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QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF THE MANAGEMENT OF AN
INSTRUCTIONAL OFFERING PROCESS: RESEARCH
METHODOLOGY IN THE B.TECH. PROGRAMME IN
TECHNIKONS: A SYSTEMS APPROACH

by

Lillette du Toit

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BLOEMFONTEIN

PROMOTER: PROF. H.R. Hay (Ph.D.)

November 2002

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis submitted by me for the Philsophiae Doctor degree at the University of the Free State in the Faculty of Humanities is my own independent work and has not previously been submitted by me at another university or faculty for the purpose of obtaining a degree.



L. DU TOIT

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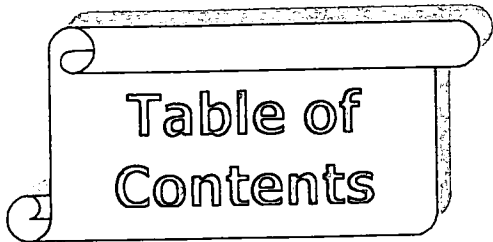
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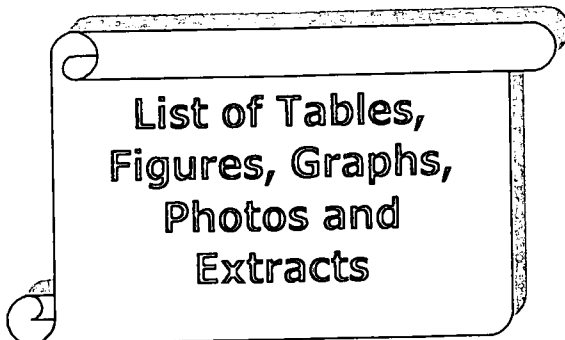
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Abstract

Key terms: quality assurance, self-assessment, process management, organisational culture, systemic approaches/models of quality assurance, action research, action learning, action coaching, continuous improvement, reflective practice.

This study focuses on the quality of the management of an instructional offering (IO) process: Research Methodology, in the B.Tech. programme in technikon by means of a systems approach. The B.Tech.: Office Management and Technology in the School for Secretarial Studies and Education in the Faculty of Human Sciences at the Border Technikon, a historically disadvantaged technikon, was used as a case study.

Theoretical perspectives of the challenges for change in the organisational culture of higher education institutions and the different organisational cultures the institutions need to embark on in order to prepare for quality improvement, are supplied. The context of quality assurance in the higher education statutory landscape, as well as the pivotal role of self-assessment in quality assurance in higher education is provided. The models and management approaches to quality assurance in higher education provided the context in which the self-assessment instrument was adapted for application to the IO process. The objective of the extensive literature review on action learning and action research supplied a solid base to apply the methodology in practice.

Theoretical perspectives on the different organisational cultures of higher education institutions are supplied. The purpose for this is to sensitise the reader to the challenges brought about by change which the higher education institutions are faced with if they are serious about quality assurance. The notions of quality and quality assurance as well as the various factors influencing quality assurance in higher education are sketched within the international quality assurance trends in higher education. South African policies and perspectives are also discussed to establish

the impact of these on the quality assurance and self-assessment approaches of higher education institutions.

This case study is undertaken to provide an in-depth study of the quality of the management of an IO process in a B.Tech. programme at Border Technikon. A qualitative research method by means of action research and action learning was used to establish the quality of the management of the IO process. An initial process map of the IO was designed and critically reflected on by academic peers, resulting in an improved process map. A self-assessment of the IO process was carried out by means of an adapted instrument based on the SAEF Level 3 criteria and the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence.

Within the framework of the literature consulted and the comprehensive annotated bibliography undertaken, the AL team critically reflected upon the outcomes of the self-assessment. The areas that were identified for improvement in the management of the IO process were prioritised and action plans to address these were executed. The reason for the research done in this case study, as well as the positive reflection on the results from the action research and the action learning applied by the AL team reflects the need for quality management of the core processes (the IO processes) of a higher education institution such as Border Technikon.

This research was not merely carried out for the sake of obtaining a higher qualification or degree, but rather for the value of its outcomes for the quality assurance and quality management processes at Border Technikon, as well as for higher education institutions similar to Border Technikon. This study displayed the importance of the quality of process management in the quality assurance activities and the institutional review process of higher education institutions which have to be accredited by an external body such as the Higher Education Quality Committee.

Sleuteltermes: gehalteversekering, selfevaluering, prosesbestuur, organisatoriese kultuur, sistemiese benadering/modelle van gehalteversekering, aksienavorsing, aksieleer, aksieonderrig, voortdurende verbetering, reflektiewe praktyk.

Hierdie studie fokus op die gehalte van die bestuur van 'n Onderrigaanbiedingsproses (OA-proses): Navorsingsmetodologie in die B. Tech.-program aan teknikons deur middel van 'n sisteembenadering. Die B. Tech.: Kantoorbestuur en Tegnologie in die *School for Secretarial Studies and Education in the Faculty of Human Sciences* aan die Border Technikon, 'n histories benadeelde technikon, is as 'n gevallestudie gebruik.

Teoretiese perspektiewe rakende die uitdaginge rondom verandering in die organisatoriese kultuur van hoëronderriginstellings en die verskillende organisatoriese kulture wat die instellings moet aanvaar om hulle op gehalteverbetering voor te berei, word voorsien. Die konteks van gehalteversekering in die statutêre landskap van hoër onderrig, asook die sleutelrol wat selfevaluering in gehalteversekering in hoër onderrig speel, word voorsien. Die modelle en bestuursbenadering tot gehalteversekering in hoër onderrig het die konteks voorsien waarbinne die selfevalueringsinstrument aangepas is om dit op die onderrigaanbiedingsproses van toepassing te maak. Die doel van die uitgebreide literatuuroorsig rakende aksieleer en aksienavorsing het 'n soliede basis vir die toepassing van die metodologie in die praktyk voorsien.

Teoretiese perspektiewe rakende die verskillende organisatoriese kulture van hoëronderriginstellings word verder voorsien. Die doel hiervan is om die leser gevoelig en ontvanklik te maak betreffende die uitdaginge wat deur verandering veroorsaak word en waarmee hoëronderriginstellings gekonfronteer word indien hulle ernstig oor gehalteversekering is. Die begrippe "gehalte" en "gehalteversekering", asook die verskillende faktore wat gehalteversekering in hoër onderrig beïnvloed, word geskets teen die agtergrond van internasionale gehalteversekeringstendense in hoër onderrig. Suid-Afrikaanse beleide en

perspektiewe word ook bespreek om die impak daarvan op die gehalteversekerings- en selfevalueringsbenaderinge van hoërondewysinstellings te bepaal.

Hierdie gevallestudie is onderneem om 'n dieptestudie van die kwaliteit van die bestuur van 'n onderrigaanbiedingsproses binne 'n B.Tech.-program aan die Border Technikon te voorsien. 'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsmetode deur middel van aksienavorsing en aksieleer is gebruik om die kwaliteit van die bestuur van die onderrigaanbiedingsproses te bepaal. 'n Aanvanklike proseskaart van die onderrigaanbiedingsproses is ontwerp en akademiese eweknieë het krities daaroor besin. Dit het 'n verbeterde proseskaart tot gevolg gehad. 'n Selfevaluering van die onderrigaanbiedingsproses is uitgevoer deur middel van 'n aangepaste instrument, gebaseer op die *South African Excellence Foundation (SAEF)* se Vlak 3-kriteria van die *Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence*.

Binne die raamwerk van die literatuur wat geraadpleeg is vir die omvattende bronnelys wat voorsien word, het die onderrigaanbiedingspan krities oor die uitkomst van die selfevaluering besin. Die geïdentifiseerde areas vir verbetering binne die bestuur van die onderrigaanbiedingsproses is geprioritiseer en aksieplanne ter verbetering is uitgevoer. Die rede vir die navorsing wat binne hierdie gevallestudie uitgevoer is, asook die positiewe refleksie rakende die resultate van die aksienavorsing en die aksieleer wat deur die aksieleerspan toegepas is, reflekteer die noodsaaklikheid vir gehaltebestuur van die kernprosesse (die onderrigaanbiedingsprosesse) van 'n hoërondewysinstelling soos die Border Technikon.

Hierdie navorsing is nie bloot uitgevoer om 'n hoër kwalifikasie of graad te verwerf nie, maar eerder vir die waarde van die uitkomst daarvan vir die gehalteversekerings- en gehaltebestuursprosesse van die Border Technikon, asook soortgelyke ander hoërondewysinstellings. Hierdie studie openbaar duidelik die belangrikheid van die kwaliteit van prosesbestuur in die gehalteversekeringsaktiwiteite, asook die institusionele evalueringsproses van hoërondewysinstellings wat deur 'n eksterne liggaam soos die Hoërondewyskwaliteitskomitee (*HEQC*) geakkrediteer moet word.



List of acronyms/ abbreviations

AL	Action learning
ALAR	Action Learning and Action Research Journal
ALARPM	Action Learning and Action Research and Process Management Association
AL team	Action learning team
AR	Action research
BPR	Business process re-engineering
B. Tech.	Baccalaureus Technologiae
B. Tech.: OMTECH	Baccalaureus Technologiae: Office Management and Technology
CALAR	Centre for Action Learning and Action Research
CARN	Classroom Action Research Network
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CI	Continuous improvement
CI team	Continuous improvement team
CQI	Continuous quality improvement
CTP	Committee of Technikon Principals
CUP	Committee of University Principals
DATA	Describe, analyse, theorise, act
DCSA	Daimler Chrysler South Africa
DoE	Department of Education
ECHEA	Eastern Cape Higher Education Association
EFQM	European Foundation for Quality Management
EQA	External quality assurance
EQAA	External Quality Assurance Agency
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurance Body
FTE	Full-time equivalent (Student State Subsidy)
HBO-Raad	<i>Hoërberoepsonderwysraad</i>

HDI	Historically disadvantaged institution
HE	Higher education
HEI	Higher education institution
HETQA	Higher Education and Training Quality Assurer
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
IHEQC	Interim Higher Education Quality Committee
INQAAHE	International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
IO	Instructional offering
IO process	Instructional offering process
IO: REM	Instructional Offering: Research Methodology
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
ITS	Integrated tertiary software
NAP	New Academic Policy
NATED	National education
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
NEPI	National Education Policy Investment
NPHE	National Plan for Higher Education
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NRF	National Research Foundation
NSBs	National Standards Bodies
NWG	National Working Group
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
OBE	Outcomes-based education
OMTECH	Office Management and Technology
PAR	Participatory action research
PDCA	Plan, do, check, act
Ph.D.	Philosophiae Doctor
PPP	Public private partnership
PQM	Process quality management
PSC	Public service commission
PSE	Post-Secondary Education
QA	Quality assurance

QAA	Quality assurance agency
QAAs	Quality assurance agencies
QI	Quality improvement
QM	Quality management
QPU	Quality Promotion Unit
REM	Research methodology
RPL	Recognition of prior learning
SABS	South African Bureau of Standards
SADC	Southern African developing countries
SAEF	South African Excellence Foundation
SAFRI	Southern African Initiative of German Business
SAPSE	South African Post-Secondary Education
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SAQI	South African Quality Institute
SAUVCA	South African Universities' Vice-Chancellors' Association
SERTEC	Certification Council for Technikon Education (<i>Sertifiseringsraad vir Technikononderwys</i>)
SETA	Sectoral Education and Training Authority
SETAs	Sectoral Education and Training Authorities
SMEs	Small and medium enterprises
SPC	Statistical process control
SQA	Swedish Quality Award
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
TQM	Total quality management
UK	United Kingdom
VLHORA	Flemish Higher Education Council
VLIR	Flemish University Council
VSNU	Association of Universities in the Netherlands



Chapter 1

BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Within a context of change in South African higher education, the technikon sector is, *inter alia*, being challenged in two important ways, namely the challenge of offering degrees and the challenge of improving the academic quality of instructional programmes. In addition, they are supposed to establish a research culture similar to that of universities. The old Technikon Act 125 of 1993 (which was since repealed by a new Act in 1998) mandated technikons to offer undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

Previously the Certification Council for Technikon Education (SERTEC) was established in 1988 to accredit diploma and degree programmes and subsequently mandated technikons to offer these (Du Toit 2000:22). With the increasing emphasis on quality assurance internationally, especially during the last decade, most South African technikons nationally established institutional quality assurance systems to guide and monitor the continuous improvement and academic quality of their services and offerings – this in the drive for performance excellence. However, improvement in quality is not possible without quality management procedures and structures in place.

