the research culture of universities (Leon, 2002a). They may further polarize teaching and research, accelerating the emergence of 'teaching only' contract staff and of institutions with differentiated and stratified 'research' and 'teaching' missions (see Nixon et al., 2001, p. 232). Awards like the NTFS may, therefore, further erode what is taken by many to be the fundamental 'idea of the university' (Barnett, 1990), since it is argued that university education will only be revitalized once teaching and research are brought into a closer and more productive relationship (Rowland, 1996).

Writing about funding excellence, Turner and Gosling (2011) write, “The idea that reward mechanisms can change behaviour has become a mantra repeated many times (e.g. DfES, 2003) and implemented through various reward initiatives, with variable success (Taylor, 2007).”

A strong comment in favour of an award scheme at an institution is provided by Jackson (2006: 268), who evaluated the award scheme at the University of Sydney:

There is no doubt that the evidence from the respondents that they favour retaining the award. As far as can be ascertained, this is the first time a teaching award has been put to the test in this way. It is especially noteworthy that even unsuccessful applicants supported the retention of the award, and showed their personal commitment to the award by completing and returning the questionnaire. They did not recommend changing the criteria.

Writing about a student-led teaching excellence award in a clinical medical setting, Wheeler and Gill (2010) maintain that it is precisely because this is feedback from students that makes the scheme so valuable. Hammer *et al* (2010: 2) refer to Ward on the institutional reward system as one of the factors having only minimal influence on teaching improvement effort, with “intrinsic motivation, teaching consultation services, and a teaching-positive institutional climate [being] more influential for teacher improvement”. They stress other reports indicating the value of such awards for generating esteem for teaching. Warren and Plumb (1999: 254) conclude their survey on award systems on a positive, but muted note:

Distinguished Teacher Awards are generally regarded as successful tools for rewarding teaching excellence in individuals, although they tend to be rather cumbersome and bureaucratic. They appear to succeed best in institutions where teaching already has a high profile, and where research influence and/or promotion procedures may be wanting. The traditional prize scheme is not necessarily the most appropriate scheme for all institutions, and alternative models may be preferred—for example for institutions developing a corpus of distinguished teachers (teaching fellowship or teaching academy schemes) or for those preferring innovation to reward (educational development grant schemes).

Carusetta reviews teaching awards in her institution and reports that there are ambivalent attitudes to teaching awards, some believing they have value and others believing that they are token, the real value being in research. Some researchers even feel that they should discourage collaborative and cooperative teaching approaches. She concludes, “Most authors hold the middle ground that teaching awards are effective when they are representative of an institutional culture that values good teaching and when they are part of a program designed to encourage teaching effectiveness” (2001:32). Chism (2006) sees teaching awards as a meaningful part of quality assurance and stresses the potential of awards to generate shared understanding, if the criteria and standards are given attention. Sorcinelli and Gross Davis (1996: 71) argue that “our experience confirms the importance of the “fit” of an award program with an institution’s culture and context if teaching awards are to be a meaningful and significant part of the campus landscape”.

Layton and Brown write that teaching awards are a “managerialist” and “modernist” project, stimulated by governments and human resource developers, and at the same time a “technology of power, which can simultaneously constrain and produce selves” (2011:171). Despite their own ambivalence towards the awards, they mention the unpredictable outcome thereof and further argue that many recipients do benefit from them, either by being recognised for their contribution, or by having the opportunity to engage in deep reflection. Applicants at their university, the University of Wollongong (Australia), mentioned that the process was disciplining in the Foucauldian sense, but that that was just part of the process, and that they derived a lot of benefit from it at the same time.

Hammer *et al* (2010) maintain that awards to individuals can have a negative impact, diminishing the work of the non-rewarded excellent teachers. Their recommendations in the pharmacy disciplinary context, based on a substantive literature review, are worth noting:

- *There should be an expectation that ALL teaching faculty members engage in professional development to improve their teaching, with an emphasis on a scholarly, collaborative approach;*
- *Schools and colleges of pharmacy should provide more than a single award to recognize teaching excellence.*
- *The criteria and selection process for the awards should be known to faculty members.*
- *Criteria should ensure that many different faculty members over time are eligible for the awards.*
- *The selection process should include broad representation and valid methods of selection.*
- *The award itself should be significant and include multiple components (2010: 8).*

Thus an issue for further consideration is whether teaching awards should be for outliers or for good lecturers. In other words, are awards something to which all lecturers should strive? Perhaps it is only when schemes are in place to recognise good lecturers on a broad base that one should proceed to recognise the outliers?

2.3 Implications for South Africa

There is an evident international long-standing tradition of teaching awards, both within institutions and at national levels. Despite the long-standing tradition of these systems, there remains a great variety of schemes and an even greater variety of types of criteria used. These depend partly on definitions of good teaching, and partly on approaches to quality measurement as a science. This signals the need for greater discussion in South Africa on what is meant by ‘quality teaching’, what is meant by ‘teaching excellence’ and how lecturers are supported to become quality teachers.

A key distinction is between awards focusing on process and effort taken to become a good teacher, on the one hand, and those focusing on demonstrating that one is a good lecturer, on the other. A large number of the lists of criteria cited in this study stress the need for reflection, and in particular what is meant by the scholarship of teaching and learning. This has been a key point of tension in the CHE/HELTASA awards committee debates. Support to become good lecturers and opportunities to develop as scholarly teachers are lacking in many South African institutions.

There are mixed views about the value of awards systems. It is of interest that even in cases where writers argue that the awards are managerialist they nevertheless note that the processes involved in preparing applications have great value for the academics involved. This points to the importance of how an award system is managed and supported at institutional level. A number of the authors cited in this study have also stated that the impact and value of the awards at the institutional level depends on the status of teaching and the support and policy environment at the various universities. If one extends this logic to a country as a whole, one could argue that the value of the CHE/HELTASA teaching excellence awards is dependent on the broader messages which are communicated about the value of teaching, and on the policy and support environment which needs to be in place.



3

TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARDS IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

This section is based on the telephonic and email interviews with individuals responsible for professional development at South African universities, the Kilfoil (2010) survey and other information available to the authors from their work in higher education.

3.1 Discipline-specific

There are several discipline-based awards systems, not all based purely on teaching excellence. For example, the Association of South African Social Work Education Institutions (ASASWEI) makes a junior and senior award at its annual conference. On occasion this award recognises teaching excellence. The South African Association of Health Educationalists (SAAHE) makes a single annual award to a SAAHE Distinguished Educator. There is no monetary award, only a certificate and the Distinguished Educator is invited to make a plenary address at the conference.

An example of a local fellowship system is the Southern Africa-FAIMER Regional Institute (SAFRI), which was established as a voluntary association in 2008 by 11 South African FAIMER Institute fellows. SAFRI is sponsored by FAIMER and is funded from Philadelphia. This is a two-year competitive entry fellowship programme for health professions faculty who have the potential to improve medical education at their schools. Approximately 16 fellowships are offered each year. The fellowship is designed to teach education methods, scholarship, and leadership skills, and to develop an active, supportive professional network among educators. According to one of the lecturers on SAFRI, Francois Cilliers, “There is a prestige associated with being a SAFRI Fellow, I believe, and many Fellows remain active in the family for years.”

3.2 General Teaching Awards

Of the 16 universities that participated in the telephonic questionnaire, all have - or are planning to have - a teaching awards system. Thirteen have established teaching excellence awards systems, only two have just developed or are in the process of developing awards systems and one has had one, but this lapsed in 2011/2012. Three indicated the system is “prestigious”, and at two the awards are made at graduation ceremonies. Kilfoil (2010) reported a similar finding, with evidence of 13 award systems in South Africa on websites. Some awards have been in place for several decades, whereas others are a few years old. There are also universities where the system is undergoing change, or is not yet stable.

The number of awards varies. One university has five awards. Another has one award for more experienced lecturers and one for less experienced lecturers. Some stipulate the format, for example one university states that an application may consist of no more than one lever-arch file.

The amount allocated varies, and in many instances, it is higher than the CHE/HELTASA award. There are allocations of as little as R5 000 and as much as R150 000 (to be used over three years).

3.2.1 Awards criteria

According to the Kilfoil survey as well as the telephonic survey, criteria are published in some cases. Such criteria are listed in documents and can range from very brief to extensive detail and from simple to extremely complex. The latter stipulate content, criteria, indicators, levels and standards. What constitutes ‘good teaching’ varies across institutions. Some specifically mention the scholarship of teaching and learning, while others do not. Some mention critical reflection, and again, others not. Likewise, some refer to being able to cater for student diversity, and some do not. Some universities’ systems are aligned with the CHE/HELTASA national awards, which poses a challenge if the national award criteria are changed too often. Some have weighted categories, for example: student assessment of teaching and learning (20%); peer assessment (20%) – and a rubric is provided for peer evaluation of class facilitation/teaching. Others have standards, for example statements like “The extent to which the teaching practice fostered student learning”.

Lists of criteria featured in this section are taken from policy documents that were freely provided by respondents at various universities. An example of a former HDI with a technical orientation and history has the following five criteria for its Vice-Chancellor’s Award for Teaching Excellence, with a strong emphasis on the quality of learning that is fostered:

- *approaches to teaching that influence, motivate and inspire students to learn*
- *development of curricula and resources that reflect a command of the field*
- *approaches to assessment and feedback that foster independent learning*
- *respect and support for the development of students as individuals*
- *scholarly activities that have influenced and enhanced learning and teaching.*

The following is an example of criteria from a comprehensive urban university. This set of criteria appears to consider criteria of extent, in other words the extent to which excellence is recognised by others:

- *demonstrates a high degree of subject/discipline expertise*
- *demonstrates expertise in approaches to teaching and learning facilitation that motivates and inspires students to learn, become independent learners, and enhance their development*
- *demonstrates leadership that enhances student learning, success and development*
- *reputation among students: Regarded by students as having been taught by an excellent teacher/facilitator*
- *reputation among and recognition from peers: Respected by peers for being an excellent teacher/facilitator of learning*
- *demonstrates involvement in engagement activities related to teaching and learning and enhancing student success and development.*

At an urban former HAI the teaching excellence system makes much reference to the CHE's published good practice guides (see www.che.ac.za/publications). It has four categories:

