



THE SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

Lifelong Learning and Professional Development
in Residential Universities

Implementing the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training



UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE



Contents

	Page
Foreword	2
Acknowledgements from the University of the Western Cape	6
List of acronyms	8
Summary of the research	10
The research questions	16
Methodology	25
Emerging themes and insights from the research	28
“ Flexible provision in a residential university	28
“ Understanding the student body	35
“ Implementing organisational change in a university	39
“ Participatory research and democracy	45
Suggestions for the way forward	47
References	49

Foreword



The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) conducts and commissions research in line with its mandate to advance the objectives of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), oversee the implementation and development of the NQF, and coordinate the NQF Sub-Frameworks (RSA 2008).

SAQA has a small internal research unit and expands its capacity to conduct large-scale and long-term evidence-based research through a partnership model.

SAQA's research is shaped by the needs of the integrated national education and training system. SAQA research focuses on transversal issues which cut across the NQF Sub-Frameworks.

SAQA to date (2008-2015) has supported seven such partnerships. This work includes the early SAQA-Rhodes University research into workplace learning, and more recent research into learning pathways; the SAQA-University of the Western Cape (UWC) research into an optimally inclusive Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) model, the SAQA-University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) research into Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College lecturers, and the SAQA-UWC action learning and research on which this book is based.

SAQA's research is linked to the 'developing edge' of the NQF. Of immediate concern, is the extent to which the system is integrated and articulated, the extent to which it is moving towards there being 'no dead ends' for individuals seeking to follow work and learning pathways (Minister of Higher Education and Training [MHET] 2013). While access and redress have been national

imperatives for some time, the focus on supporting learners in their learning and work pathways needs to intensify.

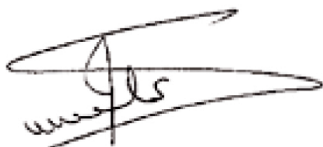
Learning pathways can be understood firstly, in terms of 'joined-up' qualifications, where achievement of a qualification enables progression to a more advanced, or a more occupationally directed, qualification or professional designation. Secondly, pathways can also be understood as being enabled through agreements between institutions of learning, or between institutions of learning and workplaces, and following processes involving Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT). Thirdly pathways can be seen in terms of the trajectories followed by individuals, as they take up, and are supported in, learning and work opportunities available to them.

Networks of education and training institutions are central for enabling lifelong learning, or, access and success, and learning pathways for diverse students of all ages. The SAQA-UWC research addresses the issue of how universities can respond meaningfully to the real circumstances of students, to enhance prospects for their success and professional development. The study sought to influence organisational change, using an action research orientation, to explore how the university could develop appropriate pedagogical approaches to help working students to succeed. The research develops an argument and approach for the university studied, to move beyond the traditional binaries of part- and full-time provision, and day and night-time time-tabling, to Flexible Learning and Teaching Provision (FLTP) for the diversity of students across the different ages and stages of life. It develops nuanced understandings of some of the enablers of, and challenges for, lifelong learning. These mechanisms operate at macro-, meso-, and micro levels, from national policy, to institutional and classroom contexts. The research can be seen as a case study, the findings of which have relevance for education and training institutions across the country.

All institutions of learning are encouraged to read this booklet, and to apply the principles it elaborates, towards flexible provision to support and

enable the success of all learners in the country. By applying the principles institutions will support learner articulation.

In conclusion I want to express my appreciation to the University of the Western Cape and in particular Professor Shirley Walters the leader of the research partnership team at UWC for the work that they have done. I also want to thank the research director, Dr Heidi Bolton, for the support and management of the research partners.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe Samuels', written over a large, stylized, horizontal oval shape that serves as a decorative underline or background for the signature.

Joe Samuels
Chief Executive Officer, SAQA

Useful references

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Acknowledgements from the University of the Western Cape Research Partner



We wish to express deep appreciation to the leadership of SAQA and acknowledge their financial and advisory support, while hastening to add that the ideas expressed in this booklet are those of the researchers alone. The role of Dr Heidi Bolton, as Director of the Research Directorate at SAQA, needs special mention. The research partnership between SAQA and the University of the Western Cape (UWC) has been exemplary in many ways.

We wish also to acknowledge all those at UWC who participated in the SAQA-UWC research project, in particular leadership, staff and students in the four research sites – Library and Information Sciences, Political Studies, School of Public Health, and the B Admin Degree, each in turn supported by their faculties. Specialist cross-cutting units like the Centre for Innovative Education and Communication Technologies (CIECT) and the Directorate of Teaching and Learning at UWC gave timely help, as did the Advisory Committee of the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee under the leadership of Professor Vivienne Bozalek. The teaching and learning leadership in all faculties participated actively at various stages, giving shape to the work.

The visiting international scholars Professors Maria Slowey, George Openjuru, Tara Fenwick, Richard Edwards, Anne Edwards and Miriam Zukas helped to frame the research in various ways at different stages through their advice and support, as did Masters student, Catherine Wynsculley. Ms Andrea Broom and her associates provided their creativity in the latter period.

The Division for Lifelong Learning (DLL) staff at UWC, particularly, Mr Vernon Weitz, Ms Barbara Jones, Dr Mark Abrahams, Ms Freda Daniels and Ms Tania Oppel all contributed to the collective effort through their diligence, integrity and humour.

It was a pleasure to work with all of you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shirley Walters', with a long horizontal line underneath it.

Professor Emerita Shirley Walters
UWC Research Project Leader

List of acronyms

ADEA	African Development Education Association
CACE	Centre for Adult and Continuing Education, UWC
CASAE	Canadian Association for Studies in Adult Education
CAT	Credit Accumulation and Transfer
CHAT	Cultural Historical Activity Theory
CIECT	Centre for Innovative Education and Communication Technologies, UWC
DESD	Decade for Sustainable Development
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DLIS	Department of Library and Information Sciences, UWC
DLL	Division for Lifelong Learning, UWC
DoE	Department of Education
EMS	Economics and Management Sciences
FET	Further Education and Training
FLTP	Flexible Learning and Teaching Provision
HAU	Historically Advantaged University
HDU	Historically Disadvantaged University
HE	Higher Education

HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
ICTs	Information Communication Technologies
IOP	Institutional Operating Plan
LLL	Lifelong Learning
MHET	Minister of Higher Education and Training
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OER	Open Education Resources
PSET	Post-School Education and Training
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAIDE	South African Institute for Distance Education
SAERA	South African Education Research Association
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SOPH	School of Public Health, UWC
STLC	Senate Teaching and Learning Committee, UWC
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UIL	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UWC	University of the Western Cape

Summary of the research

Background

The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (PSET) (Minister of Higher Education and Training [MHET] 2013:6) emphasises the importance of the integration and articulation of the system for education, training and development. Importantly, there should be ‘no dead ends’ (Ibid:6) for individuals following work and learning pathways. The White Paper challenges education and training institutions to re-think approaches to teaching and learning. The idea of Lifelong Learning (LLL) is central in achieving these objectives (Ibid:xv-xvi). Additionally, the White Paper emphasises the need to expand affordable access to education and training to youth, especially women, and to those who are working (Ibid:7-8). It is essential that Post-School

Box 1: What is ‘Lifelong Learning’?