According to Koehler and Pankowski (1996:15), total quality management (TQM) is "a management system embracing a set of beliefs and principles designed to empower all associates to continually improve organisational processes with the goal of meeting or exceeding customer expectations". In the corporate world quality circles, audits and systems are an integral part of companies and have been in use for many decades (Koehler & Pankowski

1996:15). It is often said that the foundations for TQM in the workplace originated with two Americans, W. Edwards Deming and Joseph Juran. For over 50 years both helped to improve quality in public and private institutions, in the service and health-care industries, as well as in manufacturing, education and government. Juran (a practitioner) provided an analytical approach to managing for quality, while Deming (a philosopher) described a systematic view of the organisation. Both observed that, to succeed, quality management efforts need the long-term commitment and involvement of top management (Landesberg 1999; Koehler & Pankowski 1996).

It is also often said that it seems to be easier to measure quality in the business and industry sector, whilst it is not the case in higher education institutions, because of the complexity of the nature of the "business" of teaching and learning. In an article on TQM and higher education by Willis & Taylor (1999), it is stated that an increasing number of higher education institutions are adopting a TQM approach to enhance the institution's ability to attract and retain students by implementing processes to continually improve their quality.

Since its establishment in 1988, Border Technikon in East London has been an undergraduate institution. It has now moved into degree programmes – as most other technikons in the country. Initially it started with the B.Tech.: Marketing programme in 1996. Since the first B.Tech. programme was implemented, another eight B.Tech. degree programmes have been introduced. These B.Tech. degree programmes are in the Faculty of Human Sciences in the Business and Management fields. In 1999, 75 students were registered in the various B.Tech. degree programmes in the Faculty of Human Sciences. It is anticipated that more students will enrol for M.Tech. degrees – obviously in accordance with the Technikons Act of 1993. The biggest implication of this initiative is the move away from the basic requirements of teaching on an undergraduate level to teaching graduate and postgraduate students.

With reference to the desired growth in terms of student numbers and instructional programmes of Border Technikon as envisaged in the 1999 and 2001 three-year-rolling plans, B.Tech. programmes are viewed as the first

step in the vertical growth of the Technikon and its schools and departments. B.Tech. programmes are not only attractive for the high subsidy they generate per student, but they also encourage departments and schools to broaden their core business from teaching to include research and supervision as well.

If managed appropriately, the introduction of research methodology courses should result in departments and schools developing research in selected fields. This could lead to the generation of external funding through the conduct of research and consultancy work for private or government organisations.

To a large extent, the realisation of this scenario depends on the quality of these B.Tech. programmes and, more specifically, the quality of the management of the programmes and their IOs. Over time programmes which are inferior and fail to produce graduates (results) with the necessary skills and competencies, are expected to be rejected by the market and will fail to attract new subscribers.

As already mentioned, research is an important component of B.Tech. programmes. This degree programme is especially designed to present students with advanced knowledge in the discipline of their choice, building on material covered at the Diploma level. The research IO for the B.Tech. programme includes research methodology course work and a research project. The intention is to equip students with the required skills to either proceed to Master's degree studies by research or to apply research skills in occupational situations. The quality of the Instruction Offering: Research Methodology (IO: REM) depends, *inter alia*, on the availability of suitable and effective teaching strategies for both the research methodology course and the supervision of research projects.

At a meeting of the Research Capacity Development Working Group in the College Street Campus Boardroom, at Border Technikon on Friday, 5 November 1999, the teaching strategies for this course were the focus of discussions (refer to Annexure 9). At this meeting the following perspectives and recommendations were shared (this was to ensure that the ground rules

and quality assurance mechanisms and procedures would be in place to enhance the overall quality of the programme):

- Learning research methodology is effective only when done in conjunction with a research project and when the methodology course is synchronised with the research project cycle.
- Given the current status of research capacity and experience among staff at Border Technikon, as well as the largely generic nature of research methodology and practice, the offering of research methodology and the supervision of research projects could benefit from using a team teaching approach.
- Whereas the full-time equivalent (FTE) loading of the different courses in research methodology varies and is generally very low, the Working Group considers the research component (methodology and/or research output) of the B.Tech. degree as the most important of all, because it prepares students for independent investigative work. This skill is expected from people wishing to perform in positions of middle and higher management. The long-term success of the B.Tech. programmes depends on graduates getting into such positions, and warranting their appointment by performing capably and excellently.
- Team teaching is not new to Border Technikon and the approaches used by myself, the research officer and colleagues, as well as the experience gained thus far, should form the base for development of the IO in 2000 and beyond.

Subsequent to this meeting another meeting took place early in 2000. The primary aim of this meeting was to formalise the management and organisational aspects of the course (refer to Annexure 4.2). The following aspects resulted from this meeting:

- Dates of lectures were scheduled with specific topics and presenters in mind.
- Due dates for assignments were given to students and supervisors.
- Students were issued with general instructions.
- Students were issued with the specific content of their cumulative assignments.

However, irrespective of the precautions that had been taken, unstructured interviews conducted with students in the IO: REM in 1999 indicated that problems existed in the course. It was the identified problems that made me aware of the need for a thorough investigation into this matter. With these introductory perspectives in mind, the research problem of this study came to the fore.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The interview with a group of students from B.Tech.: Commercial Administration (now called "Office Management and Technology"), B.Tech.: Human Resources Management and B.Tech.: Management doing Research Methodology, revealed that they were not given the necessary support and information by supervisors regarding the course expectations. They also felt that being part of a support group could assist them in their work for assignments, ensure that assignments were handed in on time, etc. The lack of support was indicated as one of the reasons why students either did not hand in assignments at all or did not hand them in on time.

As a result, the programme management was adjusted to take place in the year 2000. Lecturers from different departments were assigned to deliver lectures on different topics in the IO: REM. Furthermore, a lecturer from each B.Tech. programme attended these lectures and was assigned to a group of students for supervision and support throughout the duration of the IO.

The research problem for this study has therefore been formulated as follows:

The problem seems to be the impact of the quality of the management of the instructional offering (IO) **process**: Research Methodology (REM), on the output(s) or the results of REM.

1.3 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

I was particularly interested whether an adaptation of the South African Excellence Foundation (SAEF) management framework could be used successfully as a self-assessment instrument to assess the quality *management of the IO process*: REM.

In order to undertake self-assessment, an underlying framework is necessary. A variety of frameworks for this purpose exist currently. One of these frameworks is the SAEF's management model. Although each organisation or institution is unique, this model provides a generic framework of criteria that can be applied widely to any organisation or institution or part of an organisation or institution.

The establishment of this framework can be traced back to 1990 when a group of concerned organisations in South Africa met under the chairmanship and patronage of the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS). One of the outcomes of this meeting was the establishment of the South African Quality Institute (SAQI) as a non-profit Section 21 company with the following prime objectives:

- Unifying the various quality efforts in the country.
- Promoting the use of quality in all walks of life as a critical success factor.
- Encouraging and promoting the successes of quality with a National Quality Award programme.

After considerable consultation throughout South Africa and abroad with organisations already using either the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) or the American Baldrige systems, it became clear that the two systems are conceptually so close that the differences were relatively minor. After discussions with potential users and stakeholders, a decision was made to merge the two internationally recognised systems into one South African Excellence Model. This model better represented the South African needs and thus avoided having two competing systems in the country.

Along with the need to develop, introduce and administer a National Quality Award, there was also a growing demand for a "Self-assessment" option. A non-profit Section 21 company – the SAEF – was set up to manage these processes. The SAEF model was the product of a "think tank" consisting of 12 organisations and it was facilitated by SAQI (Köpke 1998). SAEF, together with SAQI, accepted the challenge in contributing to enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of South African organisations by reinforcing the importance of quality and excellence in all aspects of their activities. They also stimulated and assisted with continuous performance improvement through the introduction of the SAEF model to organisations for the use in self-assessment and/or application for the South African Excellence Award.

The SAEF model for performance excellence – which also underpins the SAEF Award, Prizes and Certificates – is based on the premise that customer satisfaction; people (employee) satisfaction; impact on society (community); and supplier and partnership performance are achieved through leadership, driving policy and strategy, customer (student) and market focus, people management, resources and information and processes that ultimately lead to excellence in business results (SAEF 2000:11).

Each of the 11 elements comprising the SAEF Excellence Model is a criterion that can be used to assess an organisation's progress towards performance excellence. When reference is made to more than one criterion, they are referred to as criteria. The first six criteria are referred to as *enablers* and the last five criteria are referred to as *results* (refer to paragraph 5.7). A summary of the enabler and results criteria for organisation performance excellence according to the SAEF model are summarised in the Table 1.1:

TABLE 1.1: A summary of the "enabler" and "results" criteria of the SAEF model

ENABLERS	RESULTS
1. Leadership How the behaviour and actions of the executive team and all other leaders inspire, support and promote a culture of performance excellence.	7. Impact on Society What the organisation is <i>achieving</i> in satisfying the needs and expectations of the local, national and international community at large.
2. Policy and Strategy How the organisation formulates, deploys, reviews and turns policy and strategy into plans and actions.	8. Customer Satisfaction What the organisation is <i>achieving</i> in relation to the satisfaction of its external customers.
3. Customer and Market Focus How the organisation determines needs, requirements and expectations; enhances relationships and determines satisfaction of customers and markets.	9. People Satisfaction What the organisation is <i>achieving</i> in relation to the satisfaction of its people (employees).
4. People Management How the organisation releases the full potential of its people.	10. Supplier and Partnership Performance What the organisation is <i>achieving</i> in relation to the management of supplier and partnering processes.
5. Resources and Information Management How the organisation manages and uses resources and information effectively and efficiently.	11. Business Results What the organisation is <i>achieving</i> in relation to its planned business objectives and in satisfying the needs and expectations of everyone with a financial interest or other stakes in the organisation.
6. Processes How the organisation identifies, manages, reviews and improves its processes.	

SAEF (2000:13)

The left-hand column reflects the criteria that empower an organisation or unit to obtain its results, as reflected on the right-hand side of the table. The framework and its criteria are discussed in more detail in paragraph 5.7. The need for a systems approach - based on self-assessment - in higher education has become prominent with the termination of activities of the Quality Promotion Unit (QPU) and the Certification Council for Technikon Education (SERTEC).

As a result of the fluid situation with regard to quality management and assessment in higher education the past two years with the discontinuation of the activities of the QPU of universities (in 1999) and SERTEC (in 2001), it became necessary for institutions of higher learning to be pro-active

concerning quality management. Prior to the launch of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) institutions had to take initiative and seek some framework or other on which to base their self-assessment and institutional quality improvement activities.