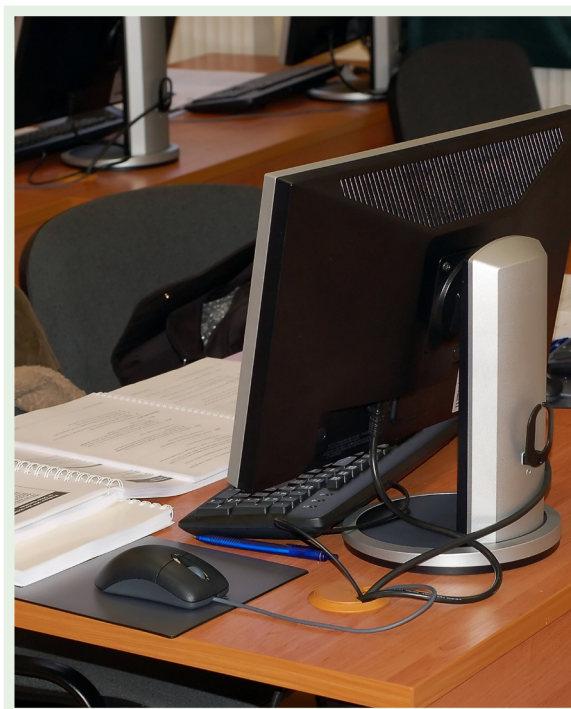
- *excellence in teaching and learning*
- *excellence in e-learning*
- *excellence in service learning*
- *excellence in programme design and development.*

What is interesting about the indicators under excellence in teaching and learning in this example is the use of evaluative or “thick” descriptors such as “creativity”, “innovation” and “diversity”:

Evidence of the following should be considered as indicators of excellence in teaching

- *high quality and innovative teaching and learning practices that actively engage students*
- *uses techniques and approaches for teaching, learning and assessment which are ‘fit for purpose’ and appropriate for the context and mission of the university*
- *demonstrates creativity and innovation in the design and planning of learning activities*
- *demonstrates excellence in assessment design and/or implementation, including the use of formative feedback to foster student learning*
- *recognises student diversity and devises strategies to work effectively with students with diverse learning styles.*

With regard to “criteria” the following points can be made: lists of criteria frequently interweave categories, domains, content, standards, levels, testimonies’ of achievement and indicators of quality. Some are fairly value neutral or low on philosophy of good teaching, whereas others use terms to describe what is believed to be quality teaching. In many cases the latter remains difficult to prove or specify, and to measure. Overall, the South African universities’ lists of criteria perused via the survey for this study, reveals similar trends, dilemmas and tensions as the international literature survey.





4

THE CHE/HELTASA AWARDS SYSTEM

This section was written by Brenda Leibowitz, in consultation with the awards committee for 2011, comprising: Mark Hay, Jeff Jawitz, Wendy Kilfoil, Brenda Leibowitz, Matete Madiba and Anisa Vahed.

4.1 Implementation of the Award

The National Teaching Excellence Awards were conceptualised in 2008. The proposal was processed swiftly and was implemented for the first time in 2009, with the stated aims to:

- show symbolic support at a national level for excellence in teaching and learning in higher education;
- generate a cadre of academics who are identifiable and able to provide leadership in teaching in their disciplines, institutions and regions;
- generate debate and public awareness about what constitutes teaching excellence. (Taken from the founding proposal document.)

The awards committee initially comprised of five individuals: the Chairperson of HELTASA; the Executive Director of the HEQC of the CHE; the Convenor of the HELTASA Special Interest Group for Professional Development; an additional member of the HELTASA Executive and an individual with teaching and learning expertise nominated by the CHE. By 2012 the committee had extended to eight individuals to ensure regional and institutional representation and to include the presence of a previous award winner.

The awards were funded by the CHE, starting with four awards of R15 000 in 2009. By 2012 the grant had been increased to R30 000 for each of the five award winners. Commendations were made for the first time in 2011 in order to increase the number of people who were recognised for their excellent teaching. The invitations to participate were made fairly late each year for the first three years, as the budget was approved on an annual basis. However by 2012 the budget had become institutionalised, leading to an earlier award announcement and earlier support provided to universities by the awards committee. In each year the award winners were invited to receive the award at a dinner at the annual HELTASA Conference and to make a presentation as part of a panel at the Conference.

Initially there were no limitations placed on the number of applications that could be submitted as a hard copy portfolio, nor on the number of pages. Applications came from public higher education institutions, and were not filtered in any way at the institutional level. This resulted in a vast number of applications that stretched the capacity of the small committee which gave each application the attention it merited. Part of the challenges in evaluating the applications was related to an absence of pre-screening at the institutional level. Many of the applications did not meet the stipulated requirements and many were extremely lengthy. This added considerably to the workload of the small committee. For these reasons institutions in the subsequent years were invited to submit no more than three nominations of a maximum of 50 pages each and preferably electronically. By 2012 all applications were required to be downloaded onto the central HELTASA website in order to facilitate ease of dissemination to the awards selection committee. The scheme was initially managed under contract to Stellenbosch University, where the HELTASA Chairperson was located. By 2012 much of the administration was taken over by the Executive Director's office at the CHE.

In 2009 there were very few applications from rural or historically disadvantaged universities. In most years there were no or few African awardees. For this reason for the first time in 2011 CHE funding was allocated for developmental support to universities. A workshop was held to which institutions which had not participated were invited to send participants. At the well-attended workshop, participants learnt more about the award, about systems for recognising quality teaching and about how to encourage others to prepare portfolios.

By 2012 discussion at previous annual HELTASA Conferences and other national meetings, as well as correspondence with the awards committee, led to several key concerns emerging with regard to the awards. These are discussed briefly below.

1. The question whether the scheme should remain for public higher education institutions only was raised. This question arose as several letters were written to the CHE from lecturers at private higher institutions, requesting permission to participate. The Committee was concerned about managing and processing the inordinate increase in applications as there are about 115 private higher education institutions. Moreover, the award fund is provided by the CHE, which is funded by the fiscus. However, the CHE has oversight and executive responsibility for quality assurance of all higher education, not just public institutions. The question is whether such funding can be used for private providers of higher education which are largely for-profit institutions, and to make use of the public purse to fund awards to private providers.
2. The Committee questioned whether the scheme is not simply rewarding the advantaged. Is it rewarding individuals at those universities where opportunities to develop professionally already exist or where conditions are conducive to preparing an impressive portfolio? The decision to accept a limited number of institutional nominations means that institutions need to have systems in place to recognise excellence in teaching. In many cases these systems are underdeveloped or exist in certain faculties or disciplines rather than at an institutional level. The decision to require portfolios to be submitted electronically tends to favour those candidates who have access to and are familiar with various digital forms of providing evidence related to teaching.
3. In 2012 the Committee revised the criteria it had been using. It remains to be seen whether the new criteria are able to distinguish between excellent teachers across a variety of geographical, socio-cultural and institutional settings. In the words of one Committee member, “What are we saying about the playground that is not level? What are we saying about comparing or making lecturers from the Universities of Fort Hare and Limpopo compete with those from the University of Pretoria, Stellenbosch University and the University of Cape Town?”
4. A related concern is that the award as it is presently managed appears to be rewarding academics who appear to have a favourable workload, access to resources and other advantages, especially in terms of publications and scholarship. Those who have cumulatively managed to acquire the evidence have stood a good chance as opposed to those in institutions where a publication culture is not nurtured. Thus although the awards are doing well to reward those who engage in teaching and learning scholarship, the award is reported to be demoralising those in the previously historically disadvantaged institutions. This view has been expressed at various HELTASA meetings, where

the racial skewing of the award is seen to contribute towards the racial stratification of higher education. It was noted that that the awards criteria are not the only feature that might privilege one nominee over another, for example, access to institutional resources, including technological support might be as significant and may inadvertently advantage some. The process and requirements with regard to forms of documentation might be as significant and an applicant may be inadvertently advantaged.

5. The question of the number of awards to be made has also been considered. Is the number based arbitrarily or purely on the basis of the funds available, or should it be based on a more systematic calculation of how many individuals should receive such an award? This is linked to the question of whether more funding for a more substantial capacity building initiative should be sought at this point.
6. This led to the question whether an award of this nature can be used to advance the national equity and developmental trajectory for higher education to which both the CHE and HELTASA subscribe, or whether it should be substantially reconceptualised? In other words, is an award of this type by its very nature elitist?
7. A final question the Committee considered is related to the previous question: whether more extensive recognition schemes such as a fellowship along the lines of the NRF ratings or the FAIMER Fellowships might not be more appropriate, or made in parallel to a national award?

More detail about the take up of the scheme and its impact is provided in the next section.



4.2 Analysis of Applications Received

4.2.1 Applications received per year and institution

A total of 97² applications were received during the review period, 47 of which were received during 2009. Table 1 below summarises the number of applications received, per public HEI.

Table 1: Annual applicants received per institution

University	Year			Total
	2009	2010	2011	
Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT)			1	1
University of Fort Hare (UFH)	1			1
Vaal University of Technology (VUT)		1		1
University of Limpopo (UL)			3	3
University of the Western Cape (UWC)	1	1	1	3
Durban University of Technology (DUT)	2		2	4
Tshwane University of Technology (TUT)	4			4
University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)		2	2	4
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU)	3	1	1	5
Rhodes University (RU)	1	1	3	5
University of the Witwatersrand (WITS)	2	3		5
University of Johannesburg (UJ)	3	3	1	7
University of South Africa (UNISA)	2	2	3	7
Stellenbosch University (SU)	3	3	2	8
University of Cape Town (UCT)	5	2	1	8
University of the Free State (UFS)	4	2	3	9
North-West University (NWU)	10		1	11
University of Pretoria (UP)	6	2	3	11
Total	47	23	27	97

² Due to one joint application by two females, the number of applicants differs by 1, compared to the application of 97.

4.2.2 Application status per institution

A total of 11 applicants, over the three years, were identified as being the award winners, whilst nine applicants were awarded a commendation. Table 2 below displays the successful applications per HEI.

Table 2: Successful applications per institution

University	Application Status		Total
	Commendation	Winner	
Stellenbosch University	1	2	3
Durban University of Technology		2	2
Rhodes University	1	1	2
University of Cape Town		2	2
University of the Free State		2	2
University of Limpopo	2		2
University of Pretoria	2		2
University of the Western Cape		2	2
University of Johannesburg	1		1
North-West University	1		1
University of South Africa	1		1
Total	9	11	20

4.2.3 Applications according to discipline

The information concerning the applications according to discipline is intriguing. Whilst the largest number of applications were from the Arts and Humanities, the greatest number of winners were from the Health Sciences. This could possibly be explained by the interest displayed in teaching and improvement in teaching within health science faculties in South Africa as well as internationally.