UNESCO subscribes to four pillars of Lifelong Learning:

- .. Learning to know
- .. Learning to do
- .. Learning to live together
- .. Learning to be

SAQA defines Lifelong Learning as ‘learning that takes place in all contexts in life from a life-wide, life-deep and lifelong perspective. It includes learning behaviours and obtaining knowledge, understanding, attitudes, values and competences for personal growth, social and economic well-being, democratic citizenship, cultural identity and employability’ (SAQA 2013:5). It can take place in formal educational, informal, and non-formal, contexts.

It can be said that there are two main understandings of Lifelong Learning globally, which are in tension with each other:

- .. Lifelong Learning within neo-liberal discourses of human capital and skills development; and
- .. Lifelong Learning in the furtherance of social justice, equity and the development of civil society.

In reality, Lifelong Learning forms an interconnected, complex web that shifts and changes with people’s lives and requires an articulated, interwoven system of different forms of educational provision.

Education and Training prepares participants for work and, to this end, quality workplace education and work-integrated learning will need to play a central role (Ibid:8).

Lifelong Learning: A holistic approach

Lifelong Learning (LLL) was one of the major justifications for the establishment of the South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in 1995. Lifelong Learning is not a new concept.

The Faure Report of 1972, *Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow*, recognised that education was no longer the privilege of an elite, or a matter for only one age group. Instead, it should be both universal and lifelong (Dave 1976).

The Delors Report of 1996, *Learning: The treasure within*, saw learning throughout life as the 'heartbeat' of a society which builds on four pillars – *learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be*. It envisaged a learning society in which everyone can learn according to his or her individual needs and interests, anywhere and anytime in an unrestricted, flexible and constructive way.

The *Dakar Framework for Action* (UNESCO 2000) subsequently recognised that 'Education, starting with the care and education of young children and continuing through Lifelong , is central to individual empowerment, the elimination of poverty at household and community level, and broader social and economic development' (Ouane 2008, World Bank 2003).

The Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) has stressed the importance of Lifelong Learning for developing core skills, or capabilities, for sustainable living and survival in the 21st century. In 2009, the Belém Framework for Action adopted by the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) held in Belém do Pará in Brazil in December 2009, affirmed that the role of Lifelong Learning is critical in addressing global educational issues and challenges. Lifelong Learning has been accepted

by UNESCO's Member States as the *master concept* and *guiding principle* towards a viable and sustainable future (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning [UIL] 2011).

In reality, however, the understanding of the concept of Lifelong Learning and its importance for individuals and for sustainable socio-economic development is still limited. Comprehensive policy frameworks for promoting Lifelong Learning remain patchy, and actions towards implementing a holistic vision of Lifelong Learning are weak. This situation is in stark contrast to the socio-economic, political and cultural demand for good quality human resource development and active citizens (Openjuru 2010, Amutabi 2009, Maruatona 2006, Medel-Anonueovo 2006). It is for this reason that the European Union has adopted Lifelong Learning as a philosophy and approach, and the African Development Education Association (ADEA) has adopted it as a major thrust.

Implementing Lifelong Learning

The translation of the paradigm shift to Lifelong Learning as the master concept for education and training systems, for education and training institutional practices, for curricula and for pedagogical innovations within education and training, has been uneven (Yang & Valdés-Cotera 2011, Preece 2009, Walters 2006, Torres 2004).

Lifelong Learning argues for a shift from a 'front end loading' understanding of education, where the major provision is for the young. It implies the provision of flexible, Lifelong Learning opportunities across people's lifespans, which recognises different forms of knowledge within and between sectors, institutions, or sites of practice, including the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). It affirms the importance of a learning culture which enables all people, from the cradle to the grave, to learn.

In South Africa, the impetus was to redress past discriminatory practices and to build a new understanding of education and training for youth and adults. The development of the NQF in South Africa was understood from the start

as, and remains, a key lever towards embedding Lifelong Learning. It has been designed to make qualifications more transparent as social constructs, and emphasises the importance of flexibility, portability and accessibility across the system (Parker & Walters 2008). It was intended that the establishment of the NQF would enhance mobility and transferability within and across 'learning streams' or professional fields, including integration across education and training. There are to be possibilities for transition from one site to another, which could mean moving from a vocational setting to an academic one, or vice versa, with articulation between some academic and vocational forms of knowledge. Epistemological, institutional and professional *articulation* has emerged as an important and complex imperative with direct consequences for progression pathways (Carrim & Taylor, forthcoming).

As we know so well, building a Lifelong Learning system regionally, nationally or institutionally, is complex. It challenges deeply ingrained views of what and whose knowledge counts. There are not many sites or individuals in South Africa who have taken Lifelong Learning seriously, politically, institutionally, or pedagogically. This lack of commitment has a number of origins, not least of all the socio-economic and political pressures to continue to serve the young: those under 25 years of age make up 50% of the population in the country, thus making the shift in expectations of the population that 'learning is for life', very difficult to achieve. 'Lifelong Learning' has often been interpreted as a rhetorical gesture in many parts of the system. There are few institutions in the country which have consistently explored what it means in theory and in practice to try to attain the aspiration of the National Education Policy (DoE 1997:17), for the system to "open its doors in the spirit of Lifelong Learning to workers and professionals in pursuit of multi-skilling and re-skilling, and adult learners whose access to Higher Education had been thwarted in the past".

The University of the Western Cape as a Lifelong Learning institution

The University of the Western Cape (UWC) has been one of the leaders in taking on this access challenge and is recognised both locally and internationally for its efforts to deepen and expand pedagogical and organisational understandings and practices to implement Lifelong Learning successfully, both institutionally and more broadly. For example, following the 1997 World Conference on Adult Education, UWC, the UNESCO Institute for Education (now the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning - UIL) and the Danish Pedagogical University convened an international workshop in order to develop characteristics for Lifelong Learning Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The results were published in the *Cape Town Statement on Characteristics for Lifelong Learning Higher Education Institutions* and these were translated into French, Spanish, Mandarin, Arabic and Hungarian, and distributed globally (Division for Lifelong Learning [DLL] 2001). Locally, the UWC has been recognised as a 'centre of excellence for Lifelong Learning' by a former Minister of Education and through the UWC institutional review by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC).

UWC is the only Higher Education Institution (HEI) in South Africa to establish a Division for Lifelong Learning (DLL) which works across all faculties (Arts, Education, Economic and Management Sciences, Law, Natural Sciences, Dentistry, Community and Health Sciences) to develop and promote the Lifelong Learning mission. It works with several partners across Higher Education, with government institutions, and with the civil society and business sectors. It is currently also working in international networks with the German based UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL); the University of Stirling in Scotland; the University of London; the University of Toronto, and several professional associations, such as the Researching Work and Learning International Advisory Committee.