In an attempt to respond to the demands for quality assurance the SAEF management framework was selected for Border Technikon because its Council had adopted it to be used as an instrument to guide its quality processes and systems across the institution. This decision was influenced by the ongoing professional relationship with Daimler Chrysler South Africa (DCSA) who had also adopted the SAEF framework along with other well-known organisations like the South African Breweries and Honeywell South Africa. The SAEF model has been recognised as being of international standard and is largely based on the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Awards (USA) and the EFQM.

Besides those mentioned in the previous paragraph, there are also other models for internal quality assurance in higher education especially as referred to by Jacobs in the SERTEC manual (SERTEC 1998:1):

- The ISO 9000 Series Model (refer to paragraph 5.8 for a detailed discussion of this model's application in the higher education sector).
- The Deming Quality Management Model based on the Deming principles.
- The SERTEC Model (as discussed in paragraph 3.5.1).

A further alternative is the QPU model previously followed by South African universities (refer to paragraph 3.5.2).

Although most of these models relate to industry, it is according to Freed and Klugman (1997:10), not unusual for higher education institutions to benchmark with non-educational institutions. Higher education institutions are responding to the external and internal pressures for continuous quality improvement and quality assurance by adopting principles used successfully by the business sector (Brunyee 2000:18). However, due to the unique characteristics and organisational culture of higher education institutions, these models obviously need adjustments and contextualisation.

Although the SAEF management framework is used in commerce, industry and the public service, it is a generic model with a holistic approach and could be modified for use in higher education (Brunyee 2000:18). It provides a comprehensive framework for self-assessment, which enables a company or institution to benchmark itself worldwide. The model is fully measurable because of its structured approach to gap analysis and it accommodates all kinds of organisations, large, as well as small and medium enterprises (SMEs), private or public. It makes for logical prioritisation and planning of corrective measures and allocation of resources while addressing both hard and soft governance issues.

The benefits that businesses using the SAEF model as a management framework have experienced, includes among others:

- Significant gains in business results and productivity.
- Improved service/product quality, sales and profits.
- Credibility as trading partners.
- Improved customer, employee, supplier and partner satisfaction.
- Business and community approval.
- Reduced dependence on consultants.

SAEF is a member of the Global Network of Excellence Award Administrators and is allied to its international counterparts such as the Baldrige National Quality Programme (USA), the EFQM, the Australian Quality Council, the Japan Quality Programme and Singapore Quality Award. For these reasons it was felt that it would be an appropriate model and framework to adapt to be used in the "business" of higher education. It could provide a systematic framework and instrument to use in self-assessment and assessment of the quality of the higher education institution, in particular a technikon.

Border Technikon applied the elements of the framework to focus, prioritise and continuously improve its activities as part of a systemic approach in preparation for SERTEC audits in 2000. Using this framework as a tool for self-assessment is not in "competition" with existing efforts to improve, but should rather be seen as a holistic framework that can accommodate improvement activities such as the International Standards Organisation (ISO) 9000 (refer to paragraph 5.8) and SERTEC (refer to paragraph 3.5.1).

The success of companies using the SAEF management framework and similar frameworks to manage their business processes was noted. I felt that it could be beneficial to the core business of Border Technikon (teaching and learning), if an adaptation of the SAEF management framework could be used to improve the management of an IO process.

It was also argued that by improving the quality of the management process of an IO holistically and systematically, it would invariably improve the design, input, delivery and output (results) of the IO itself. Improving the quality of the management of an IO process would, in turn, impact on a fundamental quality domain in higher education, namely academic quality.

With this background information the research question of this study is formulated in the next paragraph.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

With these introductory perspectives on the research problem, background and rationale, the following research question is formulated.

Will the quality of the management of the IO process: REM have an impact on the output(s) or results of the IO: REM?

With the background to the study and the research question formulated the following aims and objectives of the study emerge.

1.5 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This doctoral thesis investigates the management of a fundamental process in the technikon, namely that of an IO. The unit of analysis in this study is the IO process: REM. This study will therefore focus on the development of a quality assessment instrument that will be used to assess the quality

management of a single IO process in an institution of higher education. A process map of the IO process will be developed to be used as a basis in the assessment of the management of the IO process and to identify possible gaps in the process.

A further implicit purpose of the investigation is to use the quality assessment results as a basis to determine areas for improvement and actions to address them. The impact of the action plans on the outcomes of the IO process will be captured, interpreted and reported upon (refer to paragraph 7.5.1.1.1 and Table 7.3). The specific IO process to be assessed is that of the fourth-year offering of Research Methodology (REM) in the B.Tech.: Office Management and Technology (OMTECH) programme.

Therefore, the adding to "new" knowledge will be the adaptation and application of an industrial instrument, the SAEF management framework, on a fundamental process (IO: REM) in the organisation (Border Technikon) (refer to Annexure 1).

Seymour (1995) emphasises the importance of measuring or assessing a process in order to improve it. According to him the literature on quality contains many wise epigrams on measurement: "If you can't measure it, you can't understand it; if you can't understand it you can't control it; and if you can't control it you can't improve it Every process generates the data to improve it.... What gets measured, gets done" (Seymour 1995:78).

The purpose of this study is therefore to provide a generic management framework that can possibly be applied widely to all the IO processes of the Border Technikon. Seymour (1995:60) stresses the importance of "efficient processes" that lead to "effective outcomes". This statement can be interpreted that, if one can improve the management of an IO process, the outcomes of this process can be improved (refer to paragraph 7.8 and Table 7.4).

The objective is to present a "theoretical" systemic managerial instrument which will not only assess the management of an IO process, but which will also enable the "IO manager" to identify his/her responsibilities for the

academic sub-processes. A checklist of the IO manager's responsibilities in the management of the IO process will be compiled (refer to paragraph 7.6).

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The outcomes of this study can prove to provide a systemic generic framework to assess the quality of the management of the IO process: REM and possibly other IO processes at Border Technikon.

The adding to new knowledge will be the adaptation and application of an industrial instrument, namely the SAEF management framework, to assess the quality of the management of an IO process: REM in Border Technikon (refer to Annexure 1).

If managed appropriately, this "improved" IO process (REM) should result in departments and schools developing research in selected fields. This could lead to the generation of increased FTEs per IO and possible external funding through the conduct of research and consultancy work for private or government organisations.

A framework for research excellence based on the SAEF model for continuous improvement and self-assessment can be used beneficially in the higher education system by technikons and universities to identify areas for improvement in the IO process management: REM to promote a culture of research and possibly improve research output.

The adapted framework is a comprehensive diagnostic tool for self-assessment that will systematically address both hard and soft governance issues such as internal customers (students and staff); external customers such as employers, funding agencies and the community; as well as policies and strategies.

IO managers will also benefit by becoming process owners and acquiring the skills to identify areas for improvement (gaps) and strengths. The framework can furthermore serve as a checklist and an action plan for the manager(s) of the IO process: REM, in order to systematically improve the quality of the

management of the offering. The IO *process* manager will also be able to identify "bottlenecks" in the process and address them according to action plans.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology appropriate for this study and chosen by myself was AR. This I did for the following reasons:

- The study involved the subjects of research (participants such as students and academics, administrative and support staff at Border Technikon) as an integral part of the design (Mouton 2001; Salkind 1997).
- Mainly qualitative methods were used to gain an understanding of the IO process.
- Participants were empowered through workshops, conferences, reflective practice, etc. and committed to change (Mouton 2001; Salkind 1997).
- The key research problem and question were exploratory, descriptive and had an action-related focus (Mouton 2001; Salkind 1997).
- The mode of reasoning and conceptualisation was more inductive than deductive, with the emphasis on the participants (AL team) and the IO process (Mouton 2001).
- The selection of the case study was based on non-probable selection principles.
- The mode of observation and sources of data were based on participant observation; semi-structured interviews; reflective practice; relevant documentation such as minutes of meetings and reports, workshops and fieldnotes as referred to later in this chapter.
- The data analysis was a collaborative effort between myself and the participants (AL team) (Somekh 1988; Wickham 2000; Winter 1996).

AR is a research paradigm that allows knowledge development and understanding as part of practice. It is a useful way of doing research if one wants to improve professional practice. It is also suited to situations where one wishes to bring about action in the form of change and, at the same time, develop an understanding which informs the change and is an addition to what is known (Zuber-Skerritt 1997; Patton 2002; McTaggart 1991, 1994).

Qualitative research, and more specifically, AR has become increasingly popular because of its participative nature and the fact that it includes not only stakeholders and participants, but also the researcher in all the phases or cycles of the research (Bennett & Oliver 1988; Carr & Kemmis 1986; Elliott 1991a, 1991b).

AR is typically cyclic in nature. The later cycles are used to challenge and refine the results of the earlier cycles. It is also critically reflective in the sense that the researchers and participants regularly and systematically critique and reflect on what they are doing (reflection-in-action) and on what they have done (reflection-on-action) (refer to paragraphs 1.8.22-1.8.23; paragraph 2.2.5). The participants and/or stakeholders and I refined questions we were asking in the process. In the same process we asked new questions, but at a different stage of the AR cycle. Sometimes the same questions were asked during the process, but in a different way. The participants and/or stakeholders in AR and I also refined the methods we were using, as well as the understanding and subsequent action plans we were developing (Kember & Kelly 1994; Lewin 1946; McKernan 1991a, 1991b, 1991c; McNiff 1988, 1995; McNiff, Lomax & Whitehead 1996; Mc Taggart 1996; Mills 2000; Perry & Zuber-Skerritt 1994; Wickham 2000; Winter 1989).

AR was further chosen as the most appropriate method for this particular study because of the following reasons:

- It is a useful research method for managers in a management situation with a particular challenge that needs to be addressed in practice.
- It is regarded as supplying answers which are specific to the particular situation and which cannot be generalised with respect to other situations.
- It is used by researchers that are often practitioners building close relationships with the participants or stakeholders within the system or situation which is studied.
- It uses a research process which, rather than being standardised, is modified on the run in response to what happens.
- It is designed to allow simultaneous change and systemic understanding arising from activities related to the research.

- It has a capacity to respond to the demands of both the participants and/or stakeholders as well as the situation in a way which most other paradigms cannot.
- It is a process by which change, understanding and continuous improvement can be pursued at the same time, resulting in improved practice (Brunyee 2001; Denzin & Lincoln 2000; Elliott 1985, 1988; Huizer 1997; Kemmis 1982; Kemmis & McTaggart 1988; McNiff 1993; McTaggart 1994; Somekh 1988; Zuber-Skerritt 1991; Zuber-Skerritt 1992).

The linking of the terms "action" and "research" highlights the essential feature of the approach, which (adapted for this study) involves the testing out of ideas in practice as a means of improving practice and increasing knowledge (Kemmis & McTaggart 1988).

I involved IO managers (practitioners), the academic development officer, quality specialists (national and international) and Research Methodology students. I also facilitated reflective discussions and workshops, identifying underlying problems and assumptions while becoming a collaborative member of the group. I circulated findings and results to specialists and practitioners in industry and at other technikons nationally (Technikon Northern Gauteng, Peninsula Technikon, Pretoria Technikon), as well as and internationally (Northland Polytechnic, Massey University, Palmerston North and Waikato University, Hamilton in New Zealand) for their comments and input (refer to paragraphs 7.5.1.1.1, 7.5.1.1.4 & Annexure 18).