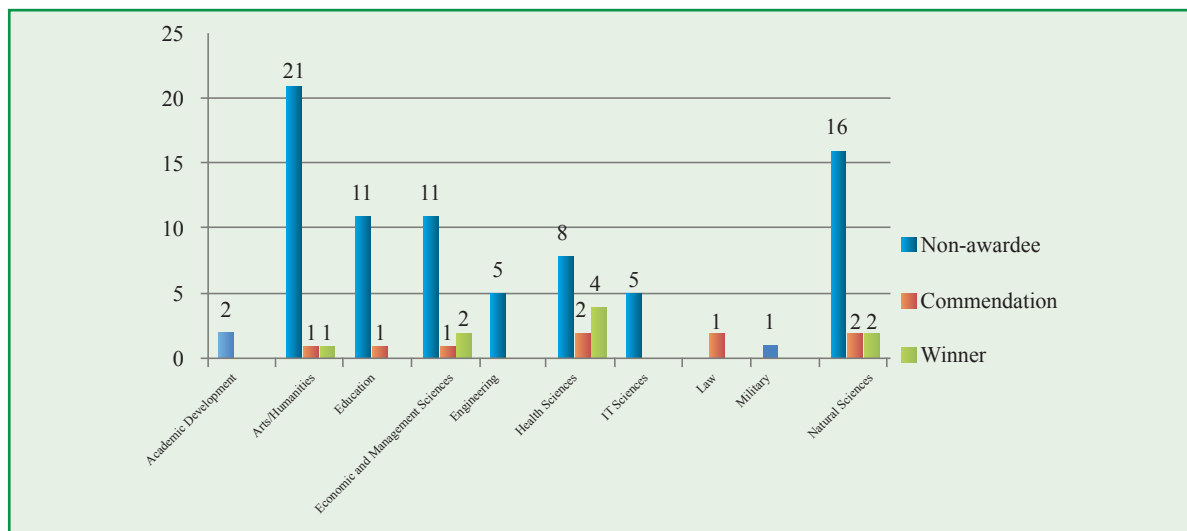


Figure 1: Applications According to Discipline

4.2.4 Gender distribution of applicants

Of the 97 applications received, 70 were from females. Applications from women consistently outweighed those received from males, as depicted in Figure 2 below. This is not consistent with the higher education gender ratios for academic staff. For example, in 2007 there were 42% females amongst academic staff in South Africa (CHE, 2009).

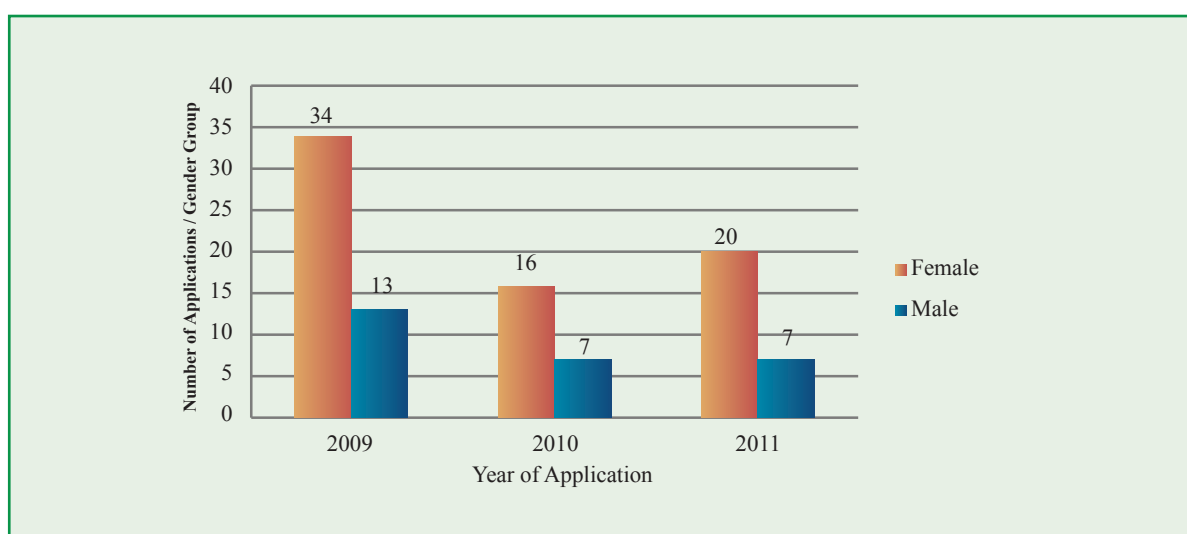


Figure 2: Gender Distribution of Applications Received

Figure 3 shows the gender distribution for the applicants, those who received commendations and those who were the award winners.

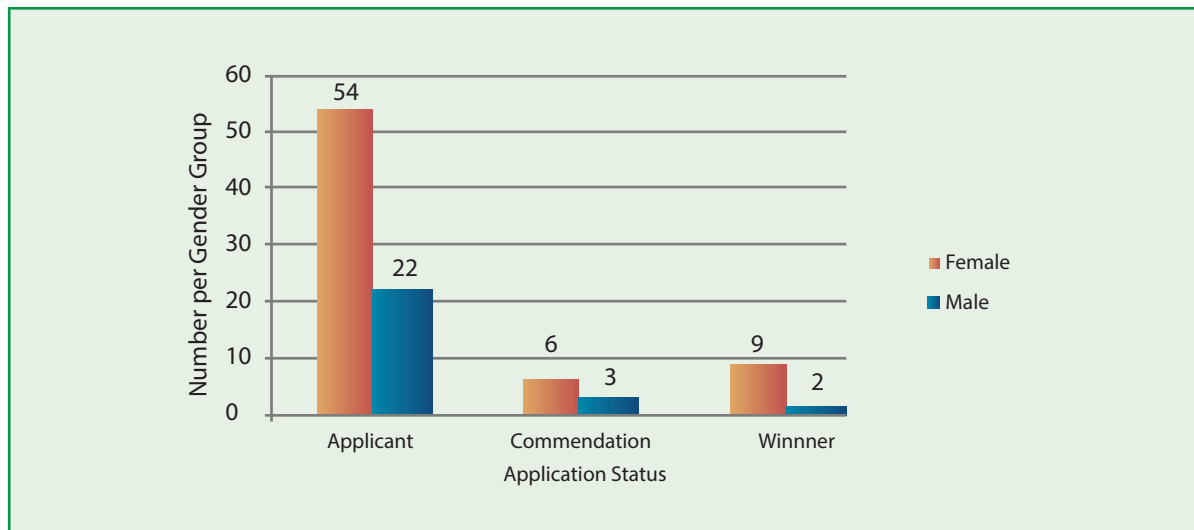


Figure 3: Application Status per Gender Group

4.2.5 Distribution of applicants according to race

White applicants consistently outnumbered those from other racial categories, as depicted in Figure 4 below. (One applicant's "race" could not be established.) This distribution is inconsistent with the ratios amongst academic staff, where in 2007 there were 60% white academics, thus less than in the ratio depicted in Figure 3 (CHE, 2009). The distribution could be reflective of levels of seniority, since in 2007 80% of academic staff at professorial level was white (CHE, 2009). It could also have to do with factors that would require further research and discussion. For example, what are conditions at formerly historically disadvantaged institutions, and how do these discourage lecturers from applying for teaching awards? What are the conditions that make it more difficult for academics at these institutions to achieve what has been defined thus far as excellence? What might make African academics at any South African institution less likely to apply for a teaching excellence award than white academics?

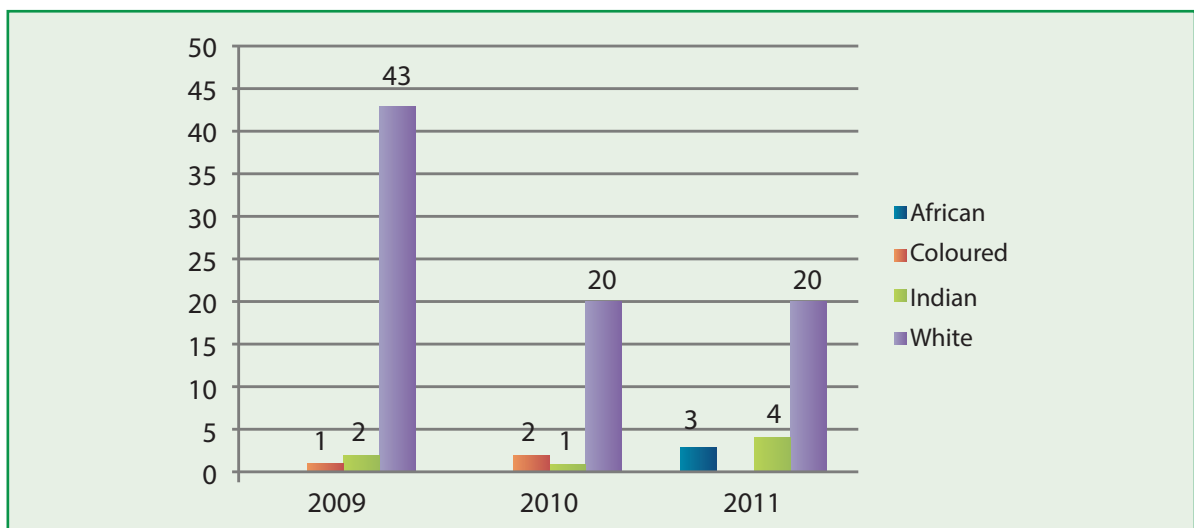


Figure 4: Distribution of applicants according to race

Figure 5 displays the distribution according to race for those who received commendations and those who were the award winners.

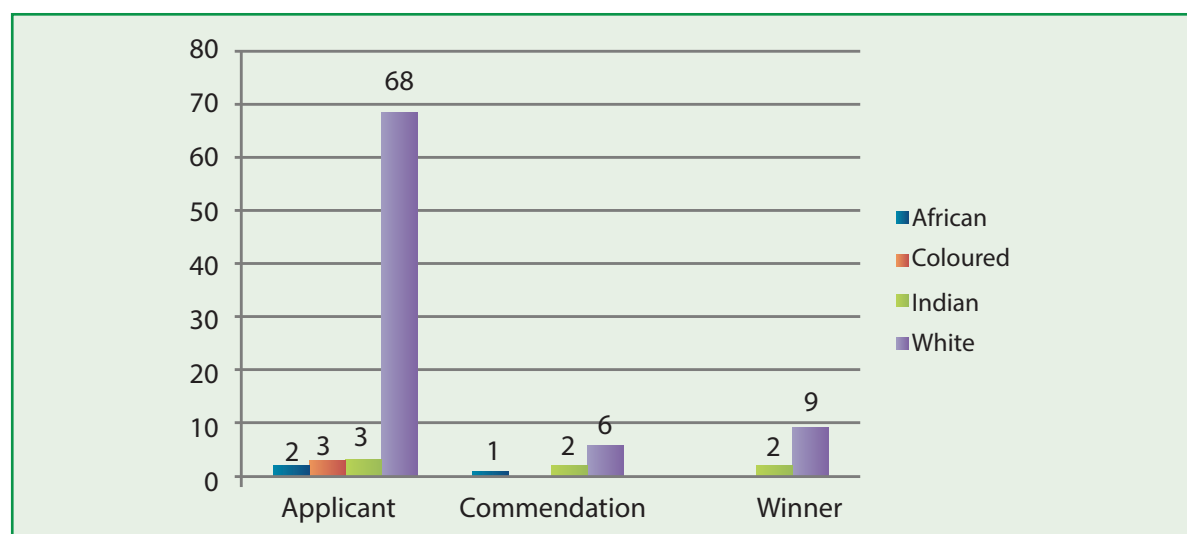


Figure 5: Application status according to race

In terms of seniority and qualification levels out of the 11 award winners, six were at the level of Professor/Associate Professor, two Doctor and three below the level of Doctor.