As part of its commitment to building a national system, the UWC's Division for Lifelong Learning has worked closely with SAQA over many years, based on

a shared interest in implementing Lifelong Learning. This has been a logical and generative link which has contributed to developmental approaches for the benefit of building a Lifelong Learning system in South Africa.

The research questions

The general research questions

The general research questions under-girding the SAQA-University of the Western Cape (UWC) research into Lifelong Learning were: What does Lifelong Learning mean? What is the relationship between Lifelong Learning and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)? How does the NQF help or hinder Lifelong Learning processes? How are qualifications used within professions and institutions, and by individuals, to aid or impede the Lifelong Learning ambition?

The specific research questions

The more specific questions addressed were: What are the barriers and affordances for learners to be able to inhabit a Lifelong Learning system? How do the barriers or affordances play out at policy, institutional, professional or individual levels, for academics, particular professionals/workers and learners? How do national and institutional policies and practices inhibit or encourage the possibilities for Lifelong Learning? How do professional and work-based practices interface and inter-penetrate the ability of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to enable innovation and professional development?

SAQA-University of the Western Cape research into Lifelong Learning

Within a Lifelong Learning system, networks of education and training institutions are central for enabling access and success for diverse students of all ages. SAQA-UWC research into *Lifelong Learning and National Qualifications Frameworks* involved conducting and reporting on action research to assist one historically black university to realise a Lifelong

Box 2: Bird's eye view of the outputs of the SAQA-UWC Lifelong Learning and National Qualifications Frameworks action learning and research project 2011 – 2015

- .. **Research Report:** *Flexible Learning and Teaching Provision at UWC: Understandings, Practices, Implications* (There is a full report, and an abbreviated version)
- .. **Case Study Reports on the action research conducted** at the two pilot sites within the university: the Department of Library and Information Sciences, and Political Studies - including reflections of pilot site staff on flexible teaching practices, and their 'motives' underpinning these practices
- .. **One Case Study Report on research into a site of 'best Flexible Learning and Teaching Provision'** within the university, that of the School of Public Health
- .. **A Scoping Report** done to ascertain the feasibility of implementing flexible teaching and learning in the B Admin as a fully flexible undergraduate degree pilot
- .. **A number of publications**, including five academic articles produced for peer-reviewed journals (Abrahams and Witbooi 2015; Jones & Walters 2015; Walters, Daniels & Weitz 2015; Walters, Witbooi & Abrahams 2015; Abrahams 2013), and an M Ed thesis on 'Time for Studies' (Wynscurley 2015)
- .. **Policy briefs**
- .. **Conference papers** delivered at the Eighth Researching Work and Learning (RWL) Conference at Stirling University, Scotland, in 2013; at the first South African Education Research Association (SAERA) Conference in 2013; and at the 2015 Conference of the Canadian Association for Studies in Adult Education (CASAE), held in Montreal, Canada.

(Reports are available from: uwcflexiblelearningandteaching.blogspot.com)

Box 3: Collaboration with visiting international academics

International academic	Key concepts drawn on in the SAQA-UWC research
Professor Maria Slowey, Dublin City University	The heterogeneity of lifelong learners and implications for Higher Education Institutions
Professor George Openjuru, Makerere University	Challenges for Lifelong Learning/ learners in a traditional African university
Professor Denise Wood, University of South Australia	Universal Design for Learning, and Flexible Learning and Teaching
Professor Richard Edwards, University of Stirling	Diverse meanings of flexibility in Further and Higher Education
Professor Tara Fenwick, University of Stirling	Transitions in professional practice and learning; Activity Theory
Professor Anne Edwards, Oxford University	Building common knowledge; Relational Agency and Relational Expertise; Cultural Historical Activity Theory
Professor Miriam Zukas, Birkbeck College, University of London	Educators and students as 'people in the world'

Learning philosophy and approach under new and changing conditions. The lessons from this in-depth study are relevant for institutions across the board.

The research was concerned with the inter-relationships of the students, their working lives and the university – the primary question was: How can the university respond meaningfully to the real circumstances of students to enhance prospects for their professional development? The study was also interested in the process of influencing organisational change through the research. In brief, the research set out, using an action research orientation, to explore how the university could develop more appropriate pedagogical

approaches to help working students to succeed. This project entailed understanding the working lives of students, engaging their workplaces, and influencing the teaching, learning and administrative environment of the university.

The key contradiction to which the research responded was that, over the past several years, access has become increasingly limited through the partial closure of after-hours or evening classes, at a time and in a place where access for working and first-generation students is a core part of the university's historic mission. The research developed an argument and approach for the university to move beyond the traditional binaries of part- and full-time provision, and day- and night-time time-tabling, to a more unitary vision of Flexible Learning and Teaching Provision for the diversity of students across the different ages and stages of life.

The study has developed nuanced understandings of the nature of Lifelong Learning and its enablers and challenges, which operate at macro-, meso- and micro- levels, from national policy, to institutional and classroom contexts. The research included the actual institutional transformation necessary to enhance Lifelong Learning.

Box 2 provides a bird's eye overview of the SAQA-UWC partnership research entitled *Lifelong Learning and National Qualifications Frameworks*.

Central contradiction driving the research

The central contradiction which provided the impetus and basis for the research project undertaken through the SAQA-UWC partnership was that access to undergraduate programmes for working students is being closed with the reduction of after-hours tuition at UWC while the policy intention in the White Paper PSET (MHET 2013) is to increase access for everyone, including workers and adult learners. There is a national imperative to open access and increase education success within a philosophy and approach to Lifelong Learning, but opportunities to do so at undergraduate level are closing down. Therefore, a key question for 'residential universities' is: is it possible to develop a new paradigm, to move beyond the binaries of part/full time, day/night provision, in order to achieve an inclusive conceptual framework for teaching and learning which includes the *diversity* of students which inhabit the Higher Education system in the country?

Link between the White Paper for Post-school Education and Training, and the research

The White Paper for PSET (MHET 2013:48) emphasises principles of: 'learner centredness, Lifelong Learning, Flexibility of Learning provision, the removal of barriers to access learning, the recognition of credit of prior learning experience, the provision of learning support, the construction of learning programmes in the expectation that learners can succeed, and the maintenance of rigorous quality assurance over the design of learning materials and support systems'.