Characteristics of AR that distinguish it from other types of research include collaboration between the researcher (myself) and the practitioner(s) (myself and IO managers, SAEF assessors, B.Tech. students and members of the AL team for this project); solution(s) to practical problems (e.g. identification of areas for improvement in the IO process); change in practice (adjustment to management of the IO process at Border Technikon in order to promote continuous improvement of the process); theory development (an adaptation of the SAEF framework for use in the management of the IO process at Border Technikon); and publicising the results of the inquiry (by dissemination

of information by means of delivering and publishing papers and facilitating workshops) (paragraph 7.6; Zuber-Skerritt 1997).

Reviewing the management of the IO process required looking at the total process from a systemic point of view. The IO process: REM needed to be mapped into its sub-processes. An initial process map had been designed by means of the cyclic principles (plan, act, observe, reflect, revised plan) of AR. An activity map of the IO process was designed by myself (plan) and given to other staff members involved in the REM process to review (act) (refer to Figure 7.6). Staff members observed and reflected on the map and returned it to me for revision (revised plan). From a management perspective, the process map included the academic component and all the other elements required, ensuring the delivery of this IO (refer to Table 7.2).

To demonstrate the application of a systemic approach to assessing the quality of the management of this organisational process, an adaptation of an industrial self-assessment instrument (SAEF framework) and an existing external evaluation process (SERTEC), as well as the Baldrige Education Criteria for performance excellence were used (refer to paragraph 7.4). Thereafter, the adapted instrument was used to identify areas for improvement and strengths in the management of an IO process. Action plans were drawn up to address the prioritised areas for improvement as identified in the self-assessment of the IO process (refer to paragraphs 7.5 & 7.6).

The cyclic nature of AR and the selection of steps or stages in the cycle formed the basis of the procedure of AR. These macrocycles contained several microcycles within each spiral (refer to Figure 7.7). Reflective practice, reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action as well as double-loop learning played significant roles in the methodology of the investigation.

The research techniques used in this investigation were the following:

- Semi-structured interviews with students and staff involved in the REM process at Border Technikon; with experts on quality, strategic, process and operational management in industry; and with experts on quality,

strategic, process and operational management at other technikons and universities nationally and internationally.

- AL team discussions and reflections with students, academics, researchers, administrators, support staff and technikon management staff.
- I facilitated workshops with staff and students on improving research-related processes. I organised workshops and discussions with staff and colleagues from other institutions to acquire information to disseminate information, as well as to report on the progress of the study.
- I annually had to report to the Border Technikon Research Committee and the National Research Foundation (NRF) - a funding agency – on the progress of the study.
- I kept several journals of visits, events and reflections over the three-year period of 1999 to 2001. The journals of 1999 were unfortunately lost as a result of a theft from my car in East London in June 1999 (refer to Annexure 18).
- Fieldnotes and memorandums to myself: I kept fieldnotes, especially of visits nationally and abroad, to other institutions, as well as of relevant meetings, workshops and seminars. I wrote these memorandums to myself to capture "AHA-moments" and reflections.

In 1998, prior to the commencement of the AR project (as described in this study in Chapter seven), I produced an extensive literature review as well as an annotated bibliography on AL, AR, participatory AL, emancipatory AR, group learning and student learning. I used this unpublished document as a guide and reference throughout this study (refer to Annexure 19).

I further conducted a literature review on methods of addressing quality, self-assessment, TQM, quality improvement (QI), quality assurance (QA), continuous improvement (CI), incremental improvement, assessment

frameworks, benchmarking, reflective practice, process thinking, customer satisfaction, etc. (refer to Chapters three, four and five of this study).

Whilst most of the literature addresses all the elements mentioned in the previous paragraphs, little has been reported in the literature on how to measure the quality of the management of a *fundamental unit of service* such as the IO at a technikon. I used AR and AL to explore my professional experiences in order to understand them better. I was committed to improving my professional practice and to presenting these experiences and understanding to others.

This study required a firm commitment to AR, which implied more than simply a commitment to a set of techniques (refer to paragraph 8.2.6).

1.8 DEMARCATION OF THE FIELD OF STUDY AND LIMITATIONS

The unit of analysis in this study is an academic IO process: REM in the instructional programme B.Tech.: OMTECH in the School of Secretarial Studies and Education in the Faculty of Human Sciences, Border Technikon, East London in the Eastern Cape. The period of literature study was from January 1998, while the investigation and observation period lasted from January 1999 to January 2002.

The type of the descriptive research - namely a case study - that was used in this study had a number of strengths and challenges that deserve mentioning. True to the definition of a case study given by Salkind (1997:211) that it is a method used to study a process "in a unique setting or situation in as intense and as detailed a manner as possible", this case study proved to be highly detailed and often personal. It took a great deal of time, but it yielded an enormous amount of detail and insight. It encouraged me to use several different techniques such as unstructured interviews, workshops, conferences, participant observation, personal observations and reflections, the use of documentary sources, journals, reports, fieldnotes, as well as the use of existing data to obtain the necessary information. It was not only a "rich account" of what occurred, but also suggested directions for further study as discussed in paragraph 8.10 (Salkind 1997:212). It provided

in-depth insights and involved participation as well as involvement on the part of students, academic, administrative and support staff, which enhanced opportunities for "high construct validity, low refusal rates and ownership of findings" (Mouton 2001:151).

Limiting factors, however, were the following:

- This case study appeared to be simple to do because it is only a single IO in a single instructional programme, in a single school, in a single faculty in Border Technikon. Quite the opposite was true, however. It proved to be the most time-consuming research method imaginable, because I rarely had a choice as to the wide variety of sources and conditions to collect the data from. For example, if relevant national policies changed, it had an impact on the institution, the faculty, the school, the programme and – ultimately - the IO process and study. The data was collected in a variety of settings (nationally at Peninsula Technikon, Pretoria Technikon, Technikon Northern Gauteng and Border Technikon and internationally at Waikato University in Hamilton, Massey University in Palmerston North and Northland Polytechnic in Whangarei in New Zealand) under a wide variety of conditions. My journals of these experiences were stolen from my vehicle in East London in June 1999 – another "condition" or "experience" that one had no control over (refer to Annexure 18).
- I had to be a creative and an adaptive enquirer using diverse techniques – almost like a "bricoleur or maker of quilts deploying whatever strategies, methods, or empirical materials are at hand" (Denzin & Lincoln 2000:4). However, the combination of these multiple observations, methods, data sources and techniques contributed to triangulation in order to overcome the intrinsic bias of AR as methodology as discussed in detail in Chapter six and referred to in paragraph 1.7 of this chapter.
- The fieldnotes and observation notes that I recorded in several journals over the three-year period may reflect reality the way I observed it, but it also may not. I consciously recognised that I might be biased and made every effort not to be biased – by reflecting with the AL-team - in the conclusions that were drawn based on reality (as perceived by myself).

- The case study approach does not allow for speculation or trying to establish any cause-and-effect relationships between what is observed and what one thinks might be responsible for the outcomes. There is simply insufficient data to conclude that a cause-effect relationship exists. However, studying causal relationships was not the purpose of this study or method used.
- What this case study provided in depth, it lost in breadth. While it was extremely focused, it was not nearly as comprehensive as other research methods. As a result, the findings in this case study can only be applicable to the specific IO process in the specific B.Tech. programme in the specific school and faculty of Border Technikon and has therefore limited generalisability.

Another limiting factor to be taken into account in the presentation of this thesis is the fact that none of the participants and stakeholders in this project - except myself - had been formally trained to be SAEF assessors. Being a formally trained SAEF assessors implies a sound knowledge and assessment of the application of the SAEF Framework in commerce and industry. Most participants and stakeholders had never applied or used some of the criteria of the framework before. This could have had an impact on the quality of the outcomes of this study.

One of the main lessons learnt in this research was the importance of interpreting the core concepts of the SAEF framework and the Baldrige Education Criteria sensitively in an academic environment, specifically in a fundamental unit such as the IO process. It was not possible to simply transfer either the total framework or the scoring system from the commercial environment and new approaches had to be adopted along the way. The conceptualised adaptation of the Baldrige and SAEF frameworks by myself, proved to be a challenging task as participants wished to select their own topics for comparison. The main trend of the changes in the AL team's processes has been to bring them closer to the peer-evaluation model, more familiar in the academic environment, but to retain most of the principles underpinning the SAEF framework. Members of the team found it difficult to

ask new questions all the time and realised that it forces them to think about how they did things.

Another limiting factor was the fact that participants and stakeholders - except myself - were not familiar with concepts such as "AL", "AR", "reflective practice", "reflection-in-action", "reflection-on-action" and the functions of an AL group. This was, however, partly overcome by informational workshops and sessions on the key concepts facilitated by myself. It also turned out to be a value-adding exercise and a learning curve for everyone involved in this project.

1.9 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

In order to improve the understanding and interpretation of this study, concepts used frequently are clarified in this section of this study.

1.9.1 Accountability

This concept entails a "direct authority relationship within which one party accounts to a person or a body for the performance of tasks or functions conferred, or able to be conferred, by that person or body" (Liston 1999:156). A logical consequence of this is the application of rewards and sanctions when accountability mechanisms are activated. It is important to understand that this concept of accountability does not imply simply providing information or answering questions, but includes setting goals, providing and reporting on results and the visible consequences for getting things right or wrong. It also implies delegation of responsibility and authority, an essential element of which is that the delegator does not lose responsibility for performance and may therefore, depending on the circumstances, be called to account. This definition enables a distinction to be made between accountability proper and other forms of activity which lack the direct authority relationship, but are sometimes referred to as involving accountability (Liston 1999).

1.9.2 Action coaching

Dotlich and Cairo (1999:18) define action coaching as "a process that fosters self-awareness and that results in the motivation to change, as well as the guidance needed if change is to take place in ways that meet organizational needs". This concept is elaborated on in paragraph 7.6.

1.9.3 Action learning (AL)

AL, as defined by Rothwell (1999:5), is "a real-time learning experience that is carried out with two equally important purposes in mind: meeting an organizational need and developing individuals or groups". Dotlich and Noel (1998:14) observe that AL is "magical, at least in the sense that it kills two birds with one stone. The process helps organizations respond to major business problems and opportunities, and at the same time develops key people so that they have the capacity to lead organizations in the desired strategic direction".

Many definitions of AL have been offered. According to one such definition offered by Dean (1998:3), AL is a "voluntary, participant-centered, evolutionary process to solve real, systemic, and so-far-up-till-now unresolved organizational work-cum-learning problems in the workplace as it applies the principle of democratic values and team learning in an environment of trust and authenticity". However, the founder of AL, Reg Revans, "avoids defining action learning. He is more inclined to describe action learning in terms of what it is not. Revans, in effect, holds the view that to try and build finite structures around it ... only robs action learning of its power" (Dilworth 1998:29).

1.9.4 The action learning team (AL team)

This is a group of individuals who possess both the appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes or expertise to address the problem which will be the focus of team efforts and who need development in the area which the team will address (Rothwell 1999).

1.9.5 Action research (AR)

According to Zuber-Skerritt (1992:11), AR reflects dialectic research (relationship between theory and practice) and is educational research with action and practical experience as foundations.

The process of AR was first conceptualised by Lewin (1952) and further developed by Kolb (1984), Carr and Kemmis (1986), as well as others. In brief, it is a spiral of cycles of action and research consisting of four major moments, namely plan, act, observe and reflect (refer to Chapter 6 for a comprehensive discussion on AR).

1.9.6 Assessment

Assessment means the process of collecting evidence of learners' work to measure and make judgements about the achievement or non-achievement of specified National Qualifications Framework (NQF) standards and/or qualifications (SAQA 2000).