4.3 Questionnaires to Applicants

With a view to understanding the applicants' motivations and experiences of the application process, three separate questionnaires were designed – one for each group of applicants. These were emailed to each set of applicants: the award winners, those who received commendations, and those who applied but were not successful. The responses from each group were analysed thematically and the key points for each section of the questionnaire are presented. The questionnaires are provided in appendices 2, 3 and 4.

Seven of the 13 award winners responded to the questionnaire (listed as A in the comments below); four of the nine recipients of the commendations (C) and nine responses out of 76, for those who received no award (N).

4.3.1 Motivation for applying

Various motivations were cited for applying for the award. The first was that of receiving recognition:

To receive recognition for ten years of dedication to help establish the academic field of [mentions field] at local, national and international level. (A 2)

I believe the bilingual degree (the first undergraduate degree in South Africa, in which an African language, Sesotho sa Leboa is used along with English,) that I started with my team was worthy of recognition. (C 4)

A second reason highlighted by respondents was receiving support and recommendations to apply from a dean and head of department:

Our Director of Teaching and Learning encouraged me to apply. (A 3)

A third motivation was to use this to reflect on one's professional life:

I thought it would be a good reason to take stock and reflect on my professional life. In our busy lives, time for reflection is rare and precious! I also felt it was a helpful way to highlight the collaborative nature of many of the teaching and learning projects I have been involved in recently – with my innovative [mentions department] colleagues as well as with university-wide projects.(A 3)

A fourth reason cited was that the applicant had been nominated and/or won a teaching and learning accolade previously:

I have been Teacher of the year of the Business and Economic Sciences in 2010. I have won the award of excellent teacher due to my teaching skills and abilities of handling our first year Accounting 1 class; 450 plus per lecture. (N 1)

A final reason cited was to compare, compete or benchmark, “To determine the quality of my module” (N 2).

4.3.2 Receipt of institutional support

Fifteen of the 26 respondents indicated receiving support for the preparation of their application. This included support from the dean or from the Director for Teaching and Learning or equivalent. This was not the case for all the applicants, as the recipient of a commendation wrote:

None at all! In fact institutional support for this innovative degree has been sadly lacking at top management level. It is only the enthusiasm of our young students that keeps us going, despite many difficulties and obstacles. (C 4)

A form of support was also prior experience in having to prepare a portfolio:

I had completed and submitted an assessment portfolio in December 2007. This experience significantly assisted me in my application for the award. (A 1)

4.3.3 Process of applying for the award

For most of the respondents the process was easy to follow. One of the respondents highlighted that the process of applying allowed her the opportunity to reflect more on her professional development:

... I found the process itself very generative and satisfying, giving me the impetus to reflect on my teaching and learning activities and involvement in a structured way. ... So this process helped me to think more about my own professional growth and development, with teaching obviously as a key thread. (A3)

A recipient of a commendation specifically complained that her institution had not informed her in advance, leaving her with one day to prepare her application.

Although some of the non-winners found the process adequate, two reported not receiving the final decision on their application at all, and others had critical comment, most notably that the guidelines were not clear enough:

The guidelines were not quite clear - it was difficult to decide what to focus on, especially in view of the limited number of pages allowed in the application. (N5)

The non-winning respondents also reporting finding the requirements, especially regarding length, difficult to deal with:

I was unhappy with the layout of the teaching portfolio we had to submit. It was far too short to do any justice to one's teaching. My personal portfolio is 10 times longer than what was required for this award and I could not do myself justice. It was frankly a waste of time. (N9)

Another criticism from this group was that the feedback was not specific or useful enough, so that they could use it to improve:

I truly feel that the feedback wasn't very useful. It was 'general feedback' about what eliminated some applicants and which criteria made other applications successful. There was no feedback on what lacked in MY application or what was good in my portfolio. (N10)

The award winners were mostly satisfied with how they were notified about their award, and one was pleased that her DVC had been part of the process:

I was officially notified by our DVC, who then also announced it to the university community; the DVC's involvement probably was a useful means of signalling that teaching and learning matters to the institution. (A3)



4.3.4 Impact of receiving the award

Successful applicants were asked about the process of receiving the award as well as the long-lasting impact. They found the experience of receiving it at the annual HELTASA Conference highly motivating:

Overwhelming, and absolutely thrilling to have received the award at a national platform among respected and distinguished colleagues and guests. (A1)

It was very exciting and affirming; the dinner was a wonderful opportunity to meet and get to know the other recipients, and the sharing session the next day was set up by the conference organisers to be a relaxed and collegial forum to share 'teaching tales.' (A3)

Of interest is the personal or professional impact of the award on award winners. The impact described is similar to the benefits recorded in the international literature on awards:

The award motivated me to pursue my doctoral studies, and to continue to improve my other research activities such as writing journal papers and presenting at conferences. (A1)

It had a personal impact in the sense that it served to confirm that my educational pursuits have been recognised as being of value and provided motivation for continuing these pursuits (A2)

The award came at a time when I was rethinking my path in academia; and certainly the award has reaffirmed my decision to spend less time in management, and on university committees, and more time in the classroom! (A3)

I felt that the effort and time I put into improving large class undergraduate teaching had been recognised and rewarded. (A4)

One can surely say that for this group and through this group, it had a beneficial impact on teaching and learning:

The award encouraged me to complete my web-based teaching and learning certificate (NQF Level 7). ... The award also influenced me to introduce and experiment with more teaching-and-learning strategies such as workshop interventions to provide first-year students with epistemological access to [mentions subject]. (A1)

Professionally, the award was widely publicised at my university, which, I hope, helped to legitimise T&L practice and research as a worthy academic endeavour". (A3)

Five respondents noted that they were able to, or are planning to; use the financial award to fund conference registration fees, attendance of a short course or international travel.

Eight of those who did not receive an award indicated that this had no impact for them, and seven said that it did. For two this impact was negative, and for five, it provided encouragement and an opportunity for reflection:

It was a useful reflection on my scholarship in terms of teaching and learning. (N10)

For one of these it encouraged a kind of "application literacy":

Every time you prepare an application, based on criteria, it does make you think what you are doing. (N5)

Of the unsuccessful respondents, eight indicated that they would not apply for the award again, because it is too much work, the requirements do not fit their material, or because there is not enough feedback to improve, ("apples are not compared with apples") or because their attention had shifted to other matters.

4.3.5 Institutional publicity for the awards

There was more publicity for the recipients of the full awards than for the commendations, although in both cases they were mostly recognised. The following are examples of what universities did to publicise the award or honour the recipients of the awards:

I was the recipient of the “Gender Forum Award for Success” honoured by DUT’s Gender Forum, and guest speaker at various forums. (A1)

Yes, it was publicised in the Faculty’s and University’s communication media (Impromptu, Tygerland, Kampusnuus, Matieland). (A2)

No not really – there was a request from the DVC but it was never followed up by our publicity dept nor was the second recipient from our institution XXX. I have placed her presentation on You Tube though with her permission. (W6)

4.3.6 Suggestions for broader publicity

Apart from one dissatisfied non-winner who found the process to be chaotic, and recommended “First fix the mess inside before you even think about publicising it further!” many detailed and extensive suggestions were made from all three groups of respondents about how to publicise the awards, and by extension, good teaching. These included placing more information about the award winners on the CHE and HELTASA websites, making videos of the award winners teaching, inviting award winners to give talks at other universities, rewarding the institution, creating a system like the NRF or using local newspapers. The following are samples of the comments received:

Probably just a dream, but I would in the long run envision teaching and learning awards and rating of teachers in higher education on a system similar to the NRF. What about the National Teachers in HE Foundation? Teaching and learning are not recognised as much as research in HE. This award is but one example of giving recognition to teachers in HE. Awareness about quality teaching in SA is improving, but we need the buy in of Dept of Education [DHET], CHE and every tertiary institution in SA. (N10)

Nobody really knows anything about these awards and why should people care? Are there any benefits for the winners? Financial or otherwise? Collaborate with the universities so that there are real benefits for the winners, possibly for the university itself. In that way the universities will do their bit to raise awareness and make sure it appears in the press. University ratings are mostly about research and publications; why don’t we have the “Best Teaching University”? (N13)

Put it in a journal like SAJHE with the pieces that the people did, have an on-going blog where recipients can respond with others regarding pedagogical practice. Have the recipients visit HEIs the year after the award to disseminate good practice. National press such as Mail and Guardian could have a small articles in the Higher Ed[ucation] section. (A6)

4.3.7 Other suggestions regarding the awards

Various suggestions were made about the nature of the awards, loosely grouped as follows:

Award categories
• there should be a team or departmental collaboration category; • two awards categories, one for younger (less experienced) and one for more established staff members.
Use institutions more
• deans and departmental heads should be copied in on award notifications.
Criteria and guidelines
• make criteria clearer; • not such a limited number of pages; • clearer feedback; • provide tips on how to present the material.

4.4 Comment from Centre Heads and Deputy Vice-chancellors

4.4.1 University processes

The award winners appear to be selected via various means, in order of most common to least common:

- deans are asked to select or faculty awards are used;
- there is an open invitation to the staff;
- no clear process;
- via campus based academic development officers;
- the deputy vice-chancellor selects.

Nine out of the 16 respondents specifically mentioned supporting the applicants with their applications, either by one-on-one support processes, or a workshop on portfolios and applications.

The winners' achievements were mainly publicised on the institutions' internal, and in one case external, media. In some instances these were announced at Senate meetings. In one case the award was announced at a function where various vice-chancellor awards are made and for one award winner, the award was announced at a graduation ceremony.