The White Paper PSET advocates Higher Education programmes and modes of provision that are responsive to students' needs and realities and 'which take into account their varying life and work contexts, rather than requiring them to attend daily classes at fixed times and central venues' (MHET 2013:48). It prioritises the need to strengthen teaching and learning across the Post-School system (Ibid:32). It recognises the important role of educational technologies, and encourages the expansion of quality 'online'

Box 4: Distance, open, online and blended learning

- “ The South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) describes **distance education** as ‘a collection of methods for the provision of structured learning’ Distance education ‘avoids the need for learners to encounter the curriculum by attending classes for long periods. It aims to create a quality learning environment using an appropriate combination of different learning resources, tutorial support, tutorials, peer group discussion, and practical sessions. Effective use of educational technology can address some of the underlying educational challenges facing distance education provision, particularly in Africa’ (accessed on <http://www.saide.org.za/distance-education#sthash.jQkCvMfU.dpuf>, June 2015).
- “ **Open learning** is an approach to education which seeks to remove all unnecessary barriers to learning, while aiming to provide learners with a reasonable chance of success in an education and training system centred on their specific needs, and located in multiple arenas of Lifelong Learning. Open learning principles include flexibility of learning provision; Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT); and learner-centred approaches which build on learner experience and encourage independent and critical thinking (accessed on <http://blog.saide.org.za/2011/11/29/open-learning-principles/>, June 2015). Open learning can include guided self-study, and the appropriate use of a variety of media, which give practical expression to open learning principles (DoE 1995).
- “ **Online learning** refers to engagement in learning via the internet and may include virtual learning environments such as Sakai, Moodle, Blackboard Collaborate, wikis, blogs, discussion boards and forums, video streaming services (like YouTube or Vimeo), and virtual worlds (such as Second Life).
- “ **Blended learning** refers to a formal education programme in which a student learns: (1) at least in part through online learning, with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace, and (2) at least in part under supervision in an educational institution. Further, the modalities along each student’s learning path within a course of study or subject, are connected to provide an integrated learning experience (accessed on <http://www.christenseninstitute.org/blended-learning-definitions-and-models/#sthash.oymwivTl.dpuf>, June 2015).

and 'blended' learning, and open and distance learning programmes (ibid:49-52), with appropriate student and staff support (Ibid:52).

The research speaks directly to these ideas.

Changing conceptions of the 'traditional' student

The changes in Higher Education must be viewed in a context where the notion of a 'traditional' student is no longer valid, neither in South Africa nor in other parts of the world.

In Britain, for example, the numbers of part-time enrolments have declined 'dramatically' in the past few years, for a number of possible reasons. Alongside this the 'traditional division between full-time and part-time learning is increasingly becoming less distinct' (McLinden 2013:6). Learners are looking for more flexible ways of studying that fit with their work, family and other commitments. Pollard, Newton & Hillage (2012) point out that full-time students are increasingly working part-time; working and non-working students are seeking accelerated, decelerated and other flexible study options; and their studies at higher levels are more likely to be work-related. The researchers argue that the more flexible options there are, the less valid are the distinctions between part-time and full-time students or learning (Pollard *et al* 2012:268). In other words, students should be defined by their enrolment on a course, not by whether they are distant learners or on campus (Kinuthia 2014).

Recognising these shifts, the research reported in this booklet set out to investigate what it would mean for a South African university, like UWC, to undertake more sustainable, flexible approaches to learning and teaching that would enable a diverse population of both working and non-working students to have equal access to, and success in, undergraduate studies.

The SAQA-University of the Western Cape Research Partnership

The SAQA-UWC research partnership is based on shared values and commitments to redress; learner access, success and progression; systemic integration and high quality education and training within a philosophy of Lifelong Learning.

On the one hand, SAQA, as the oversight body of the NQF and the custodian of its values, 'will boldly serve lifelong learners' (SAQA Strategic Plan 2012-2017); and "... cater for the wide-ranging circumstances that face learners and the wide-ranging options for delivering what constitutes relevant credits and qualifications...." (SAQA 2000:3).

On the other hand, historically, UWC has actively catered for working professionals and working class people, in particular those disadvantaged by *apartheid*. This focus is apparent in the mission of the university, which among other aspects, aims to:

- .. assist educationally disadvantaged students to gain access to Higher Education and to succeed in their studies;
- .. seek racial and gender equality and contribute to helping historically marginalised people to participate fully in the life of the nation; and
- .. encourage and provide opportunities for Lifelong Learning through programmes and courses.

In addition, UWC's 2010-2014 Institutional Operating Plan (IOP) has been aligned with this mission and committed to '(d)velop a more responsive teaching and learning environment which promotes and enhances Lifelong Learning' through more flexible approaches to teaching and learning, based on research into students' learning needs and current capacity for flexible learning. Strategies suggested on the basis of the research are to:

- .. investigate best practices in using educational technologies;
- .. plan teaching and learning venues which are conducive to flexible learning; and

- .. create a more flexible university timetable that takes into account the needs of students and educators.

Selection of Action Research pilot sites

Criteria for selecting pilot sites to participate in the research were developed in consultation with deans and heads of departments at the UWC, and Higher Education academics from within and beyond South Africa.

The selection criteria for the pilot sites were:

- .. the willingness of the faculty and relevant departments to participate;
- .. the pressure of increasing student numbers and/or student profiles which were likely to respond positively to flexible provision;
- .. an existing, suitable undergraduate programme;
- .. the potential for impact of the pilot, on UWC's understanding and implementation of 'flexible provision'; and
- .. the capacity to deliver an entire undergraduate degree within a flexible provision framework.

Two of the sites which volunteered and were selected for the pilot action research study were the Department of Library and Information Sciences (D LIS) in the Faculty of Arts, and the Department of Political Studies in the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences (EMS). The Department of Political Studies is the biggest faculty at UWC, with the largest number of part-time students. In addition, the School of Public Health (SOPH) was selected as a site of leading practice of flexible provision. The SOPH's innovative and pedagogically well-designed blended learning programmes have been offered for many years, for distance learners studying for the Masters in Public Health degree.

Methodology

The SAQA-UWC action learning and research project was a university-wide initiative at the UWC, led by the Division for Lifelong Learning (DLL), which is a small unit working across faculties to deepen the philosophy and approach to Lifelong Learning. The research had to ensure that it would not be an innovation only on the fringes of the institution; therefore, a particular strategy and approach were adopted to maximise the chances of approval of the project at the highest levels, with regular reporting through to Senate. The project set out to work collaboratively with cognate units within the university and with three pilot sites in three different faculties. A small project team orchestrated multiple structures which coordinated various aspects of the project and ensured its broad ownership.

The overall research design was influenced by the Participatory Research Approach (PRA) as defined in adult education literature (for example, Kassam 1982; Walters 1989; Hall 2001). This approach demands that the research integrates 'investigation, education and action'. PRA is a form of action research, which demands involvement rather than detachment. Coming out of the radical Freirian adult education tradition (Freire 1972), it has a particular commitment to the educational value of the research process for all participants. It is this specific commitment, which is tied to the 'investigation and action' components, that distinguishes it from some other forms of action research.

The participatory research design included investigation through collaborative research. It also included education through sharing of findings and invitations to co-construct 'common knowledge' relating to flexible learning and teaching. Further, it comprised action, through moving documents into the relevant committees, in order to influence changes in teaching and learning policy. It also included supporting changes in teaching and learning within the pilot sites.

In order to ensure that the pilot sites would not remain separate silos of innovative pedagogy in the university, a survey of flexible learning and teaching practices was undertaken across all faculties so as to engage the fields of 'mainstream' pedagogy. A working definition of Flexible Learning and Teaching Provision was developed from an international literature review and this conceptualisation was tested in thirty-one semi-structured interviews with senior teaching and learning specialists, deans and academics in the university hierarchy across all faculties, as well as staff and administrators in the student support services. Interviewees entered into dialogue with what Flexible Learning and Teaching Provision might mean for them in their faculties and departments, and in the university as a whole.