1.9.7 Assessor

"Assessor" indicates the person who is registered by the relevant Education and Training Quality Assurance body (ETQA) in accordance with the criteria established for this purpose by a Standards Generating Body (SGB) to measure the achievement of specified NQF standards and/or qualifications (SAQA 2000). In this study an SAEF assessor is a person registered and trained by SAEF for the purpose of assessing SAEF awards' applications from local government, public sector, businesses and small and medium enterprises (SAEF 2000).

1.9.8 Audit

An audit means the process undertaken to measure the quality of products or services that have already been manufactured or delivered (SAQA 2000:47).

1.9.9 Benchmarking

According to MacDonald and Tanner (1998:8), benchmarking is the "process of identifying, understanding and adapting outstanding practices and processes from organisations anywhere in the world in order to help your own organisation to improve its performance". A shorter definition as supplied by MacDonald and Tanner (1998:8) is that benchmarking is "a reference or measurement standard for comparison".

1.9.10 Best practice

Liston (1999:2) describes "best practice" as: "The best way to do something. The concept can be applied at all levels of the organisation, from the total management system down to individual functions. It is a changing concept as improved processes are integrated into the organisation".

1.9.11 Continuous improvement (CI)

The process of continuous improvement as described by (Liston 1999:157), is sometimes called "constancy of purpose", a principle used by Deming to examine the improvement of the product and/or the service. According to Liston (1999:157), it "involves searching unceasingly for ever-higher levels of quality by isolating sources of defects. It is called *kaizen* in Japan, where the goal is zero defects. Quality management and continuous improvement involves ongoing activity to seek constantly to improve the quality of process, product or service in the belief that performance can always be enhanced through incremental and breakthrough improvements".

1.9.12 The continuous improvement team (CI team)

This term is applied to an AL team that continuously and incrementally improves the processes and tasks pertaining to the specific problem it is addressing and which it is involved in on a day-to-day basis.

1.9.13 Delivery

Rothwell (1999:12) describes *delivery* in a training context as the "transmission of training from trainers to learners". In the higher education context education delivery refers to instructional approaches – modes of teaching, as well as organising activities and experiences so that learning can take place (NIST 1998:16).

1.9.14 External customer

The term "external customer" means "an external person, body or structure that is a beneficiary to the services or product of a particular organisation" (SAQA 2000:47).

1.9.15 Internal customer/IO customer

The term "internal customer" means "an internal person, body or structure that is a beneficiary of the services and/or products of a particular organisation" (SAQA 2000:47).

In the context of this study the internal customer is also the IO customer. The customer in the context of higher education and specifically in the higher education institution and in the IO, is the group of individuals (learners, professional organisations, employers, community, etc.) who directly receive the services (teaching, instruction, research supervision, consultancy) or products (information, courses, research findings) of this organisation or specifically the IO unit. The customer can be internal as well as external (NIST 2001).

1.9.16 Instructional offering (IO)

This is a "subject" or division of an instructional programme offered at a technikon. It covers a complete homologous syllabus with a national education (NATED) code (a code awarded to the subject by the National Education Department as part of the registration of the subject for an instructional programme) and has credit value (RSA DoE 1997c).

1.9.17 IO unit/unit of service/unit of analysis

For the purpose of this study the IO unit, as referred to in the adapted version of the SAEF criteria document, is the IO process with all its sub-processes and activities as set out in Figure 7.2.

For the purpose of this study, a unit of service would be the IO process with all its sub-processes and activities as referred to in Table 7.2.

1.9.18 Instructional programme

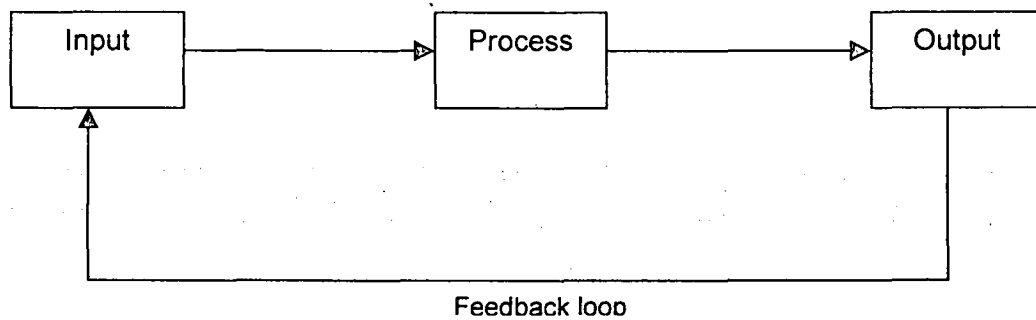
This is a qualification (degree/diploma/certificate) offered at a technikon. It consists of different levels of "subjects" (IOs), each with a NATED code and credit value (RSA DoE 1997c).

The definition supplied in the Technikons Act is the following: "...any programme of education and training offered at a technikon and in respect of which a technikon certificate is awarded upon the successful completion thereof..." (RSA 1993:125).

In the discussion document of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) on a new academic policy for programmes and qualifications in higher education, a programme is referred to as: "...a purposeful and structured set of learning experiences that leads to one or more qualifications; and in an outcomes-based system, a programme is designed to enable learners to achieve pre-specified exit level outcomes" (CHE 2001b:40).

1.9.19 Process

A process is a series of actions, changes or functions bringing about a result. According to Slack, Chambers, Harland, Harrison and Johnston (1995:137), it is described as "a set of activities creating goods or services through transforming inputs into outputs" in operations management. This is illustrated in Figure 1.1:

FIGURE 1.1: Illustration of a process in operations' management

(Adapted from Slack *et al.* 1995:137.)

1.9.20 Process improvement

Process improvement entails enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of those processes identified as critical to the success of provision of services, the achievement of outcomes, as well as overall impact (also refer to paragraph 7.2 for more information).

1.9.21 Process manager/IO manager

This is the person responsible for the smooth running of the whole IO process with its sub-processes and activities in order to achieve its desired outcome(s). In the context of this study, this person must:

- ensure that the action plans for the process are fully implemented;
- obtain and organise the necessary resources to do so;
- select the team that will implement all the actions;
- overcome resistance from the bureaucracy;
- manage the process; and
- ensure that continuous improvement is taking place.

In the context of this study, an IO manager is someone who is responsible for the management of the IO unit or the IO process, specifically the IO process: REM.

1.9.22 Process redesign

Process redesign is strongly customer-focused and continually concentrates on the question of "Should we be doing this at all or does this sub-process add value?" If it does not add value, it must either be left out or be re-engineered (Liston 1999). (Also see paragraph 7.2 for a more comprehensive explanation.)

1.9.23 Process re-engineering

Process re-engineering is a radical redesigning of processes to achieve dramatic improvements, instead of slow and steady progress (Macdonald 1999). Process re-engineering is also known as "business process redesign" or "process innovation" and change management is seen as the element that "makes or breaks" business process re-engineering in practice (Earl 1996). (Also see paragraph 7.2 for further information.)

1.9.24 Process thinking

This entails the programming of the mind to think along the lines of processes, sub-processes, activities, the management of these and process improvement, as well as process redesign and process re-engineering in all the day-to-day activities that it is involved in in a higher education institution or organisation is called process thinking [Kedian 1999 (personal interview)].

1.9.25 Provider

A provider means "a body which delivers learning programmes (instructional programmes) which culminate in specified National Qualifications Framework (NQF) standards and/or qualifications and manages the assessment thereof" (SAQA 2000:47).

1.9.26 Quality assurance (QA)

Quality assurance is "very much part of quality management and includes the planning and systematic activities designed to ensure that customers are

confident that the higher education institution consistently delivers a service of a high standard. It can also be the procedures that the higher education institution uses to map and standardise its core processes to ensure that its own output requirements and customers' expectations are consistently met" (Liston 1999:159).

Quality assurance means "the sum of activities that assure the quality of products and services at the time of production or delivery. Quality assurance procedures are frequently applied only to the activities and products associated directly with the goods and services provided to external customers" (SAQA 2001:6).

1.9.27 Quality audit

Quality auditing is part of, but not the total of, a quality assurance system. Quality audits are activities undertaken to measure the quality of products or services that have already been manufactured or delivered. Where a product or service has a number of components, each component may be subject to an audit. The findings of such an audit could contribute to achieving the desired quality end product or service. However, it is the decisions taken in response to the findings of the audit that influence the quality experienced by the customer, either with respect to that which has been audited or with respect to future products or services. Often different people take these decisions to those who carry out the audit; indeed, it is generally recommended that it should be so. Therefore, a quality audit in itself has no impact on quality (SAQA 2000:10).

1.9.28 Quality control

A quality audit only controls quality when the findings are used to decide whether or not a product is delivered to the customer. An audit cannot control the quality of a service, because the audit can only happen while the service is being delivered or afterwards. At best an audit may influence the quality of services in the future.

The person who makes the product or delivers the service ultimately controls quality. Even where an audit is used to decide if a product is fit to deliver to the external customer, the person or people who make the product control the quality of goods that are delivered to the auditor, namely the internal customer (SAQA 2000:10-11).

1.9.29 Quality improvement (QI)

Quality improvement is "one of the key elements of quality management that indicates that striving for excellence and achieving best practice is a continuous improvement process. It is a structured approach that involves all staff in the higher education institution using performance indicators to identify and act on areas to address/improve in all processes in order to meet and sometimes even exceed customer expectations" (Liston 1999:159).

1.9.30 Quality management systems

The term "quality management systems" means "the combination of processes used to ensure that the degree of excellence specified is achieved. A quality management system is the sum of the activities and information an organisation uses to enable it to better and more consistently deliver products and services that meet and exceed the needs and expectations of its customers and beneficiaries, more cost effectively and cost efficiently, today and in the future" (SAQA 2001:6).

1.9.31 Reflection-in-action

Reflection-in-action means reflecting on what one is doing (one's actions) *while* one is doing it. This term is discussed more comprehensively in paragraph 2.2.5.

1.9.32 Reflection-on-action

Reflection-on-action means reflecting on what one *has* done (one's actions) *after* the action(s) have been executed. This term is discussed more comprehensively in paragraph 2.2.5.

1.9.33 Reflective practitioner

A reflective practitioner is someone who uses reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action to improve his/her practice. This term is contextualised in paragraph 2.2.5.

1.9.34 School/department

For the purpose of this study the terms "school" and "department" are used interchangeably, meaning a collection of related instructional programmes managed by a head of the school/department in a faculty.

1.9.35 Self-assessment

According to the Houghton Mifflin Company (1996), self-assessment is the evaluation, appraisal or measurement of oneself, especially in relation to certain objective standards.

According to SAEF (1998:3), self-assessment is a "comprehensive, systematic and regular review of an organisation's activities and results referenced against a model of performance excellence. The self-assessment process allows the organisation to clearly identify its *strengths* and *areas in which improvements can be made*. It culminates in planned improvement actions which are then monitored for progress".

Strydom (1997:604) states that in "all the policy documents on further and higher education in South Africa self-evaluation [self-assessment] has been emphasised as the basis for any quality assurance system". In Chapter four the role of self-assessment in higher education is discussed in detail.

1.9.36 Systems approach

In discussing quality, Karapetrovic and Willborn (1998:100) define a system as "a set of interrelated processes that function harmoniously using various resources towards achieving a set goal". In a system there is a core process with definable inputs and outputs. Control processes, self-organisation, interaction between the parts and the whole, a definable structure, standardisation and interdependence are usually part of a system (Pretorius 2000:191). According to Cummings and Lunsford (1996), the characteristics of a system are the following:

- There is an aim to which a set of processes is directed.
- The core process is input to address output, with a focus on satisfying customer needs.
- The process is interdependent.
- There is an optimal range of acceptance performance.
- The system is dynamic.
- Adaptation occurs.
- Time is important.
- The system is open to continuous improvement.
- People are an extremely important part of the system.