4.4.2 Impact and value

The telephonic survey questioned respondents about their views of their own institutional schemes as well as about the national CHE/HELTASA Teaching Excellence Awards. Two deputy vice-chancellors commented specifically on the institutional awards, about which they felt strongly:

I think teaching awards play a crucial role in reminding tertiary institutions that teaching is core business. Given the massive incentives researchers enjoy in SA universities, teaching awards are a drop in the ocean. But without them we'll lose the plot completely. We need to catch up with the fact that, internationally, the most highly ranked universities are taking teaching seriously!

I am glad to say that at our institution I have witnessed an increased emphasis on evidence of teaching excellence when senior academic appointments and promotions are being considered. Teaching awards would be one form of such evidence. In faculties where teaching awards are accompanied by substantial rewards they certainly acquire a lot of status. The challenge with teaching awards is of course that we are still struggling to find consensus on what the indicators of good teaching are.

Responses by the heads of professional development units about the value of the national awards varied, with the overall impression being that it would be good if it did have an impact, but it is not clear whether it does so. Several say it has impact, others say it would have impact if it were publicised more, and others are not sure. The following is a summary of comments:

- yes: 2;
- yes it has had an impact on the culture of teaching, not on teaching *per se*: 1;
- yes but not enough staff are aware of it: 1;
- too early to say: 1;
- not sure: 3;
- no, due to lack of developmental feedback to applicants: 1;
- yes but not as much as more systemic work: 1;
- not really, only those who care about teaching pay attention to it: 1.

One DVC commented specifically about the need to continue the scheme, citing motivational impact as well as the value for benchmarking purposes:

I would be very distressed if this award were to be discontinued. It is the only national context in which teaching excellence can be showcased, and through which lecturers who take teaching seriously are afforded recognition for their work and their commitment beyond their home institutions. The award also has the effect of providing benchmarks against which institutions and individuals can measure their own teaching performance!

One head of a professional development unit at a former HDI indicated satisfaction that two applicants at the university received commendations:

Last year we had two commendations which was the first time, and it was very nice because it was the first time we promoted someone.

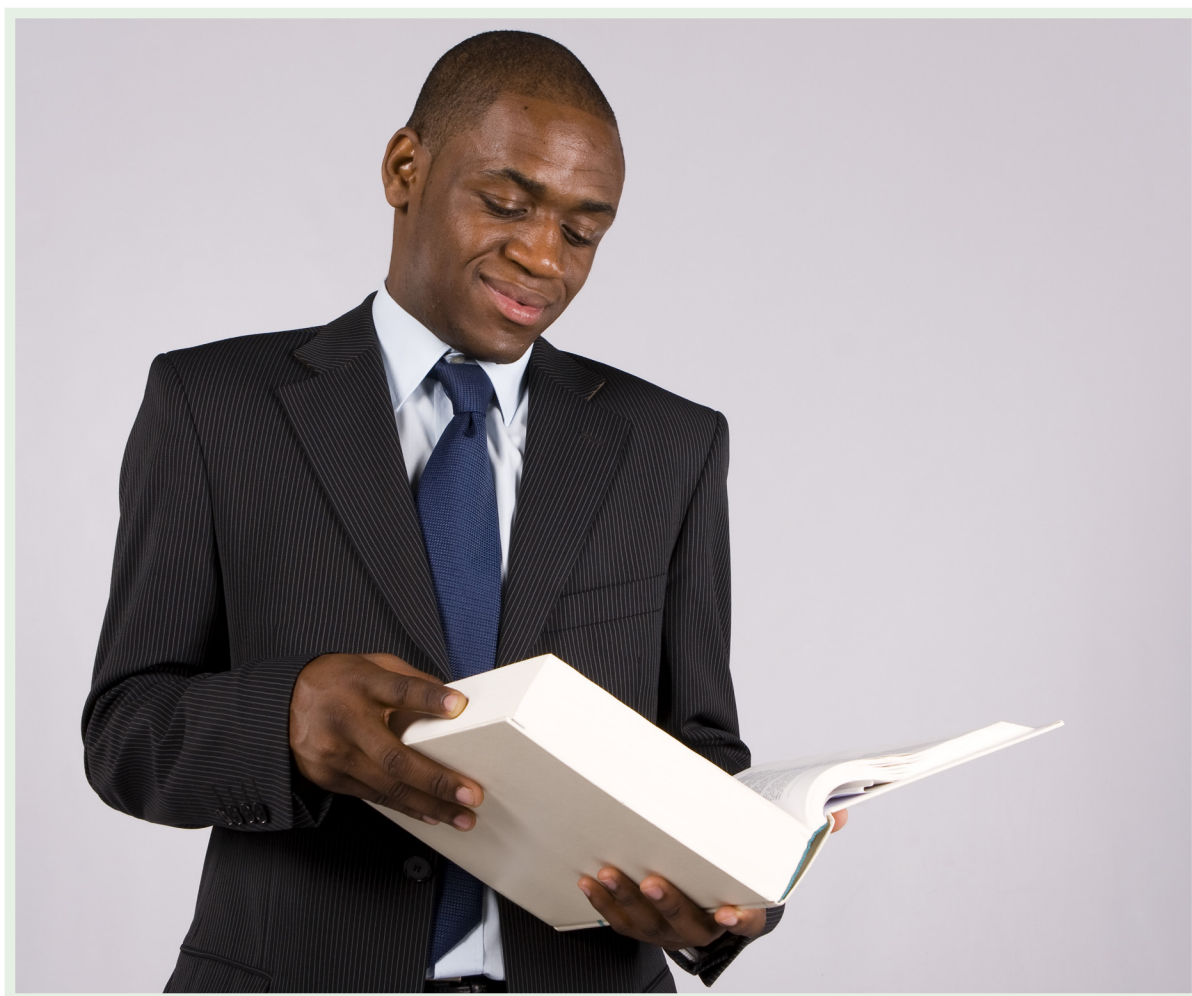
Respondents were also asked what they thought should be done to enhance the impact of the scheme. Suggestions fall into several categories, namely, to broaden the base of applications at institutions; link

them more directly to systemic and capacity building initiatives; use awardees more as ambassadors, use them for capacity building and use such opportunities to develop their capacity (rather than treat these activities as a once off events). A longer list is provided below:

- increase the award amount;
- rather make awardees fellows;
- send awardees overseas, to international conferences, as emissaries from this country;
- broaden the base by having faculty awards;
- it would help if there was a more systemic approach, for example with the CHE/HEQC capacity development activities;
- give an institutional award or incentive as well;
- relate more to capacity development, along the lines of the HERS-SA Academy;
- give them a more capacity enhancement role, for example for them to run workshops in the regions;
- publicise nationally, for example on the television;
- have frequent regional or national workshops and promote discussion on what is good teaching, what are criteria for good teaching, have resources on the web, have portfolios of successful candidates on the web;
- promote more open debate about quality teaching especially in relation to equity issues and HDIs;
- it should be part of a much larger national developmental network and organisation, such that awardees could put it along with their title;
- share the presentations internationally, for example, at an Across the Globe Higher Education Learning and Teaching, International Consortium for Educational Development (ICED) conference or upload them on YouTube.

Finally, respondents were asked if they had suggestions to improve the administration of the award. Several said they were satisfied with the way the awards system is implemented. Various suggestions made were:

- do something to allow the depth and quality of teaching to emerge from the portfolios;
- promote open debate about criteria so that all can participate more equitably;
- publicise it more;
- feature successful profiles and portfolios on the website;
- have regional awards so as to broaden the base;
- allow podcasts in applications;
- find ways for the national awards and institutional awards to be more aligned, to promote ease of application.



5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions relating to the four questions which informed the study.

5.1.1 What criteria are used for international and national awards systems?

The criteria used for international and national awards systems vary greatly. Many criteria systems share similar concepts such as encouraging student learning, being reflective or being respectful of student diversity. However some also show measurement of process or product, teaching quality, teaching expertise or teaching excellence. They vary in length and degree of specificity or value load. They often mix criteria, domains and competencies within a single list. The criteria in South Africa display similar characteristics to the international criteria, and likewise suffer the same kinds of challenges and weaknesses.

5.1.2 What is the state of teaching and learning awards in HEIs in South Africa, and what is their perceived impact?

It would seem that all, or almost all, South African institutions either have teaching awards or are preparing to implement an awards system. The various aspects of the awards such as a money value linked to each award or how the number of awards, vary from one institution to another. Respondents at the HEIs were mostly in favour of their institutional awards and believed that they have value. Several institutions have begun drafting policies for teaching excellence awards since the inception of the CHE/HELTASA national teaching excellence awards. This implies that the national awards could have a beneficial impact on higher education teaching recognition in that it signals the importance of high quality teaching.

5.1.3 What implications does this have for the CHE/HELTASA national teaching excellence awards?

The implication for the CHE/HELTASA national teaching excellence awards is that, the prevalence of a number of HEI teaching award systems provides a basis on which to build the national awards. Moreover some of the institutional awards have only recently been established and it will, therefore, take some time for the culture of documenting teaching practice and teaching quality to filter through to academics at these institutions. In this context, the national awards must be seen as at an early stage of implementation, and it would not be unexpected to see modest results over a period of years linked to a slow institutional culture change. The literature survey shows that there will be successful outcomes *only if* there are complementary policy and capacity developments occurring both at national and higher education institution levels.

5.1.4 What has been the reception of the awards nationally?

The nominees/applicants were drawn from a number of public South African higher education institutions, with the distribution highly slanted towards whites and females. Awardees noted the impact of the awards system on their professional lives, and predictably, more so than the unsuccessful applicants, whose responses were mixed. In general, applicants found the administration of the award

to have been adequate. However there was an impression gained by some of the survey recipients that the criteria or guidelines were not equally fair across all teaching and learning contexts, be these geographical, socio-economic or disciplinary.

While the awards contribute towards a heightened awareness of the importance of excellence in teaching, and the recognition of the teaching contribution made by academics, it unfortunately reinforces the inequities of the South African higher educational system rather than of creating an awareness and commitment to national unity of purpose. On the one hand, the awards are recognised to be a serious attempt to give substance to the intention signalled in the Higher Education White Paper 3 (1997) to interpret and signal quality:

1.21 The pursuit of the principle of quality means maintaining and applying academic and educational standards, both in the sense of specific expectations and requirements that should be complied with, and in the sense of ideals of excellence that should be aimed at. These expectations and ideals may differ from context to context, partly depending on the specific purposes pursued. Applying the principle of quality entails evaluating services and products against set standards, with a view to improvement, renewal or progress (Education White Paper 3, 1997).

On the other hand the awards are arguably, partly because of the existing inequalities in the higher education system and partly because of the failure of the awards criteria to define quality in a sufficiently context-sensitive manner, perceived to aggravate inequities across institutions rather than contribute towards their elimination. It is fair to say that problems of educational and social inequality will not be solved by the awards system itself. It requires attention at a more systemic level, including the societal and educational levels. The purpose of the awards and their implementation will require some review and honing.

