University of KwaZulu-Natal

Inyuvesi YakwaZulu-Natali

Curriculum Restructuring in Higher Education: Actions, reactions, and interactions

Tilly Moodley *Moodleyt2@ukzn.ac.za*

Quality Promotion and Assurance

Higher Education curriculum

- If the curriculum in Higher Education is understood to be an educational network to the ever-changing social and economic realities, government and industry needs and global pressures then the **link** between knowledge and student development is imperative.

- Continual need to consider what knowledge and experiences are most worthwhile.

HEQSF Project

- The alignment of all existing programmes with the Higher Education Qualification Sub-Framework (HEQSF) **shifts** universities in South Africa to towards changes in directions of curricula, pedagogies and the use of technologies

- Is framework an opportunity for innovation or is it a tool for control and direction?

HEQSF alignment project

Intends to improve the **coherence** of the South African higher education system and to facilitate the **articulation** of qualifications, thereby enhancing the **flexibility** of the system and enabling students to **articulate** more efficiently over time from one programme to another as they pursue their academic or professional careers.

A qualification is the **formal recognition and certification** of learning achievement awarded by an accredited institution.

A programme is a purposeful and structured set of learning experiences that leads to a qualification-may be discipline-based, professional, career-focused, inter, multi-disciplinary in nature.

HEQSF alignment project

- Attempt to promote a common understanding and integrate the HE offerings in terms of:
  - Rationale, Purpose, Naming, Entry requirement, Outcomes, Number of credits

Designator **specialisation** nested within the qualification type E.g. a Bachelor of Science degree is a designator of the generic Bachelor's degree.

Qualifier **most specific layer of qualification specification** on which

most programmes are based - E.g. For example, the learning outcomes and specifications for a BSc (Hons) in Geology meet the learning demands and specifications laid down for a BSc (Hons) and include specialised learning outcomes related to the field of Geology.

Summary of UKZN qualifications categorisation by the four Colleges as at 15 July 2014

College	Category A	Category B	Category C	Total
Law & Management Studies	22	50	26	98
Humanities	132	80	251	463
Health Sciences	25	59	50	134
Agriculture, Engineering & Science	80	23	133	236
Total	259	212	460	931

HEQSF alignment process at UKZN

- 931 programmes - complex undertaking

- an interactive - not sequential process

- The model by Walker(1971) for curriculum planning describes the process:
  - Platform
  - Deliberation
  - Design

Platform

- Academics came together as groups to undertake curriculum restructuring activities - July 2011

- Approached task with certain beliefs & values

- historical practice within the university – Bachelor of Arts Honours in Drama and Performance Studies

- professional body requirements – programmes in architecture-design module/s comprise 50% of the total credits for the programme

Platform

- reviews of programmes and modules – review of research methodology
- perceptions about task
  - "...way out of my depth here & to be honest, do not know what I am doing, it is extremely technical. I do not have the knowledge required to do the job in the way I suspect it needs to be done. I think that the timeframe given to complete this task is unrealistic and unfair"

- preliminary step was to get academics together – to a **platform**

Deliberation

- In deliberation phase attention moved away from beliefs to action though no clear separation between phases

- Programmes - Categorised as A [minimal change - few or no changes], B [some curriculum changes] or C [no longer offered]

- Uploaded on HEQSF online system in January 2012

- **But** - different beliefs - feelings ran high - alternatives considered - frustrating for people involved, a technical exercise, time consuming exercise

Deliberation

- Contextual factors – introduction of college model structure, streamlining of programmes
- Reflective practices – more than a mere technical, rational process
- practical mode of curricula problem solving – further re-categorisations submitted to HEQC

Deliberation

- Programmes restructured thro interactive discussion:

- 2 year masters -M(PopStudies), M(DevStudies), MArch

- PG Dip(Public Health)

- PG Dip(Clinical HIV Aids Management) had strong link between modules with masters – no clear understanding of body of knowledge between PG Dip & Masters degree

Design

- Deliberation leads to decisions for action
- Programme teams achieved consensus - beliefs, problematic circumstances, and potential solutions
- personal/group preferences continue to creep in leading further consideration of alternatives
- a culminating activity for the design phase is the creation of restructured Category B programmes
- Category B programmes uploaded on HEQSF online system - 15 July 2014 [greater evaluation by HEQC than Category A programmes]

Actions

- revision of professional programmes in Counselling, Clinical and Educational Psychology, which saw the introduction of modules such as African Healing Traditions' and 'African Approaches to Psychotherapy, Advanced Topics in African Psychology and African Feminisms

- Criminology the curriculum was reshaped link closely with victimology, policing & corrections within the South African context.

- Offering of selected tutorials & modules through the medium of isiZulu

Benefits of the process

- Academics see big picture (programmes in order to make sense of the small part of the picture. A single puzzle piece is meaningless until it is placed in context and a picture is visible

- From little knowledge of restructuring programmes - work in zone of proximal development - provision of scaffold tools for curriculum development

Experience and Reflection

- By an academic

- " …was useful. I am now in a space away from the technical exercise. I have a holistic view of not only the foundation programmes but programmes at masters & PhD levels, to think about offering programmes coherently from undergrad to postgrad. The process benefited me as an academic when I have to re-design programmes or conceptualise new programmes. I am more familiar with terminology (cognate). I preferred the discussions and not having to read numerous documents. The discussions helped to immediately clarify areas of concern."

Challenges

- Limited time available for programme teams to avail themselves for deliberations & for individual work

- Programme teams were not enthusiastic

- The concept of curriculum restructuring in the university setting was unfamiliar to many academics who developed & taught **modules** (courses) largely based on their own interest & areas of expertise, with little interest in ensuring coherence or identifying outcomes or objectives of the **programme**

THANK YOU

Tilly Moodley *Moodleyt2@ukzn.ac.za*
Quality Promotion and Assurance

EDGEWOOD CAMPUS   HOWARD COLLEGE CAMPUS   NELSON R MANDELA SCHOOL OF MEDICINE   PIETERMARITZBURG CAMPUS   WESTVILLE CAMPUS

UKZN INSPIRING GREATNESS