1.9.37 Total quality management (TQM)

According to Liston (1999:160), TQM is the "application of quality principles to achieve the integration of all functions and processes of the organization. The ultimate goal is customer satisfaction. The way to achieve it is through continuous improvement. The creative involvement of everyone, from the chief executive down, in the continuous improvement of the organization's processes, products and services".

1.10 LAYOUT OF THE STUDY

Chapter one of the thesis explains the orientation of the study in terms of the necessity for the study, the aims, the scope and the research design envisaged for this research. The significance of the study is discussed and a

demarcation of the study and its limitations are provided. The various concepts used throughout the study are clarified and contextualised. The content for different chapters is also outlined in this chapter.

Chapter two discusses the challenges to change an organisation's culture and what the culture should be like if it is serious about quality. This chapter provides theoretical perspectives on skills such as becoming a learning organisation, continuous improvement, reflective practice, as well as customer focus and benchmarking. The challenge of a culture of process management in the changing organisation is highlighted.

In Chapter three the notions of quality and quality assurance in the higher education landscape are defined. Factors influencing quality assurance in higher education, e.g. globalisation, massification, technology, financial constraints, academic mobility and the changing relationships between government and higher education are discussed against the international trends in quality assurance in higher education institutions. Quality assurance is then contextualised within the South African higher education policies and perspectives.

The pivotal role of self-assessment in the quality assurance system in higher education is defined and discussed in Chapter four of this study. The different approaches to self-assessment are described and the levels and areas for self-assessment discussed. Linkages among self-assessment, the institutional or unit planning process and action plans in improved quality processes are illustrated.

Chapter five provides theoretical perspectives on a systems approach to quality assurance. The role of a systems approach for quality assurance with reference to the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence, the SAEF model and the ISO in the higher education context are also discussed. In addition, the philosophy of TQM in higher education is contextualised.

An in-depth discussion of the theoretical base of AR and AL as methodology is provided in Chapter six. The reader is introduced to the origins of AR, the

essential principles of AR and the techniques commonly associated with AR. The contradiction in AR is discussed and debated to substantiate the use of AR and AL as methodologies in this study.

The methodology of AR is put into action in Chapter seven with a detailed description of the cyclical experiences in the mapping process, the self-assessment process, the problem identification process, the action process and the reflection process that took place during the research period from 1999 to 2001. The cycles of AR and AL are described and reported on, as well as the prioritised areas which were identified for improvement. Emphasis was placed on the personal reflections of the AL team and myself during the AR experience and a checklist was compiled for the IO manager (IO manager) or the process owner to contribute to the improvement of the management of the IO process: REM in the B.Tech.: Office Management and Technology at Border Technikon. Actions effected are supported by a number of annexures, tables, figures, graphs and photos.

Chapter eight culminates in conclusions and recommendations. Furthermore it postulates the adapted self-assessment instrument used in addressing the research problem. Conclusions of all the chapters are provided, while the limitations of the study and suggestions for possible areas of further exploration in the field are advanced in the final chapter of this thesis.

1.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter laid the foundation for this thesis. Not only did it introduce the research problem and research question, but it also highlighted the significance and value of the study. The research was justified, definitions were presented for a clearer understanding of the content, and the methodology was briefly described and justified. The layout and demarcation of the study, as well as some limitations were provided. Having laid this foundation, the thesis proceeds with relevant literature reviews and a detailed description of the research.



Chapter 2

THE CHALLENGES FOR CHANGE IN THE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in the introduction of this study, one of the challenges South African technikons are faced with in the context of change and transformation, is to improve the academic quality of their "business". If an institution is serious about the quality of not only its core business, but also the quality of the institution as a whole, it is faced with a "culture change" to a culture of TQM. In this chapter the change to a culture of TQM is set out in both a nationally and internationally higher education context. Following from concepts such as "a learning organisation", "continuous improvement", "performance excellence", "reflective practices" and "customer focus", internal and external benchmarking are discussed.

In the context of this study the organisational culture is changing to continuously improve professional practices in order to deliver value-for-money education to students ("customers"). In order to meet the demands of internal and external stakeholders and to cope with the factors influencing quality in the higher education institutions, it has become imperative to focus on skills and changes towards performance excellence. These changes and skills include becoming learning organisations with a TQM philosophy based on reflective practices and a

CI culture towards performance excellence. These concepts, as well as the benefits of benchmarking are brought into context with the challenges and demands of the changing landscape of quality assurance in the higher education sector (Pounder 2000; Lundquist 1996; Webbstock 1997, 1999c).

For technikons to be competitive in the higher education market, a number of organisational "cultural" changes are envisaged. These changes are not merely for the sake of change, but is imperative to improve the quality of the students' learning experiences.

2.2 CHALLENGES TO CHANGE TO A NEW ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Flowing from the challenge to offer degrees and to improve the quality thereof, technikons have the overall embracing challenge of changing to a culture of improving, monitoring, assessing, controlling and assuring the total quality of the institution (Karathanos 1999; Frazer 1994). In addition, the minute one mentions any challenge to change an organisational culture, it invariably implies investigating concepts such as learning organisations, change management in organisations and cultures in organisations. How does one change from an existing culture to another? Besides moving from a culture of teaching, instruction and learning to a culture of applied research, technikons also have to move to a culture of not only academic quality improvement, monitoring, assessment, control, management and assurance, but also total (holistic) quality improvement, quality monitoring, quality assessment, quality control, quality management and quality assurance of the entire institution.

Harman (1994:40) quotes David Kemp, the Australian Shadow Minister for Education:

"Education has to be about excellence. If it is not about quality, then all our effort, all our expenditure will have been for nothing, because we will

not only have blighted the lives of our students, but damaged our ability to compete and survive in a world-class living standard without a world-class workforce. And we cannot have a world-class workforce, without world-class education".

Quality of education in the context of being part of world-class education implies a change in culture for many South African higher education institutions (Green 1994). What is meant by "cultural change"? According to Enderby and Phelan (1994) cultural change in organisations is about employers wanting their employees to change so that they are "better" at service, better at problem-solving, better at leading, etc. In other words, they are trying to change the way people behave and in that sense changing the organisational culture or the way people do things in their organisation(s). As stated in paragraph 2.2.3 of this chapter, an organisation consists of people and it is people that have the ability to change - not organisations. Enderby and Phelan (1994), in the same article, state that there are some principles that they learned from the many techniques that companies use to change culture. The principles of a self-generating cultural change are the following:

- Sustained long-term change can only occur when people's hearts and minds are committed - that is when true behavioural changes can take place. It cannot be created automatically (Senge 1990; Liston 1999).
- People commit themselves when they believe in the worthiness of the change goal; when they feel involved; and when they feel that they can contribute according to their own values (Pedler 1985; Gates 1999).
- The changes in an organisation must be organisation-wide as well as systemic and they must support the new cultural norms (Morgan 1986; Lewis 2000; Green 1994).
- Individuals like to belong to a group of people with similar commitments. In addition they want to feel needed and appreciated by the others in the group (Fessler 1986; Losoncy 1995).

- Commitment starts through interest and involvement. There must be a process whereby experimentation can occur. People need to be able to try things out; to reflect on the results; and to share their experiences with others in an environment that is non-threatening (Peters & Waterman 1982).
- There must be trust and excitement instead of fear for people to be able to change (Rogers 1969; Losoncy 1995).
- The psychological (e.g. recognition, self-esteem) and material rewards (e.g. financial) for changing must be greater than those for maintaining the *status quo* (Plant 1987).
- When people are either unable or unwilling to cope with the effects of change, they cling to the familiar or to the past. So people need to be familiar with the effects of the change and able to cope with the effects thereof in order that they can let go of the past (Bridges 1980; Taffinder 2000).
- People cope best with change when they are able to move gradually through a process of endings, beginnings and transitions. People will not move forward until they have had a chance to deal with any feelings or loss of or grief associated with moving from the present. Therefore sustained cultural change will only occur if the critical mass can be achieved. If a critical mass is achieved, a very significant leap forward in the market place is possible (Bridges 1980).

If we are serious about "world-class education" in South Africa and specifically in higher education, we need to investigate what exactly is meant by "world-class". In what is referred to as the "systems era" by Sobel (1993), he refers to the period in the 1980s and beyond as a period synonymous with the theme of TQM. He states that the cornerstones of TQM include striving toward constant and ongoing improvement (CI), the setting of long-term objectives, empowering employees, and utilising the team approach. One needs to investigate what role TQM plays in higher education internationally, nationally as well as in South African technikons specifically to understand the challenge for CI towards excellence that institutions are faced with in a very competitive market.

2.2.1 A total quality management (TQM) culture in higher education internationally

As far as TQM and higher education are concerned, it is stated that an increasing number of higher education institutions are adopting a TQM approach to enhance the ability of the institutions to attract and retain students by implementing processes to continually improve quality (Willis, Hillman & Taylor 1999; Green 1994; Frazer 1994).

Karathanos (1999) addresses the question on quality, by asking: "Is education keeping pace with business?" He argues that the implementation of TQM in the United States business sector has made great progress in the past two decades, but that the education sector's efforts, although implementing quality initiatives since the early 1990s, appear to be fragmented without a clear scope. This situation has resulted in a widening gap between the needs of the business sector and the product and services of the education sector.

Karathanos (1999) maintains that accreditation bodies remains the most common means of assessing education programmes, but are ineffective in promoting quality and CI, because they rely primarily on inputs; assessment are performed infrequently; and are usually static. Findings from the investigation into the South African quality assurance situation by the Interim Higher Education Quality Committee (IHEQC) of the CHE, supported Karathanos' argument (Reddy, Baijnath, Brennan, Fourie, Genis, Noruwana, Singh & Webbstock 2000). Some of these findings are mentioned in paragraphs 3.5.1, 3.5.2 and 3.5.3.9.

According to Karathanos (1999), the United States higher and secondary education sector, began to seriously investigate the notion of CI during the late 1980s - a time when quality-related activities had reached a fairly high level in the business sector. Corporate concerns regarding quality and challenges of the global markets fostered the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Improvement Act of 1987 as a means of addressing quality issues systematically

(Izadi, Kashef, & Stadt 1996). By the late 1980s early 1990s, various forums were created to facilitate the sharing, learning and applications of quality concepts in education, e.g. the Annual Conference on TQM in Higher Education, the annual Governors' Conference on Quality in Education, the Annual Deming Conference on Quality in Education, the annual Total Quality Forum, etc. Following on this, a comprehensive and unifying programme to guide the efforts toward the improvement of education was developed - the Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence. These award criteria defined a framework for TQM in education. The seven education criteria for performance excellence are leadership, strategic planning, student and stakeholder focus, information and analysis, faculty and staff focus, educational and support process management, and school (unit) performance results. Together with the SAEF's criteria, the Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence were adapted in order to be used as a quality management framework in the research of this study (refer to paragraph 7.4).

The Baldrige business criteria were adapted to education criteria and from 1994 to 1995 the Baldrige office developed the "Education Pilot Criteria". In 1995 those pilot criteria were pilot tested through the same process used in the Baldrige award for business. In 1996 the Baldrige office hosted a conference at which participating institutions shared their experiences regarding the pilot programme. Feedback was used to revise and improve the education pilot criteria as well as the evaluation process and in 1998 revised and updated Education Criteria for Performance Excellence were released. The creation of a Baldrige award for education and appropriate funds for implementing it were authorised in 1999. Clearly, the development of the Baldrige education criteria represents significant progress in education because of its comprehensive, rigorous framework for educational excellence. It also contributed significantly to change to a culture of CI and performance excellence in higher education in the United States (NIST 1998; 2001).