It would appear that there is a widespread recognition that the awards are of value and have the potential to promote good teaching or the culture of teaching. Several writers in the international setting have observed, however, that this depends on the broader policy and institutional environment in which such awards are implemented. There is a concern that the awards might be counter-productive, by encouraging managerialist and individualist attitudes and practices. Teaching excellence awards (at both institutional and national levels) are, in their current form, most likely not a major driver of high quality teaching, but on the other hand, they require comparatively little funding and capacity to manage in comparison with major national system-wide teaching improvement initiatives. As with many large-scale change programmes, it is not easy to prove incontrovertibly whether, and to what extent, they contribute to teaching quality and student academic success. There is also a danger that their absence would signal a gap and a silence about teaching, in comparison with the situation that prevails in relation to the recognition and stature of research in higher education. Therefore, rather than abandon them, consideration should be given to how best to shape their use. What follows is a list of recommendations on interventions to enable the awards system to play a modest, but productive role in recognising and promoting teaching quality.

5.2 Recommendations about the recognition and promotion of quality teaching in South Africa

- 5.2.1 There should be promotion of debate about quality teaching and about the extent to which quality teaching can be specified in a context sensitive manner, as well as in relation to the purposes of higher education in South Africa.
- 5.2.2 Ways should be found to link debates on quality teaching and learning and the concerns arising out of this report, with national debates and even processes such as the DHET Teaching Development Grant funding that is currently allocated to all South African public higher education institutions.
- 5.2.3 There should be capacity development activities for educational developers to promote the understanding and use of quality constructs such as “criteria”, “indicators” and “standards”.
- 5.2.4 Consideration should be given to the establishment of a professional framework similar to the British HEA Professional Standards Framework as well as to a strongly developmental fellowship scheme such as the FAIMER and SAFRI Fellowship schemes.
- 5.2.5 There should be lobbying and fundraising at the national level for more systemic and context-sensitive capacity development initiatives with regard to the promotion of quality teaching. The outcome should benefit all South African public and private HEIs, with due attention to challenges faced by individuals from various social backgrounds. Institutional characteristics and types should be taken into account.

5.3 Recommendations for further research

There should be further context-sensitive research on the conditions prevailing at South African universities and how these challenges could be overcome in order to promote the recognition of teaching excellence at both institutional and national levels. This research could investigate what the conditions are in different contexts, and what should be in place, in order to promote the professional development of academics with regard to their teaching role.

5.4 Recommendations for the continued implementation and revision of the National CHE/HELTASA Teaching Excellence Awards

- 5.4.1 The scheme (excellence awards and commendations) should be continued for another three years, but with thorough consideration of the suggestions below.
- 5.4.2 Further attention to what “context sensitive criteria” in relation to teaching quality and teaching excellence might mean (that is, for example, taking into account institutional and regional contextual realities).
- 5.4.3 Establishment of fairer categories for applications, for example:
 - Emerging teacher (teaching for 5 – 10 years);
 - Senior teacher (senior lecturer and above);
 - Teaching quality in contexts of adversity (personal or institutional adversity);
 - Academic development (those involved primarily in service and support, as opposed to direct teaching);
 - Collaboration (more than one person, which could include collaboration across programmes and institutions).

- 5.4.4 Consideration of “broadening the base” initiatives, such as regional or disciplinary schemes upon which this national scheme could build. This could include public and private provider collaborations.
- 5.4.5 Consideration of how the Selection Committee can provide useful individual developmental feedback to unsuccessful applicants.
- 5.4.6 Substantial attention to greater publicity for the scheme and the development of web-based resources such as good practice portfolios.



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Higher Education Academy: <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/professional-recognition>

Hong Kong University: <http://tl.hku.hk/teaching-excellence-awards>

HERDSA: <http://www.herdsa.org.au>

National Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award, New Zealand: <http://akoaotearoa.ac.nz/awards>

Professional and Organisational Development, United States (POD):

http://www.podnetwork.org/grants_awards.htm

SAFRI: <http://safri.fairmerfri.org/>

STLHE (Canada): www.mcmaster.ca/3Mteachingfellowships/ and

<http://www.stlhe.ca/awards/alan-blizzard-award/>

Thompson Rivers University: http://www.tru.ca/ctl/teaching_awards/teaching_excellence.html

University of Southern California: http://cet.usc.edu/resources/awards_grants/associates

University of Waikato: <http://www.akoaotearoa.ac.nz/awards>

ACRONYMS

ALTC	Australian Learning and Teaching Council
ASASWEI	Association of South African Social Work Education Institutions
AUTC	Australian University Teachers Committee
CETL	Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning
CHE	Council on Higher Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DVC	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
FAIMER	Foundation for the Advancement of International Medical Education and Research
FIRTL	Fund for the Innovation and Research in Teaching and Learning
HAI	Historically Advantaged Institution
HDI	Historically Disadvantaged Institution
HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Academy
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HELTASA	Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HERDSA	Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia
ICED	International Consortium for Educational Development
NRF	National Research Foundation
NTFS	National Teaching Fellowships Scheme
OISE	Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
POD	Professional and Organisational Development
SA	South Africa
SAAHE	South African Association of Health Educationalists
SAFRI	Southern Africa-FAIMER Regional Institute
STLHE	Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
USA	United States of America
USC	University of Southern California

APPENDIX 1:

CHE/HELTASA NATIONAL TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2012



National Excellence in Teaching and Learning Awards 2012



The Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa (HELTASA) in collaboration with the Council on Higher Education will be making up to a maximum of five National Excellence in Teaching and Learning Awards in 2012.

Aims of the National Excellence in Teaching and Learning Awards

- To show support at a national level for excellence in teaching and learning in higher education.
- To generate a cadre of academics who are identifiable and able to provide inspiration and leadership in teaching in their disciplines, institutions and regions.
- To generate debate and public awareness about what constitutes teaching excellence.

Eligibility

Academics (lecturers and academic development practitioners) at all South African public higher education institutions are eligible for this award.

Criteria

Applications will be considered holistically. The committee will evaluate the degree of reliability of data, and alignment of claims articulated with evidence provided. Awards will be made on the basis of evidence of some or all of the following:

Criteria	This means that	Evidence
Teaching is effective in a variety of contexts (80%)	The Lecturer - Aligns outcomes, teaching and learning activities and assessment constructively when planning his/ her teaching. - Creates rich environments for active learning. - Sets high expectations. - Shows skills in the art and craft of teaching. - Is enthusiastic. - Is well prepared for class, presents material in an interesting and clear manner and has the ability to encourage diverse students to be engaged and learn. - Links to prior and future knowledge showing the relevance of what students are learning to the outcomes of the programme and the students' goals. - Responds creatively to challenges in the teaching context, including those posed by limited resources. - Can organise, emphasise and clarify ideas, and communicate knowledge beyond the mere exchange of information. - Blends new ideas, research and developments into teaching both within and outside the classroom. - Is fair and reasonable in the assessment of student learning and provides a variety of assessment opportunities with constructive feedback for formative development based on transparent assessment criteria. - Is open to new techniques and approaches to stimulate intellectual growth and to generate active student participation, including using a range of community engagement activities from work-integrated learning to service learning. - Is open to using a variety of delivery modes including face-to-face and technology enhanced. - Is innovative in his/ her teaching. - Makes significant contributions to teaching materials, development of the curriculum, teaching methods or the assessment of student learning in his/ her discipline. - Elicits feedback about teaching quality on a regular and systematic basis and uses students' feedback to improve teaching and assessment.	Evidence could include but is not restricted to the following: - Own reflections on teaching philosophy - Peer review/ endorsement/ testimony - Student feedback - Letters of support from students - Artefacts such as study guides, multimedia, online materials, innovative student assessment, photographs

Criteria	This means that	Evidence
	Students • Experience a sense of intellectual and practical engagement. • Believe that the lecturer respects them as human beings and embraces their diversity and their different viewpoints. • Know of and use support effectively (e.g. attend tutorials) • Believe that their lecturer cares about their progress. • Experience their lecturer as approachable and available. • Achieve success at university and in their careers.	Evidence could include but is not restricted to the following: • Student feedback scores/ comments • Student retention rates • Student success data • Letters of support from students
The lecturer's involvement with teaching and learning has a broader impact within the university and beyond. (20%)	The Lecturer • Is concerned to advance the principles of good teaching within disciplinary communities and in the university more generally. • Inspires and mentors others, particularly in challenging contexts. • Shares experiences of teaching in a variety of fora. • Assumes leadership in teaching, learning and assessment whether at discipline, departmental or School/ Faculty level. • Collaborates with others within the discipline/ field, university or with other universities. • Assumes responsibilities on departmental curriculum or teaching committees. • Is engaged in activities to improve teaching; e.g. attends seminars/ workshops, develops special teaching materials or publications (including conference papers and journal articles), explores alternative methods, reads on teaching, learning and assessment, engages in reflective practice, undertakes action research, participates in professional bodies/ associations that promote teaching and learning, and seeks aid in trying new teaching ideas.	Evidence could include but is not restricted to the following: • Peer review/ endorsement/ testimony • Papers read on the subject of teaching and learning • Articles or other publications on teaching and learning • Membership of professional associations and their special interest groups • List of university committees • List of CPD

The application process

1. A maximum of three applications per university may be sent via the office of the Vice-Chancellor/Rector or relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor/Vice-Rector.
2. Institutions may consider nominating as candidates, winners of the university's own teaching awards. If a university does not have such a system, it is suggested that a process for selection and a committee be set up to administer the application process.
3. A university may send the application of the same individual more than once, but only after one year has lapsed since the previous application, and provided that the application has undergone some revision. (An applicant will not receive the national award twice).
4. General questions about the awards can be directed to Brenda Leibowitz at: bleibowitz@sun.ac.za or tel: 021 808 3717.
5. If a university would like to request additional support for advising on the selection or the portfolio development process, such requests should reach Wendy Kilfoil (wendy.kilfoil@up.ac.za) or Jeffrey Jawitz (jeff.jawitz@uct.ac.za) preferably before the end of March 2012.
6. The due date for all applications is: Friday 15 June 2012. The outcome of the selection process will be announced by 30 September 2012. Awards will be handed over at the HELTASA annual conference which will take place from 28 – 30 November 2012 at Stellenbosch University.