The emerging results of these engagements were fed back to a reference group which formed a sub-committee of the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee (STLC) - the research 'advisory group'. The advisory group comprised leading practitioners within the university, as well as a leading academic and practitioner of flexible learning and teaching from an Australian university. A workshop was held in year two of the four-year project, to which all those who had been interviewed were invited, to give and get feedback on the survey, and to clarify what a working definition of Flexible Learning and Teaching Provision could be.

An additional focus for the research was to explore what the implications would be, for the B Admin degree to be offered as one flexible learning programme for both working and non-working students in the Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) Faculty. To this end, interviews were conducted with thirteen B Admin academics and administrators, and with three focus groups comprising present and past B Admin part-time students, to deepen conversations around Flexible Learning and Teaching Provision within this programme.

Documentation was made available at various stages of the research, to the university leadership, to academics in the university faculties and to Senate committees. This sharing was done to encourage participative discussion and the building of 'common knowledge' of Flexible Learning and Teaching

Provision. It also served to disseminate the emerging research findings vertically, to leadership in the authority hierarchy, and horizontally, among colleagues. Related information was also disseminated through regular national and international seminars and conferences.

Emerging themes and insights from the research

The research findings emerged in four themes from the study.

Flexible provision in a residential university

Flexible provision of learning and teaching emerged as a central theme in the SAQA-UWC research.

A working definition of Flexible Learning and Teaching Provision

A working definition of Flexible Learning and Teaching Provision (FLTP), in furtherance of UWC's Lifelong Learning mission, was developed:

Flexible learning and teaching provision is an inclusive, student-centred approach that promotes flexibility in admissions criteria, curriculum design, learning and teaching modes, and assessment, with appropriate support systems and services, for the purpose of developing graduate attributes throughout the learning process so that all students can make a positive difference in the world.

To illustrate:

- .. **flexible admissions criteria**, include mechanisms such as the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT);
- .. **flexible curriculum design**, includes flexible forms of assessment which take into account the different circumstances of students;
- .. **flexible delivery**, includes distance, online, and on-campus modes, and a mix of these modes, as well as accelerated or decelerated options.

Flexible Learning and Teaching Provision, then, is more than simply re-packaging existing materials: “we are not just selling a new course but a new concept in education” (Outram 2009:9). Flexible Learning and Teaching Provision requires the development of distinctive, more *holistic* forms of *provision*, as well as institutional change.

Principles of Flexible Learning and Teaching Provision (FLTP)

The principles of FLTP commonly expressed in the literature are that it:

- “ is responsive to a diversity of learners - both working and not working;
- “ is responsive to a variety of learning styles;
- “ is about access and success in Higher Education;
- “ is founded on good pedagogy that puts the learner at the centre of learning;
- “ develops self-regulated learners and well-rounded, knowledgeable and capable graduates who can make a positive difference in the world; and
- “ requires a coordinated, enabling response.

Technology in Flexible Learning and Teaching Provision (FLTP)

Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) are essential for successful participation in the local and global economy, and for providing flexible learning and teaching opportunities of quality. The use of ICTs can mitigate attendance requirements, enabling students to learn in their own time and place and at their own pace. ICTs enable easy delivery of materials from lecturers to students and vice versa, and can connect learners to people and resources that can support their educational needs online, such as Open Education Resources (OERs). ICTs allow universities to extend their traditional campus-based services to distant (off-campus) and online modes, and have formed the basis of distance education for many years.

McLoughlin and Lee (2010:28) argue that today's students "want an active learning experience that is social, participatory and supported by rich media", and which is possible through the continual expansion of Web 2.0 social networking tools. The use of these tools and technologies can promote learner agency, increase students' control over learning processes, provide authentic learning experiences, and facilitate the development of graduate attributes and flexible graduates – providing that appropriate pedagogies are used to guide the learning processes.

However, it is important to remember that teaching and learning processes are key, and that technology should never drive FLTP. The function of technology is to *enable* FLTP. The focus of the FLTP design process should be on how best to merge pedagogy with appropriate technology.

The use of ICTs in learning and teaching frequently manifests in mixed or blended pedagogical strategies, where conventional methods of instruction such as face-to-face lectures and tutorials, seminars, small-group discussions, and other established approaches, are complemented by digital methods. But these digital methods need to engage learners, transforming contact sessions into active learning opportunities that effect paradigm shifts from traditional lecturer-centred approaches, to student-centred learning environments, for more effective learning. Another shift that takes place with learner-centred approaches is that from seeing learning as acquisition using 'chalk and talk' methods, to understanding learning as participation using technology-integrated pedagogies.

Social media-enabled learning blurs boundaries between formal and informal learning, disrupts the established knowledge hierarchies that define Higher Education, and challenges normative assumptions about curriculum design and assessment. The interactive and collaborative aspects of social media-enabled learning increasingly shift the position of the learner (rather than the content or the institution), to the centre of learning, demanding a curriculum design process that is learner-centred and collaborative. The open and distributive nature of social media means that educators need to monitor

and control the quality of interaction in the learning process while at the same time developing greater levels of responsibility and self-regulation in learners. The agency of the learner, or 'learner-centredness', becomes a significant aspect not only of effective technology-enhanced learning, but also of any flexible modes of provision that engage the learner in preparation for the twenty-first century.

Flexibility and the workplace

Regarding how working people are accommodated in undergraduate degrees on the one hand, and how pedagogies of work-related learning are enacted on the other, there are a number of inherent tensions in such engagements. These tensions play out between different forms of knowledge; competing teaching-learning agendas; practical arrangements for learners and workplaces; and the autonomy of the university, of the employer and of the learner. It is a challenge to accommodate the interests of all three players equally or even sufficiently through flexible pedagogies. Therefore Kettle (2013: 31) suggests opening communication to invite the perspectives of each player while acknowledging compromises and limitations. Discussions should centre on learning and teaching, but policies, procedures and business models – both of employers and universities - must enable the educational alliances that promote teaching and learning.

However, there may be unintended consequences to adopting flexible approaches to learning and teaching. Flexible Learning and Teaching Provision, therefore, needs to be planned and monitored. Limits to flexibility need to be recognised. These limits are bounded by people's capabilities, capacity and resources, and what is reasonable. As with working students, university staff members also have complex lives with an array of responsibilities outside of the institution, that demand their time and attention.

Box 5: Flexible Learning and Teaching Provision (FLTP)

Among others, flexible learning is about when, where, how and at what pace learning occurs. It provides choices for an increasingly diverse student body. The concepts in this box relate to the *delivery* of learning.