2.2.2 Changing to a total quality management (TQM) culture in South African higher education

In the present climate of political and social change in South Africa, institutions of higher education are also facing major changes in culture, missions, functions, curricula and degree structures. At national level the size and shape of a restructured higher education system are being debated, particularly within the CHE. Coping with "mismatches" between increasing proportions of underprepared students and existing curricula has added further pressure to institutions already struggling with underresourcing and understaffing (Webbstock 1997; RSA DoE 1997a, 1997b). In an attempt to address these issues, the CHE proposed a single co-ordinated higher education system, with a single qualifications system as part of the NQF, which was set up for all levels of education (CHE 2000). The NQF establishes the equivalence of qualifications, standards and credits to create flexibility across the system. The CHE also established the HEQC to investigate the idea of a single quality assurance system for higher education (CHE 2000; CHE 2001a). In paragraph 3.5 these and other leading policies and perspectives together with their impact on quality assurance in South African higher education are discussed.

In the interim, many institutions are beginning to establish their own systems of quality assurance in the expectation that quality will need to be demonstrable.

Webbstock (1997) argues that ideas of quality and redress need to be consonant with those in the national policy arena and *vice versa*. She furthermore argues that, in order for this to happen, a clear distinction must be made between quality and standards. Some of the criticism against the QPU for universities was that it did not uncouple these two concepts clearly (Reddy *et al.* 2000; Webbstock 1997). Space can be opened up in which both continual quality improvements through self-reflection and the achievement of minimal acceptable standards across the system can be striven for, with minimal confusion and contention. Webbstock (1997, 1999b) agrees that both standards and quality (two related but

conceptually distinct notions) need to be assured in the revised higher education system. Registration and accreditation through SAQA are necessary to ensure minimum standards, but to assure quality, institutional mechanisms for self-evaluation and reflection on practice must be developed so that continuous improvement is encouraged (SAQA 1998; Webbstock 1997). Ideally, different bodies should carry out the setting of standards and assuring quality. This leaves technikons with the challenge to develop their own unique framework to support the philosophy of TQM, besides the discontinued SERTEC that used to check minimum standards. How can quality be improved in higher education and specifically in the technikon sector?

The whole idea of conforming to threshold standards as well as being "good enough" creates systems that promote mediocrity and that use an "inspection mentality" to determine the thresholds of sufficiency. If a programme or a lecturer or an IO meets the minimum standards, no action is required, but if it does not meet with the minimum standards, some action is required to improve in order to reach minimum standards - is this not a recipe for mediocrity? An inspection approach like this has a limited ability to enhance the quality of an institution, because the overall level of quality is determined by the system or framework that supports the philosophy of TQM and not by people "clever enough" to appear as if they meet minimum standards (Reddy *et al.* 2000; Webbstock 1997, 1999c).

According to Seymour, the current methods of assessing quality at the academy, which he calls "quality by threshold", ask the completely wrong question. Instead of wanting to know if our work is "good enough", we should be striving to become "the best that we can be" (Seymour 1995:33). Seymour believes that the theory and practice of continuous improvement is needed because inspiration, not desperation (inspection) drives it. Asking whether we are the "best we can be" inspires people to look beyond current practices. It requires one to reflect on "what is" and respond to "what could be". This contributes to a positive tension through the institution as it stretches and learns (becomes a learning organisation). This positive tension between continuous improvement and accountability is brought about by the requirement for institutions to meet the

requirements set by external quality agencies as well as to improve on results of self-assessments carried out by the institutions themselves. A "quality-by-improvement" approach would replace the desperate work of conforming to minimum standards, with that of inspirational, innovative work of continuous improvement of processes and outcomes. According to Seymour, it would foster a new appreciation for excellence and provide a systematic methodology for becoming the best we can. Harberer and Webb (1994) provide four practical steps to TQM that can also apply to technikons:

- Accept personal responsibility for quality.
- Improve teamwork and commitment.
- Focus on customers and service.
- Put TQM into practice through operations management.

What becomes apparent in this section, is that customers (students, parents, employers subsidising students, government, taxpayers and other stakeholders) demand better quality and will go to the institution that can offer not only quality and value for their money, but also quality at a competitive price. In order to support the philosophy of TQM, technikons must be willing to change to new cultures and become learning organisations to be able to meet the challenge of an institution-wide effort to achieve quality.

2.2.3 A learning organisation culture

Marshall (1998) and Dotlich and Noel (1998) make a relevant statement when they claim that it is important to recognise that organisations cannot learn - it is the individuals within an organisation who learn. Therefore an organisation's capacity to respond, adapt and create is only as good and well deployed as the capacity of its staff - both as individuals and collectively. Thus, to support individual development, one must focus on developing and implementing policies and procedures. This, in turn, will support and facilitate "organisational learning". Individual development or self-development must be guided, informed, facilitated and supported by strategies, structures and an institution with an environment conducive to learning (Weir 1999).

Garvin (1993) asks the question regarding how an organisation can improve without first learning something new. He states that CI requires a commitment to learning. In other words, taking Marshall's statement of individuals making up the organisation and Garvin's statement that CI requires commitment to learning, one can safely conclude that, in order for an organisation to become a learning organisation, the individuals in the organisation must be prepared to continuously improve through a commitment to learning. This includes self-directed learning, self-improvement, self-development and - ultimately - self-assessment.

Garvin quotes various definitions of organisational learning, but supplies his own definition of a learning organisation for the consideration of readers:

"A learning organisation is an organisation skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behaviour to reflect new knowledge and insights" (Garvin 1993:12).

Garvin furthermore states that new ideas are important for learning to take place. However, a learning organisation does not simply mean a collection of new ideas. Five main "building blocks" are used to operationalise the learning process

of companies that become successful learning organisations. These “building blocks” are:

- Systematic problem-solving.
- Experimentation with new approaches.
- Learning from their own experience and past history.
- Learning from the experiences and best practices of others (benchmarking).
- Transferring knowledge quickly and efficiently throughout the organisation (effective communication) (Garvin 1993).

Marquardt (1999) maintains that, for learning organisations to be true learning organisations, they need to change their focus from the traditional to a learning organisation focus. In Table 2.1 he lists seven key paradigm shifts that organisations need to make.

TABLE 2.1: Traditional focus versus learning organisation focus

TRADITIONAL FOCUS	LEARNING ORGANISATION FOCUS
Productivity	Performance
Workplace	Learning environment
Predictability	Systems and patterns
Training and staff development	Self-directed learning
Worker	Continuous learner
Supervisor/manager	Coach/learner
Engagement/Activity	Learning opportunity

(Marquardt 1999)

Senge (1990), known in the literature as the father and the guru of the learning organisation, believes that a learning organisation must be able to integrate work with learning and that only through continuously reflecting on our activities can we become a learning organisation. Revans (1982, 1991, 1995), the father of AL, believes that AL creates constant learning opportunities for people to learn. AL is a very effective tool to build a learning organisation and has many elements

and characteristics that contribute to a learning organisation. AL, for example, has the following characteristics:

- It is outcome-oriented.
- It is designed to systematically transfer knowledge throughout the organisation (i.e. it effectively communicates).
- It enables people to learn by doing (action).
- It develops learning-how-to-learn skills.
- It encourages continuous learning.
- It creates a culture in which learning becomes a way of life.
- It is an active rather than a passive approach.
- It is mainly done on the job rather than away from the job.
- It allows for mistakes and experimentation.
- It develops skills of critical reflection and reframing.
- It is problem-focused rather than hierarchically bound.
- It helps an organisation to move from a culture of training to a culture of self-directed, continuous learning.
- It is system-based (Marquardt 1999; Revans 1982).

These are a few of the many characteristics of AL as adapted from Marquardt and Revans to illustrate the relevance and effectiveness of using AL and AR as methods of building a learning organisation focused on the CI of the entire organisation.

Another cornerstone of TQM that cannot be separated from a learning organisation is employee involvement. Employee involvement follows automatically from the need for all employees to consider their internal customer (see paragraph 2.2.6 on a customer-focused culture). Employee involvement means that each individual must take the initiative to seek new opportunities and to learn not to rely on someone else. In order to achieve this, the organisation needs a culture that encourages this behaviour. Everyone must understand that

quality is every employee's responsibility and can only be achieved through co-operation and support (Marquardt 1999).

All employees need to not only constantly seek new opportunities to learn, but also to continuously improve towards performance excellence.

2.2.4 A continuous improvement culture to promote performance excellence

What does one mean by "improvement" and "change"? In Wickham (2000) these concepts are explained in a very practical approach and in the context of AR. AR implies some kind of action or improvement, development or change. Therefore it is important to articulate and analyse one's own views of these concepts. A set of questions was designed by Wickham to be used as a tool and guide to become more aware of both one's own understandings of social change as well as possible alternatives to this. Questions like the following are asked: "Drawing on your own life experiences, as well as your knowledge of other individuals you know reasonably well, list those factors which have influenced changes in either thinking and/or behaviour. Are these factors similar to those that have influenced change in the higher educational contexts in which you are working/have worked? If not, what other factors influenced change in these contexts?" The purpose of these questions is to stimulate thinking, reflection and planning towards change, resulting in improvement.

Furthermore CI, as another cornerstone of TQM, must be seen as everyone's responsibility in the organisation. To develop this responsibility for CI, it is important to focus on training, education, communication, recognition of achievements and teamwork in an organisation (Rowley 1996).

Performance excellence and CI cannot be divorced from performance assessment - another important element of TQM. Self-assessment, followed by performance assessment, needs to be based on key performance indicators

such as trends in results over the last three years, feedback on performance, as well as thorough communication (Rowley 1996; Frazier 1997).

Although some progress has been made to continuously improve towards performance excellence in some higher education institutions in South Africa, it is only some institutions that apply the philosophy of TQM in line with their mission and strategic plans. According to the literature, not all institutions have been able to use TQM successfully in teaching and research (Brunyee 2001; Bruyns 2001; Pretorius 2001). Reasons for this might be the fact that there is no uniform understanding of the meaning of "quality" and "excellence" in the higher education sector, in addition to the independent nature of the work of some academics in, for example, the university environment. Another reason might be the unwillingness of some of the top management structures of institutions to be actively and creatively involved in the implementation of TQM (Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001; Webbstock 1997; Reddy *et al.* 2000).

One of the skills that strengthens and enhances CI, is the ability to reflect on practice.

2.2.5 A reflective practice culture

What is reflective practice? In Schon (1983; 1988; 1991) and Mezirow (1990) it is said that education practitioners have incorporated the art of "transformative learning through reflection" amongst their skills. According to Perreira (1999), AR is the professional reflective practice that is processed through a more systematic method of inquiry. It is a form of practitioner research. In other words, AR and reflective practice are very closely interlinked and the terms "action" and "research" highlight essential features of the method. Trying out ideas in practice as a means of improving and as a means of increasing knowledge, is learning in action and this is enhanced by reflecting on practice (McNiff, Lomax & Whitehead 1996).

Reflective practice can be used as a method of investigation and improvement in practice, whether it is teaching or management. From Perreira's understanding of Schon's ideas the process of reflective practice could be described as problem-setting, making moves (action), analysing the results of the actions, and reframing or replanning. In other words, in order for reflective practice to work as a developmental mechanism to cope with change, the practitioner and the system of knowing-in-practice have to be open to criticism. What Schon (1991) does not emphasise enough in his book *The reflective practitioner*, is the need for constructive criticism through collaborative reflection - the help of a critical, sincere mentor or friend or a set member or a supportive reflective group. In this study the reflection with the AL group was valuable in drawing up revised plans to carry out improved actions (refer to paragraph 7.5.1.1).