The applications

1. All applications must be accompanied by a copy of the cover sheet provided below, to be completed by the applicant.
2. All applications should be prepared taking into account the criteria and possible sources of evidence referred to above. It is advisable that this evidence spans several years of teaching.
3. Further information should include:
 - Information about the applicant and the applicant's teaching context (level of seniority of applicant, part/full time, discipline taught, size of classes, teaching context e.g. main/ satellite campus, areas of key challenge).
 - A photograph and abridged curriculum vitae of the applicant.
 - The applicant's statement about teaching and learning, what they do and why.
 - A letter from a nominator (1/2 – 1 page). The nominator could be:
The Rector/Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor/Vice Rector responsible for teaching and learning; or

- The applicant's Head of Department or Dean
The applicant's Head of the Centre for Teaching and Learning or equivalent unit.
4. No incomplete applications will be considered.

How to apply on-line

5. All applications should be provided in the form of: *either* one covering form and one full pdf and accompanying media clips (maximum 100 MB per file) *or* a covering letter and a link to a portfolio on an applicant's website.
6. Go to: heltasa.org.
The first time you log in, you will need to create an account on the left-hand side.
After you have logged in, click on: teaching and learning
Click on: teaching and learning awards
Click on: applications. Here you will find instructions on how to upload your files.
7. At: note, click: edit, and you can add any notes about whose applications you are sending in, any other explanations, or the web address of your portfolio.
8. If you have any questions or difficulty with uploading onto the website, contact Ms M Van Rooyen (vrooyen@sun.ac.za) (021 808 9385).

Selection Committee for 2012

Dr Mark Hay	Executive Director, Quality Assurance, Council on Higher Education
Ass. Prof. Jeff Jawitz	University of Cape Town
Prof Wendy Kilfoil	University of Pretoria
Ass. Prof Brenda Leibowitz	Stellenbosch University
Dr Matete Madiba	HELTASA Chairperson, University of Pretoria
Dr Masebala Tjabane	Vaal University of Technology
Mr Geoffrey Tshephe	University of Limpopo
Ms Anisa Vahed	Durban University of Technology

The Award

An award of R30 000 and a certificate will be made available to a maximum of five candidates. The successful candidates will be expected to receive the award at the 2012 HELTASA conference, which will take place from 28 – 30 November at Stellenbosch University. The successful candidates will also be expected to make a short presentation on their work at a panel at the conference.



National Excellence in Teaching and Learning Awards 2012

Cover Sheet

This cover sheet should accompany the application.

Applicant Information

Name:

Department/Centre:

University:

Postal address:

Email:

Telephone number:

Fax number:

Signature:

Date:

Nominator's Information

Name:

Department/Centre/Office:

University:

Postal address:

Email:

Telephone number:

Fax number:

Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX 2:

QUESTIONS FOR TELEPHONIC INTERVIEW/EMAIL QUESTIONNAIRE - DVCs AND HEADS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT UNITS

Section One: Identity of Informant

- Name
- Contact details (for possible follow up)
- Position and department/centre
- University

Section Two: Teaching Excellence at the University

1. Does your university have a system and criteria for promotion based on teaching quality?
2. If so, can you provide us with a copy of any related documentation?
3. Does your university have a system and criteria for the recognition of teaching excellence (eg faculty or university-wide awards for teaching excellence)?
4. If so, can you provide us with any related documentation?

Section Three: Participation in the CHE/HELTASA awards

1. Has your university nominated candidates to the CHE/HELTASA awards? (this information might already be included here)
2. What process was adopted at the university to forward nominations? Was the candidate supported?
3. If you had successful candidates or commendations, was anything done to publicise this?

Section Four: Perceived value of the awards

1. Are you of the opinion that the CHE/HELTASA awards have any impact on quality teaching at your university? In the country?
2. What should be done for the awards to have more impact?

Section Five: Suggestions

1. Do you have any suggestions for the improvement of the administration of the awards?

APPENDIX 3:

CHE QUESTIONNAIRE TO AWARD WINNERS

The annual CHE/HELTASA Teaching Excellence Award has been administered for three years and is at the end of its pilot phase. The Council on Higher Education (CHE) has appointed me to conduct a short investigation into the award. The purpose of this questionnaire is to get an understanding of its potential value and impact, and to find ways to improve the administration of the award.

I hope that as a winner of the award, you will find the time to fill it in and return it to Mégan Burgoyne (meganb@sun.ac.za) by **Wednesday 22 February 2012**. You are under no obligation to do so and your responses will be treated as confidential at all times.

Kind regards



Brenda Leibowitz

Section 1: Biographical Details

Year of your application (mark with an x)

2009	
2010	
2011	

Your institution

Your academic status (mark with an x)

Lecturer	
Senior lecturer	
Associate professor	
Professor	

Your discipline

For how many years have you been an academic?

Section 2: Your experience of the award

What was your motivation for applying for the award?

Did you receive any support at your institution for your application? (For example, advice on how to prepare a portfolio, guidance from your head of department or any other professional development support?)

Do you have any comments on the process of applying for the award?

Do you have any comments on the process of notification of your successful application?

What was your experience of receiving the award at the HELTASA conference?

Section 3: Impact

Did the award have an impact on you professionally and/or personally? (Please comment)

What did the financial award you received enable you to do?

Did your university, department or faculty publicise your receipt of the award in the institution and if so, how?

Section 4: Suggestions

Do you have any suggestions to improve the administration of the award in the future?

Do you have any suggestions on how to publicise the award further, or for how it can be used to raise awareness about quality teaching in South Africa?

APPENDIX 4:

CHE QUESTIONNAIRE TO RECIPIENTS OF COMMENDATIONS

The annual CHE/HELTASA Teaching Excellence Award has been administered for three years and is at the end of its pilot phase. The Council on Higher Education (CHE) has appointed me to conduct a short investigation into the award. The purpose of this questionnaire is to get an understanding of its potential value and impact, and to find ways to improve the administration of the award.

I hope that as a recipient of a commendation, you will find the time to fill it in and return it to Mégan Burgoyne (meganb@sun.ac.za) by **Wednesday 22 February 2012**. You are under no obligation to do so and your responses will be treated as confidential at all times.

Kind regards



Brenda Leibowitz

Section 1: Biographical Details

Year of your application (mark with an x)

2009	
2010	
2011	

Your institution

Your academic status (mark with an x)

Lecturer	
Senior lecturer	
Associate professor	
Professor	

Your discipline

For how many years have you been an academic?

Section 2: Your experience of the awards

What was your motivation for applying for the award?

Did you receive any support at your institution for your application? (For example advice on how to prepare a portfolio, guidance from your head of department or any other professional development support?)

Do you have any comments on the process of applying for the award?

Do you have any comments on the process of receiving notification of your commendation?

Section 3: Impact

Did receiving the commendation have an impact on you professionally and/or personally? (Please comment)

Did your university, department or faculty publicise your receipt of the award in the institution and if so, how?

Section 4: Suggestions

Do you have any suggestions to improve the administration of the award in the future?

Do you have any suggestions on how to publicise the award further, or for how it can be used to raise awareness about quality teaching in South Africa?

APPENDIX 5:

CHE QUESTIONNAIRE TO AWARD APPLICANTS

The annual CHE/HELTASA Teaching Excellence Award has been administered for three years and is at the end of its pilot phase. The Council on Higher Education (CHE) has appointed me to conduct a short investigation into the award. The purpose of this questionnaire is to get an understanding of its potential value and impact, and to find ways to improve the administration of the award.

I hope that you will find the time to fill in this short questionnaire and return it to Mégan Burgoyne (meganb@sun.ac.za) by **Wednesday 22 February 2012**. You are under no obligation to complete this and your responses will be treated as confidential at all times.

Kind regards



Brenda Leibowitz

Section 1: Biographical Details

Year of your application (mark with an x)

2009	
2010	
2011	

Your institution

Your academic status (mark with an x)

Lecturer	
Senior lecturer	
Associate professor	
Professor	

Your discipline

For how many years have you been an academic?

Section 2: Your experience of your involvement with the scheme

What was your motivation for applying for the award?

Did you receive any support at your institution for your application? (For example advice on how to prepare a portfolio, guidance from your head of department or any other professional development support?)

Do you have any comments on the process of applying for the award?

Do you have any comments on the process of receiving notification of your unsuccessful application?

Do you think you might apply again? Please comment.

Has this experience had any impact on you (professionally or personally) that you have not yet mentioned?

Section 3: Suggestions

Do you have any suggestions about how to improve the administration of the award in the future?

Do you have any suggestions on how to publicise the award further, or for how it can be used to raise awareness about quality teaching in South Africa?

APPENDIX 6:

STATEMENTS FROM NATIONAL 3M TEACHING FELLOWS

Extracted, with permission, from the Fall 2008, Number 50 Newsletter of the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) Canada.

Getting to Know You:

Malgorzata Dubiel

Mathematics

Simon Fraser University

During the last several years, I have been teaching classes in which the majority of students has a weak mathematical background, lacks confidence, and fears or dislikes the subject. At the same time, in each group, there are some students who have reasonably strong backgrounds, and sometimes even an interest in the subject. My challenge is to teach in a way that engages the whole class. While my main focus is to provide an opportunity for the weak students to build their knowledge and understanding, learn how to study mathematics and gain confidence in their abilities, I want the class to be sufficiently interesting and challenging for the best students as well.

An important milestone in my teaching career was coming to the realization that many students need more than reaching the point at which learning mathematics is not as daunting a task as they thought. They need a reason to learn it other than the fact that math is part of their program requirements. I want to inspire them: to show that mathematics can be interesting, beautiful and entertaining, that it is useful and important, and that it is much different from what their school experience has taught them. In my teaching, I collect and implement assignment tasks that engage students and seem more like puzzles than traditional problems, stories about interesting people involved in doing mathematics; cartoons and quotation that present mathematics and mathematical thinking in a different light. I also include games and hands-on activities in class, such as building interesting geometrical objects – and show students unexpected applications of them. It is rewarding when students later tell me about working on my problems with their parents, their children, or friends, and when they send me pictures of models they have constructed.

Katherine Frego

Biology

University of New Brunswick

During 12 years as an itinerant sessional instructor I became accustomed to taking over not only a colleague's courses, but also his or her office, house, and sometimes pets and elderly relatives. My dream was to find a place where I could "put down roots", and watch the trees that I planted reach maturity. Recently it struck me that my dream was a metaphor that described my teaching journey. (I guess I am a slow learner!)

As a plant ecologist, it's probably not surprising that I have a botanical metaphor for teaching and

learning. A learner is a seed—a unique package of self-regulated growth and unimaginable potential, but often dormant, awaiting a special trigger. As a gardener, my task is to provide that trigger: for some, simply providing moisture is sufficient stimulation; for others, an impervious “seed coat” of complex obstacles must be overcome before germination—a personal life-changing learning process—will occur.