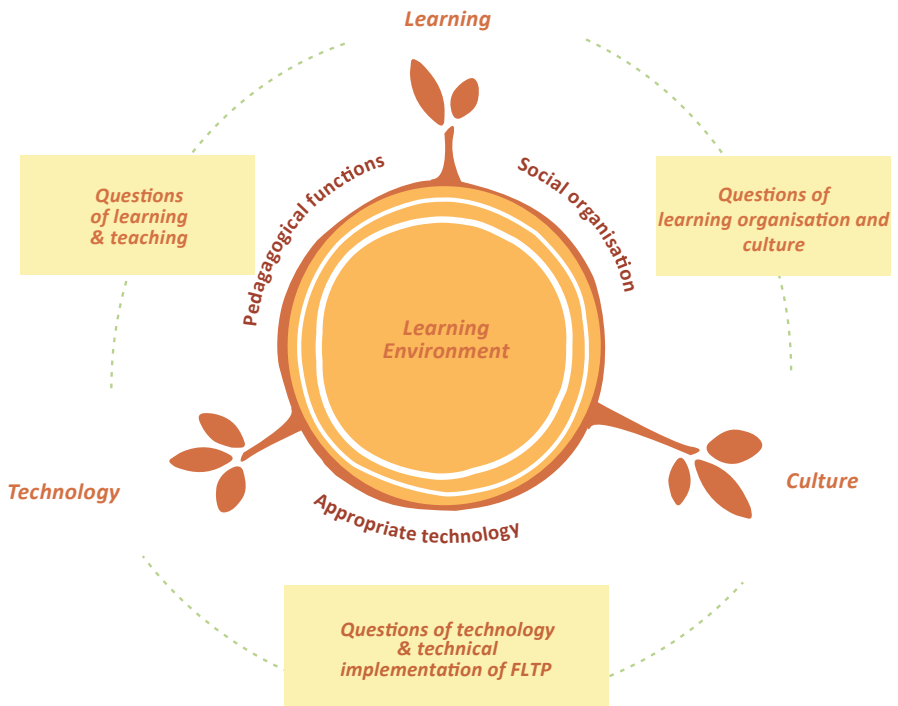
Pace, which includes accelerated and decelerated programmes and degrees, learning part-time, arrangements that allow learners to ‘roll on/roll off’ (‘stop in/stop out’), and systems for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT).

Place, which can be work-based learning with employer engagement, learning at home, on campus, while travelling or in any other place, often aided by technology which can enable the flexibility of learning across geographical boundaries and at convenient times.

Mode, especially the use of learning technologies to enhance flexibility and enrich the quality of learning experiences, in blended or distance learning, and in synchronous and asynchronous modes of learning (Gordon 2014; Tallantyre 2012:4).

Basic elements of flexible learning environments

Flexible Learning and Teaching Provision (FLTP) is mediated by the learning technologies used, and the underpinning pedagogy, as well as by the 'culture' of the department/discipline/ university/professional field. 'Cultural' tensions may arise from efforts to implement FLTP that are related to epistemological differences and/or internal educational/ organisational cultures which have developed over time.



Basic elements of flexible learning environments

Flexible learning and teaching needs collaborative relationships

For FLTP, collaborative relationships are needed among academics, administrators and technical staff. There is a need to maximise the use of all the resources of colleagues through adopting a common vision to support students. A democratic, collegial, inclusive management style and approach are needed. Student support is critical, sound infrastructure is essential, and disciplinary and other expertise are *sine qua non*. For these reasons, the administrative, academic and technical staff in the organization need to work in unison.



Flexible learning in a university classroom

Understanding the student body

A second theme emerging from the SAQA-UWC research, was the need to understand the student body.

Who are the students in the Higher Education system in South Africa?

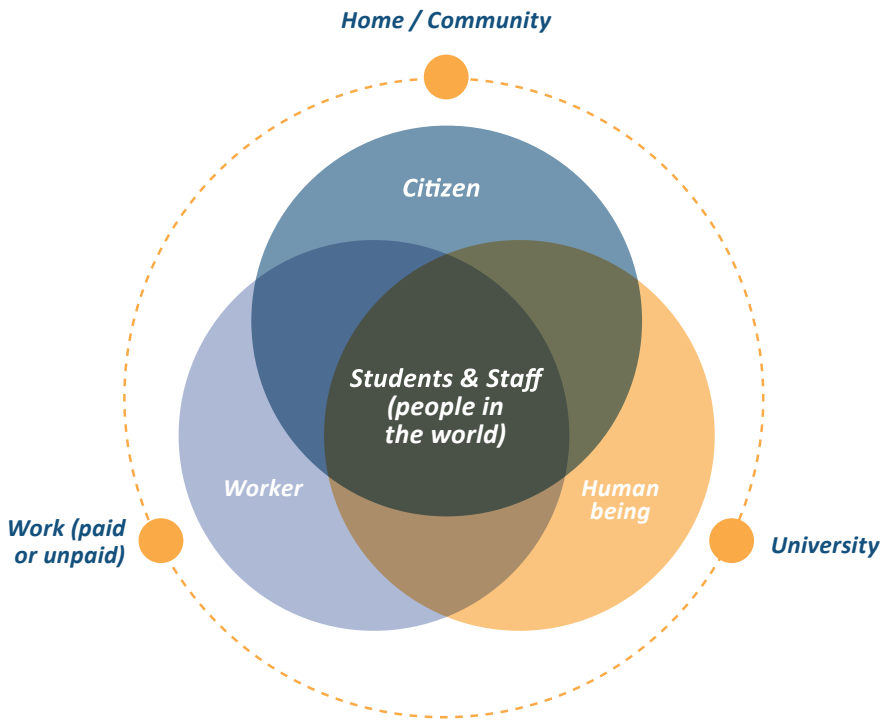
The dominant notion of who undergraduate students are, that shapes university administrative structures in the country, is that of a predominantly homogeneous population of 18-24 year olds who 'have time on their hands' to study full time and to attend classes during the day (Wynsculley 2015).

However, this picture has changed and the reality is that student populations today are much more heterogeneous, comprising a diversity of young to mature adults who have additional responsibilities and demands on their time outside of their studies. In particular, Historically Disadvantaged Universities' (HDUs') student profiles are different from those in most Historically Advantaged Universities (HAUs). The majority of students in HDUs are women who are financially poor, and are engaged in paid or unpaid work. The majority of this student body also 'drops out', or 'stops out', for a range of economic or academic reasons.

For example, three-quarters of all students at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) are 'non-traditional', in that they work either in the formal or informal sector, are usually caring for the old or the young, are often parents and/or surrogate parents to siblings and children, often live and learn with disability or chronic illness, and are usually returning or interrupting students (Schreiber & Moja 2014). They have limited financial support; the majority are women; they frequently have additional civic responsibilities and 'time is of the essence' for them (Wynsculley 2015).

Therefore, traditional conceptions of who students are marginalise large numbers of students and it is the shifting of this dominant conception to one which acknowledges a diversity of students who are 'people in the

world’, which is one of the major challenges in the interests of Higher Education transformation in the country. These trends include HDUs, and all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) need to know who their students are as individuals, as ‘persons in the world’ with complex lives. HEIs need a more accurate picture of their diverse student populations so that teaching and learning, and the associated support strategies are more appropriately tailored to help the students to succeed. Flexible and blended learning options could make successful study more possible for these students.



Students and educators as ‘people in the world’

Students and educators are ‘people in the world’

Students and educators operate in contexts that are integral to their successes as learners and teachers.

The centrality of time

The 'centrality of time' as a concept was introduced most powerfully through a Masters' thesis on *Time for Studies* (Wynsculley 2015). The working librarians studying towards their professional degrees, who participated in the research, reported experiences of the 'acceleration of time', and associated stress. These librarian-students are dependent on micro-negotiations with colleagues at work, with family at home, and with lecturers at university, to navigate a complex journey each day from work to university – having to take time off to get to class in the day, as after-hours classes have been terminated. The clock starts ticking as they leave work until they return, and these students only have 10 days of study leave a year. They are left in the most impossible situation. No wonder so many working librarians have dropped their professional studies, as it is just too difficult. This is a very serious consequence of the inability of a university to offer learning opportunities more flexibly. And of the workplaces to understand the realities of professional study and negotiate more flexible conditions for workers.

Box 6: 'Stopping in' and 'stopping out'

Many students take time out ('stop out') from their studies, to earn money to pay for their fees, or to attend to urgent family responsibilities, and they return ('stop in' or 'return') at a later stage to continue their studies. This 'stopping in' and 'stopping out' affects the time taken for the completion of studies, and could be mitigated by more flexible provision strategies including 'time to degree' regulations, that take into account students' complex personal circumstances.

Working students

Universities and workplaces have different logics which working students must navigate. There is no 'one size fits all' approach to university-workplace relationships. Different labour markets – bureaucratically controlled, professionally controlled or free market – allow for different possibilities.

Interactions at a high level are needed between the Minister of Higher Education and Training (MHET), the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), universities and workplaces to ensure that study leave policies are in place and that these policies are being implemented properly. Labour law must be checked to assess whether the study leave policies are adequate. Employers' support for working students is needed in the form of bursaries, flexi-time facilities and negotiated access to, and use of, computers for studying. Encouragement to use newly acquired knowledge in the workplace is needed to add value for the individual student and for the workplace. Encouragement of a mentoring culture at work, and other forms of support, are also needed.

Box 7: Barriers to learning for working students

Working students can face many barriers or obstacles to learning. These factors affect the transitions of mature learners into Higher Education and are navigated differently by individual students, depending on their unique circumstances at any given time. Osman & Castle (2006:511) cite Cross (1981) who classified these factors or 'barriers' into three categories.

- .. **Situational barriers** which arise because of the individual's life situation, including issues such as learners' work commitments, domestic responsibilities, as well as problems of child care, finance and transport.
- .. **Institutional barriers**, which include physical locations, institutional entry requirements, timetabling issues, as well as practices and procedures which hinder participation.
- .. **Dispositional barriers** which are attributed to factors such as learner self-esteem, past experiences, values, attitudes and beliefs about learning (Osman & Castle 2006, cited in Abrahams & Witbooi 2015).

Implementing organisational change in a university

Implementing organisational change was the third key theme to emerge from the research.

A university as a complex system

A university is a complex system with at least four interrelated sub-systems: teacher, student, delivery, and administrative. All of these sub-systems need to work together if flexible learning and teaching are to be achieved.

The four sub-systems are sketched here.

- .. **Teacher subsystem**, which includes conditions of service, continuous professional development, and other aspects.

- .. **Student sub-system**, the student body in which HEI need to understand, and which includes residential facilities, the transport provided, and support services available to all, including academic support.
- .. **Delivery sub-system**, which includes learning and teaching infrastructure, programme regulations, ICT, timetables, admission policies, curriculum and assessment, and so on.
- .. **Administrative sub-system**, such as finances, student registration, student and staff administration policies and systems, and other such aspects.

Academics, administrators and technical and support staff at all levels and in all sectors of a university need to adopt a common vision of Flexible Learning and Teaching Provision (FLTP) and form collaborative relationships to optimise the use of capacities and resources towards achieving this end.

Organisational change strategies

The question: 'What would need to change...for all students?' implies organisational change. The question needs to be asked: What would need to change to be able to move from a binary full-time/part-time system to a unitary system of flexible learning and teaching, to serve the diversity of all students?

Edwards (2010) provides useful concepts from which to draw in conceptualising possible organisational change strategies. The notion of 'common knowledge' (Edwards 2010) alerts us to the importance of building common understandings which encourage a focus on working together through directing attention to 'what matters' to each person or group. Building common understandings includes recognising the underlying historically shaped motives of behaviour, which is essential if institutional change is to be successful.

Edwards (2010) argues that a distinctive form of professional expertise, '*relational expertise*' is needed when working with others to surface people's different motives and understandings and to develop 'common knowledge' of the problem at hand.

In addition, '*relational agency*' is the capacity for collaboration when taking joint action together. In other words, it is the exercise of relational expertise and common knowledge, as practitioners jointly respond to the object of activity, such as developing a flexible learning and teaching programme.

These concepts were used to strengthen relationships amongst the people and the units involved in this SAQA-UWC action research, and to theorise the work (See Walters, Daniels & Weitz 2015).

Of critical importance for organisational change, is the concept of 'resourceful leadership'. (Edwards & Thompson 2014). Resourceful leadership is needed for transforming institutions at the top, middle and lower organisational levels, to encourage innovation, and provide support for those who are 'going the extra mile' to effect transformation in the system.

For example resourceful leadership needs to:

- .. **listen for, tap into and encourage** the movement of Flexible Learning and Teaching Provision innovations upstream;
- .. **affirm and support the champions of innovation** in flexible learning and teaching, at every level;
- .. **work towards developing common understandings** of Flexible Learning and Teaching Provision across the university;
- .. **reward and incentivise quality innovations** in flexible learning and teaching, for example, through meaningful career promotion; and
- .. **encourage collaborative relationships** within and across departments, faculties and universities for innovation, and the development and implementation of Flexible Learning and Teaching Provision.

In summary, drawing on the concept of ‘common knowledge’ makes it possible to negotiate new understandings of flexible pedagogy into practice within a university, through use of ‘relational expertise’ within a Participatory Research Approach. The political nature of organisational interventions requires conceptual tools which acknowledge the inevitable political contestations, and the ideas of ‘common knowledge’, ‘relational expertise’ and ‘relational agency’ are very useful in this regard. In addition, for organisational interventions to succeed, ‘resourceful leadership’ is essential to move common knowledge upstream (Edwards & Thompson 2014).

Box 8: Relational Expertise

- “ Relational expertise involves additional knowledge and skills over and above specialised core expertise.
- “ Relational expertise involves understanding and engaging with the motives of others: it allows the expertise (resources) offered by others to be surfaced and used.
- “ Relational expertise is useful vertically (in authority hierarchies), but it is also relevant for horizontal collaboration across practices at similar levels in authority hierarchies.
- “ Relational expertise respects history, but is focused on the common knowledge created through shared understandings of the differing motives of those collaborating and going forward together.