Even after germination begins, the environment for the developing seedling is critical: a blast of cold (or heat), too much light or too long a night may stunt it, or shut it down. A skilled gardener seeks to understand the requirements of each seed—nurturing it while it is young and vulnerable, gradually allowing it to face the stresses that will “harden it off” to withstand real life conditions. As with most gardeners, I take greatest joy in watching both the previously “dormant” seeds blossom and, when I am really fortunate, watching them bear fruit. These are the students that eventually tower above their gardener.

One of the hardest lessons I have had to learn is that I am a gardener, not a farmer: I do not germinate hundreds of identical seeds, nor do I “mass produce” a field of similar plants. Cultivating a diverse mix of seeds with unknown backgrounds and potentials means that my own learning is never done. I’m, a seed, too!

Sorel Friedman

*Département d’études anglaises
Université de Montréal*

Everything I learned about teaching I learned from other teachers.

- From the person who first held open the door for me and to whom I am eternally grateful, I learned that one cannot really teach; one can only provide opportunities for learning.
- From my colleagues at the Université de Montréal, I learned how to think outside the box when using new technologies in the classroom.
- From my sailing instructor, I learned about being an independent life-long learner. He told me, “Anyone can sail when there is wind, but only an EXPERT can sail when there is no wind.”
- From my teacher of Russian language, I learned about the difficulties of learning a foreign language: “If it sounds funny to your ears, then it is right.”

I can sum up my teaching philosophy very simply: “outside the three-hour class, beyond the 15’-week semester. “Throughout my career, I have come to understand that learning must extend further than the physical walls of the classroom and beyond the few weeks of instruction that they receive from me. Mastering a language is unlike learning any other kind of academic subject; a language is indeed, acquired, and the teacher must create contexts for immersion, so that students can increase their contact hours with the language and culture outside of the classroom. A language is learned to be used for academics, for travel, for employment, for personal development. However, many of my students lack the opportunity to immerse themselves in the English language and its many cultures outside the classroom. It is through my experimentation with technology that I have come to discover innovative ways to counteract this problem and to implement my philosophy.

Robert Lapp*English Literatures**Mount Allison University*

I recall as an undergraduate being struck by something Northrop Frye suddenly declared in the middle of a lecture on The Book of Job: “There are no answers,” he said. “There are only better and better phrasings of the question.” His remark contained a lesson I have revisited many times, both as a student and as professor, and one that has come to seem as true of the questions raised by teaching and learning as those at the heart of human life. We are all students, it implies, and our learning takes the form of returning over and over again to what we thought we knew in order to regard in a new light, to approach it from a different angle, to ask fresh questions about it. One such question that I return to, as a teacher of literature, is how best to evoke in my students a taste for the subtle, a tolerance for the paradoxical and the right-vision required to glimpse the profound, all the while meeting the demand for immediate and measurable results. How can I invite my students to temper the linear pressures of career and accreditation with the patience required for a non-linear, recursive process of reading and writing about works of philosophical art that take a lifetime (or more) to unfold? With any luck (and once the grades are submitted), my students will return to the questions raised by the course, will rephrase them in their terms, and thus carry forward that inner “career” in quest of deeper knowledge, wider consciousness, and sounder understanding.

T.A. Loeffler*Human Kinetics and Recreation**Memorial University*

Metaphors are how I make sense of the world and how I communicate that understanding to others. Recently I have been on an intense journey seeking the summits of some of the world’s highest peaks and these mountains have become my teachers.

They exact deep lessons and now, I teach my students like the mountains teach me. With vision. With struggle. I ask them to reach up and out for an unknown sky. I ask them to learn while filled with uncertainty and sometimes with joy. I seek engagement – for them to climb or teach or learn without focus leads to unwelcome consequences.

Mountains are both solid and moving. They are steady, wise, and seemingly unyielding while at the same time they are changing through erosion and time. As a teacher, I seek to provide a solid authentic presence for my students. I am reliable, accessible, and my students come to know they can depend on me but that I also move and change. I reflect on my life experiences and bring change to who I am which in turn, shifts how I teach. I teach differently over time and season, continuously trying to improve my ability to facilitate student learning.

Peter Mahaffy*Chemistry**King's University*

My teaching and learning is focused on chemistry, which is the art, craft, and science of change. Chemistry education is the art, craft, and science of coaxing learners into deeper conceptual understanding about the molecular world. But conceptual change is not an end in itself, nor is it merely an 'academic' exercise. It should enable learners to see and to understand the world better, and it should empower learners to use the tools of science to transform their own circles of influence for the better.

The most effective learning takes place within a supportive and caring learning community – and I feel both a great privilege and responsibility to learn how to walk in the shoes (cross-trainers, flip-flops, crocs and mukluks) of the learners in my classroom. What “elements” of change might contribute to finding the right “chemistry” to support that larger community of learners in Canadian universities and colleges? My own list includes:

- Teach and learn as if our planet matters.
- Teach and learn as if each human being in our bursting-at-the-seams Canadian classrooms matters.
- Nurture learners' understanding of and critical reflection about the world views and human elements that shape their approaches to science, learning, and life.
- Understand and use research on how novices and experts learn.
- Seamlessly weave content and context into science curriculum to make it relevant to learners' lives.
- Teach and learn to empower with understanding of how to live with integrity in a very complex world.
- Carry out investigative academic research that is not divorced from teaching, but which pushes back frontiers while mentoring undergraduate collaborators.
- Amplify the voice of voiceless learners from around the planet.

What's on your list? What list would the learners in our classrooms draw up?

Daniel Pratt*Educational Studies**University of British Columbia*

University teaching brings challenges that are intellectual, relational, moral, and cultural. Intellectual because it deals with claims to truth; relational because it places people in interdependent roles and responsibilities; moral because it requires judgements of propriety, value and worth; and cultural because relationships and propriety are culturally and historically constituted. Of all these, it is the relational challenges that most often accompany me home at the end of the day. Let me explain.

Students come to me with experience and expertise that is enviable. They are educators, nurses, physicians, managers, scientists, artists, and ministers - veteran practitioners of crafts about which I know little. Seldom am I the most knowledgeable person in the room, except in one domain – the topics of my classes. Thus, our relationship is one of mutual exchange and respect.

This does not mean that I am their “friend”. I am not; I am their teacher, with duties and responsibilities that would be complicated or possibly compromised between friends. My role is as a colleague and co-inquirer into educational issues that matter to them and to me. In this role, I need to establish a learning climate where it is safe to take risks, to try out tentative understanding, and accept feedback that challenges current thinking and assumptions. In other words it’s my responsibility to establish a place of learning that is respectful, challenging, supportive and productive; a place where people will be willing to share what they know and admit when they don’t know. To do this, I have to park my ego at the door and enter with a delicate balance of authority and humility – authority for what I know, and humility for what they know that I do not yet know. Finding this balance is one of my biggest challenges in teaching.

Patangi Rangachari

Medicine

McMaster University

The modern research University in a pluralistic society should provide a privileged space for fostering disciplined dissent. “We few, we happy few”, who work in them, owe a responsibility both to our students as well as to society. Idols stood in Bacon’s way as he fostered the New Learning of the seventeenth century. Our standards-based world which sanctifies objective tests fails to recognize that true learning needs time. Teachers should not be mere passport control officers busy checking off lists but rather be agent provocateurs inspiring students to change the world. Braudel and other French historians of the Annales School evoked the notion of the “longue durée” where they went beyond events and looked at deeper structures of the past. We too, should teach our students to look not at the near future but the distant one (l’avenir distant, pas plus proche). This is not easy as Society sanctifies the bottom-line. About a decade ago, I took part in a panel discussion at the CBC discussing schools and universities. Pushed to give my vision of the future, I quoted an old poem by James Elroy Flecker:

I care not if you bridge the seas
Or ride secure the cruel sky,
Or build consummate palaces
Of metal or of masonry.

But have you wine and music still,
And statues and a bright-eyed love,
And foolish thoughts of good and ill,
And prayers to them who sit above?

W.H. Auden once wrote feelingly that “As biological organisms made of matter, we are subject to the laws of physics and biology: as conscious persons who create our own history we are free to decide what that history shall be. Without science, we should have no notion of equality; without art, no notion of liberty”. To that end, I have strenuously sought to give my students a glimpse of the wonders of the natural world and help them reflect on their own responsibilities to blend harmoniously the world of the sciences and the humanities so that both cherished notions, equality and liberty, can be well preserved.

Mercedes Rowinsky-Geurts*Languages and Literatures**Wilfrid Laurier University*

Teaching is about sharing information, motivating young minds to explore endless possibilities, creating a classroom environment that is safe and challenging at the same time. Teaching is about posing questions and offering tools so students can find the answers. Most importantly, teaching for me is about passion. Passion for the subject at hand, for the topics presented: passion for teaching. If we teach with passion, students feel it. They sense it. The most rewarding experiences occur when students respond with the same enthusiasm and commitment that the instructor has shown them. I feel privileged and honoured to be able to live my life doing something that I profoundly love. This is a path where rewards are presented to us daily: a student leaving a book of poems that he has written after leaving the university; a journal created by another student with quotes from my classes (apparently she had been writing them on the margin of her class notes through the years); and those who keep in touch, even years after graduation. Their accomplishments and life experiences are the unexpected rewards that keep on giving.

Jim Silcox*Obstetrics and Gynecology**The University of Western Ontario*

As I reflect at the end of my career, I see that I more or less tumbled into teaching by default. In my youth, I always considered teaching as a career alternative to Medicine, but in the end decided on Medicine, never dreaming that eventually I would be able to combine both paths in a very satisfying way. It is that combination of praxis and theory that has been at the heart of all that I teach since I constantly crave to see ideas translated into action and results. I have discovered that most of my students do, too. The result is that I thrive in small group settings where I can ask questions and get students to teach me what they think and how they plan to put their thoughts into action in the medical setting. The queries “what”, “where”, “when”, “why,” and “how” have stood me in good stead over the years and I think have helped students to get past the temptation to learn simply by rote but rather search out the reasons for what they see and what they do. Such learning “conversations” often have the effect of blurring the boundaries between teacher and student and have led me (a decidedly “small c” conservative) to engage in activities that I would not have considered on my own. Ask me sometime what my tutorial group and I were doing in a “hot yoga” class this past winter and you will see what I mean.





HIGHER EDUCATION MONITOR NO 13:

Teaching Excellence Awards in South Africa:
A National Study

Published by:

The Council on Higher Education
1 Quintin Brand Street, Persequor Technopark, 0184
P O Box 94, Persequor Park, 0020, South Africa

Tel: +27 (0)12 349 3840

Website: <http://www.che.ac.za>

ISBN: 978-1-919856-87-2

Date of Publication: October 2012

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