Box 9: Key insights from SAQA-UWC Case Study sites

Action research in the pursuit of implementing flexible learning and teaching took place in two pilot sites, namely the Department of Library and Information Sciences, and the Department of Political Studies at UWC. In addition, changes in pedagogic practices in the School of Public Health, as a site of leading flexible learning and teaching practice, were tracked in the study.

Progress in these three sites was written up in the form of case studies and can be found at the following web address: uwcflexiblelearningandteaching.blogspot.com.

Some key insights for implementing FLTP from the three sites are given below.

Case Study 1: The Department of Library and Information Sciences (D LIS)

Findings from the Case Study of the D LIS highlighted the complexity of trying to change the current system of learning and teaching provision for working librarians. This system is interlinked in many complex ways with other activity systems, each with their own rules, processes and people. In this case, these other systems were primarily the City of Cape Town libraries (workplaces); the UWC Arts Faculty timetable and choice of subjects for B LIS students; UWC institutional rules governing part-time and full-time studies; and the students' individual family contexts. The study showed that where there is insufficient flexibility to allow students to navigate through these systems successfully, they have no choice but to leave their studies or go to an alternative institution.

Case Study 2: The Department of Political Studies

This case study demonstrated how essential a culture of team-work and shared vision was, for implementing change towards more flexible pedagogies. In addition, committed democratic leadership styles were key for driving the process of embedding forms of Flexible Learning and Teaching Provision in the department, in order to understand who their students were and to accommodate the working students as much as possible. As a result, educators in the department exhibited a sense of ownership of the process and are keen to continue to improve the new flexible pedagogic practices.

Case Study 3: The School of Public Health (SOPH)

In order to accommodate the majority of their students, who were in many cases from beyond the borders of South Africa, the SOPH has been offering a blended learning programme that includes online and distance learning materials and assessments, for many years. Many particularities of this flexible programme have been incompatible with UWC's administrative systems, forcing the SOPH to set up its own, parallel systems as a form of 'cottage industry' to support their students in successfully completing their studies. This case study emphasised the importance of the four sub-systems of the university – teaching, learning, delivery and administrative – to align with the principles of FLTP and with each other, in support of student success. It provided many lessons to draw from to set up a system for FLTP across the university.

Participatory Research and transformation

The link between participatory research and transformation was the fourth key theme/insight to emerge from the SAQA-University of the Western Cape (UWC) research. A Participatory Research Approach (PRA) was used in the project, that integrates 'investigation, education and action'. This methodology is concerned with the change processes that take during the research investigation, and therefore assists organisational transformation simultaneously.

In line with the PRA research orientation, documents generated from the research were used (amongst others) as tools to facilitate discussion and to encourage participation in building common knowledge around FLTP for UWC at different levels in the institution. In order to ensure that concepts relating to FLTP were fed upstream to senior university leadership through the bureaucracy, as well as horizontally to academic colleagues, the research team made submissions of working documents to two Senate sub-committees. These documents had different purposes, and therefore took different forms.

In reflecting back on the journeys of the documents, in some respects their journeys reflected the need for critical academic engagement and scholarly conversations with colleagues in attempts to build common knowledge around FLTP. In other respects, the purpose of the documents was to popularise the ideas amongst a broader university public, and to address the bureaucratic requirements of committees.

The core research team, as 'boundary spanners' who worked across the faculties, disciplines and institutional hierarchy, had to be alert to 'what mattered' to each of the individuals and to the collective – in order to hear and understand whether it was possible to construct the common knowledge needed. Reconfiguration of practice implies transformation through building common knowledge, and this is inevitably a political process involving engagement with competing understandings.

An example of the reconfiguration of practice can be seen in one meeting of the advisory group, where a host of issues were being raised in relation to the abbreviated research report on the project. At a certain point one of the lead researchers asked the group, 'What is the one thing that matters to all of us?' This was a significant moment of display of relational expertise which helped the atmosphere to change from one of contestation, to one of greater collaboration and collegiality. Helpful suggestions were then made as to how the document could be altered in order to make its way successfully through the bureaucratic structures. The antagonisms of 'them' and 'us', shifted to a new sense of 'us'. There seemed to be a momentary emergence of collective ownership and relational agency.

The Participatory Research Approach included firstly, investigation through *collaborative research*. Secondly, it included *education* through the sharing of findings, and co-construction of 'common knowledge' around flexible learning and teaching. Thirdly, it included *action*, through moving the necessary documents into the appropriate committees in order to influence changes in teaching and learning policy, and through supporting changes in teaching and learning within the pilot sites. The next five year Institutional Operating Plan for UWC is currently being developed, and the FLTP research documents are feeding into these processes. In these ways attempts were made to move the co-developed knowledge of FLTP around horizontally amongst academic colleagues, and upstream through the bureaucracy and to senior leadership in the organisation.

Suggestions for the way forward

This SAQA-UWC research lays the ground for FLTP to become a unitary concept to meet the needs of all students, and for moving beyond binary conceptions of ‘full-time’/‘part-time’, day/night provision in Higher Education.

To achieve an integrated approach to Lifelong Learning and professional development for a diversity of students within Higher Education, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) need to do the following.

1. **Adopt a framework** for Flexible Teaching and Learning Provision for all students. In addition, establish a high level *mission initiative*, which is integral to the Institutional Operation Plan (IOP), to shift the institution from a binary system to a unitary one. In this initiative, it is important to work with all four institutional sub-systems, namely, those for teaching, students, delivery, and administration.
2. **Implement, as a pilot, a whole under-graduate degree** using flexible learning and teaching principles, after research and development with the colleagues involved. The pilot would need to be linked to a detailed project implementation plan for a three-to-five-year period.
3. **Analyse the blockages to flexibility**, in all four sub-systems of teaching, students, delivery, and administration. For example, the regulations pertaining to staff conditions which allow for flexi-time, use of venues, rules for assessment, admissions, and other aspects, would need to be taken into account.
4. **Reward and incentivise** innovative, flexible, quality teaching and learning which is taking place to encourage and sustain a culture of educational excellence across the institution.

5. **Ensure capacity (for flexible provision and to effect transformation) in the office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic (or equivalent)** so that there is a 'strong engine room' to drive the change processes needed.
6. **Ensure that leadership at all levels of the institution undertakes professional development** to learn about flexible learning and teaching by attending, for example, the five-week Cape Higher Education Consortium Emerging Technologies (CHECET) course.
7. **Obtain the political and financial support** for the transformative institutional work which is needed.

Employers need to do the following.

1. **Ensure that study leave policies are in place** and implemented properly.
2. **Check labour laws** to assess whether study leave is adequate.
3. **Support working learners** in the form of bursaries; flexi-time facilities; negotiated access to, and use of, computers for study purposes; and affirm and draw on the learners' newly acquired knowledge, to add value to the workplace

The fundamental nature of the transformation required would need to be championed by the Minister of Higher Education and Training.

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For access to key documents from the SAQA-UWC research *National Qualifications Frameworks and Lifelong Learning*, please consult the dedicated site: www.uwcflexiblelearningandteaching.blogspot.com



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