Imel (1992) mentions that reflective practice integrates thought and action with reflection. It involves thinking about and critically analysing one's own actions with the goal of improving one's professional practice. Engaging in reflective practice requires individuals to assume the perspective of an external observer in order to identify the assumptions and feelings underlying their practice and then to speculate about how these assumptions and feelings affect practice (Kottkamp 1990; Osterman 1990; Peters 1991).

According to Peters (1991:95), reflective practice is a "special kind of practice ... [that] involves a systematic inquiry into the practice itself". According to Schon (1988), there are two kinds of reflective practice, namely reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action. When one is reflecting on one's actions, one is completing the project, task or activity or the project, task or activity is temporarily stopped, so that reflection on these actions can take place. When thinking how to improve the project, task or activity while it is taking place without interruption, this can be termed as "reflecting-in-action".

Kottkamp (1990) adds to the debate and describes reflection-on-action as working "off-line" after the event or activity when one can thoroughly analyse the event or situation without having the pressure for immediate action that must take

place. One can then also obtain the input from set members, critical friends or reflective group members (such as the AL group in this study) to assist in the analysis and reflection on the situation or event.

Reflection-in-action, on the other hand, could be of more value because of the fact that one can improve practice immediately whilst working "on-line" (Kottkamp 1990). This might be more challenging, because while one is improving practice in action, one still needs to keep an objective perspective on analysing the situation. This skill proved to be very challenging in the work of the AL group in this study, as attempts to improve practice while in action, jeopardised the objectivity of some group members (refer to paragraph 7.8).

When reflecting-in-action, a professional can be a spontaneous researcher without the "boundaries" and constraints of traditional research theory and techniques. This researcher can construct new theory suitable for the situation (Schon 1983). Schon (1983) and Osterman (1990) maintain that professionals cannot usually describe the actions and input required to successfully completing a project, task or activity. However, reflective practice provides the ability to verbalise this "hidden knowledge" so that it is available for others to share in and improve upon the professional skills in order to add to the body of professional knowledge.

An extension to the idea of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action is the concept of double- and single-loop learning (Argyris & Schon 1978). Single-loop learning can be seen as a "static frame of reference in a static society where social systems [stay] constant, knowledge is relatively stable and [situations] are mostly predictable" (Hatten, Knapp & Salonga 1997). It is therefore dependent on the present action if action is possible within the time frame of the reflection (Schon 1991). Single-loop learning usually takes place during reflection-in-action. Double-loop learning, on the other hand, is associated with reflection-on-action. When new questions are asked in changing situations, double-loop learning is taking place (Argyris & Schon 1978). Reflection-on-action and

double-loop learning complement each other and are valuable when one is reflecting after an event or action has taken place (Argyris 1982; Schon 1991).

The advantages of reflective practice are that it encourages professional growth and development; it leads to greater self-awareness; it develops new knowledge about the professional practice; and it leads to a better understanding of challenges that confront practitioners (Osterman 1990). The disadvantages, on the other hand, are the time that it takes to reflect, in addition to the personal vulnerability of the practitioner that is open to criticism, questioning and personal risk (Peters 1991).

In many cases, there is a need to provide support to employees and organisations that are grappling with both the meaning of the term "reflective practice" and how it is applied. In Dotlich and Noel (1998) an example is given of two models of reflection or mechanisms that can be used for developing reflective practice, by means of the keeping of a learning journal. The two models referred to, to assist the employees of the organisation with reflective practices are:

- Reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action.
- Reflection, development and empowerment.

In essence, the reflective practitioner is the researcher (myself) who is constructing a new theory, the testing of which may help to find a solution to a unique case. The theory construction is not separate from the action, however.

Reflective practice can be a very useful tool to be used in different sectors, for instance in the research process, in teaching by using journals, as well as in growth and change. It also creates an awareness of processes and procedures (Cook 1996; Dotlich & Noel 1998). According to Imel (1992), reflective practice can furthermore be a tool for revealing discrepancies between what we say we do and what we actually do. Imel uses the androgogical (adult) model with its four underlying assumptions and she maintains that this has been widely adopted by

adult educators with one result being the assumption that teaching adults should differ from teaching children and adolescents. However, according to research by Imel (1992), who investigated these differences, it was revealed that - although teachers perceive adults as being different - these perceptions do not automatically translate into differences in approaches to teaching. Imel (1992) goes on to supply strategies for reflective practice and points out that it takes time and effort. Roth (1989:249) supplies the following list which provides some idea of the processes of reflective practice:

- "What, why and how one does things... and asking what, why and how others do things...
- Seeking alternatives
- Keeping an open mind
- Comparing and contrasting
- Seeking the framework, theoretical basis and/or underlying rationale
- Viewing from various perspectives
- Asking, "what if...."?
- Asking for others' ideas and viewpoints
- Using prescriptive models only when adaptive to the situation
- Considering consequences
- Hypothesising
- Synthesising and testing
- Seeking, identifying and resolving problems".

There are also a number of resources available for the development of habits in reflective practice. Peters (1991), for example, describes a process called DATA that consist of four steps, namely: describe, analyse, theorise and act.

First the problem, task or incident representing some critical aspect of practice that the practitioner desires to change, is described. A lecturer may, for example, wish to become less directive and more collaborative in the instructional process. In the DATA model the context in which instruction takes place is identified,

opinions supplied on the directive of approach and if changed, reasons for changing it.

The next step would be to identify factors that contribute to this current directive approach through using analysis. An important part of this stage is to identify the assumptions that support this approach and bring to light underlying beliefs, rules and motives governing teaching and learning. Here lecturers can uncover the theory behind their directive approach.

The third step of the DATA process is theorising about the alternative ways of approaching teaching by taking the theory derived from the previous step and developing it into a new one. In this step the lecturer is developing an espoused theory to govern a new collaborative approach. Finally, lecturers will act out and try out their new theory. The goal of this step will be to minimise any discrepancies between the adopted theory and the theory in use. This will, however, only occur through further thought and reflection.

It seems that reflection is unmistakably part of AL, AR, CI, self-assessment and a learning organisation. These concepts all have reflection in common at any one stage in the cycle. They all seem to be cyclic in nature and somewhere in the cycle reflection is required. Organisations, like reflective practitioners, must be continuously involved in the examination of beliefs, practice and beliefs about actions and plans for future action. Reflective institutions promote continuous learning and growth for all. They become true learning organisations as defined by Senge (1990). Educational institutions are currently integrating reflective practice into a variety of programmes (Frazier 1997). The effect, lasting benefits and the key aspects of reflective practice, are empowering motivational forces for change in an organisation. Change in the organisation to continuous quality improvement (CQI) includes the basic value of focusing on one's customer (Frazier 1997).

2.2.6 A customer-focused culture

Quality is defined in terms of customers' perceptions, or in a more complex model that is widely debated in the service quality literature, as the gap between expectations and perceptions (Dotlich & Noel 1998; Frazier 1997; Koehler & Pankowski 1996). Such customer focus requires not only an attention to internal processes, but also an awareness of the external market place. Only a match between the requirements of the marketplace and the internal processes and operations will lead to a quality service (SAEF 1999).

How does one determine one's internal and external customers? The only way to ensure that the organisation has a focus on customers that impacts equally on all departments and teams, including those not in contact with the external customer, is to encourage each employee to identify those to whom they provide a service and to view those people as their internal customers [Mason 2001 (telephone conversation)]. In this way the customer orientation can permeate the organisation. Can we think of students as our customers? If so, are they the only customers? What about support staff, administrative staff and academic staff, the Department of Education (DoE), the community, commerce and industry (prospective employers)? Are we not a "service industry"? If one applies the answer to the question of internal or external customer determination as answered in the paragraph above, the following answers to these questions prevail: students are customers in higher education along with other stakeholders such as employers, government, the community and parents. Higher education forms an integral part of the service industry as defined by the Baldrige education criteria [SAEF 2001; Mason 2001 (telephone conversation); American Society for Quality 2001; Frazier 1997]. However, one cannot compare the higher education "industry" in its totality to a business service industry, since the core values of higher education differ fundamentally from those of business. The core values of teaching, learning, research and community service do not always apply to industry. Higher education institutions also receive some government funding and are not operated on pure business

principles the way profit-based organisations are (Frazier 1997; Brunyee 2001; paragraph 1.3).

DuBrin (2000) refers to customer satisfaction as a "major strategy of quality management" and further states that "the ultimate goal in achieving customer satisfaction is to achieve **zero defections** [to keep every customer the company can profitably serve]" (DuBrin 2000:212). The importance of customer focus in education is stressed by Frazier (1997:15):

"Public education as we know it is already in danger of losing a substantial portion of its market share to competition including home schooling, home tutoring, private schools and for-profit companies. Retaining market share will require public educators to attend to the five new competitive standards: quality, variety, customization, convenience and timeliness... this can only be achieved through customer focus".

The importance of customer focus in CQI is complemented by another form of external assessment, namely that of benchmarking (Frazier 1997). Benchmarking (the search for best practices among other organisations) establishes an external standard to which an internal process can be compared (Frazier 1997).

2.2.7 An internal and external benchmarking culture

Benchmarking is often mistaken for competitive "analysis" (MacDonald & Tanner 1996). Benchmarking can be tracked back to early Egyptian times when it was used in construction work. Egyptians used a flat strip of iron that was placed horizontally to act as the support (or bench) for a levelling staff. This was then used as a reference (mark) to measure further heights or distances. Currently, "benchmark" retains the same meaning in surveying and construction (MacDonald & Tanner 1996).

The credit for making benchmarking a modern business term is given to the pioneers at Rank Xerox who first started using these techniques in 1997. However, benchmarking was used in Japan long before 1979. They developed several forms of benchmarking, one of which was "shukko" (the lending of employees to other organisations). In this "job-rotation-way" of learning about their own organisations' internal processes, employees could also go outside the organisation and acquire new skills and processes to bring back to their own organisations (MacDonald & Tanner 1996). From this practice MacDonald and Tanner (1996:8) derive the following definition for benchmarking:

"The process of identifying, understanding and adapting outstanding practices and processes from organisations anywhere in the world in order to help your own organisation to improve its performance".

They specifically refer to "outstanding" practices instead of best practices, because what is best for one organisation is not necessarily the best for another, depending on the organisation's uniqueness. The word "adapt" is used rather than "adopt", because benchmarking is not just about observing outstanding practices and then adopting them, but it is most likely that one will have to change the practices in order for them to be effective in one's unique organisation. MacDonald and Tanner (1996:9) also distinguish between "world-class" and "company-class" benchmarks depending on the scope of the benchmarking exercise. Benchmarking is also described as a "managed change process" which:

- uses a disciplined structured approach;
- identifies what needs to change;
- identifies how to change it;
- identifies the potential for improvement; and
- creates the desire for change.

MacDonald and Tanner (1996) organise best practice benchmarking into four different categories:

- *Internal best practice benchmarking* is when a company searches for best practices within the organisation itself.
- *Competitive best practice benchmarking*: This is a difficult type of benchmarking, as competitors are not keen to share their competitive advantages.
- *Functional best practice benchmarking* focuses on the function and not the process and it is used when one's organisation wants to outperform its competitors by a wide margin. The identification of partners is more difficult, but the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.
- *Generic best practice benchmarking* focuses on the process and the function and is not a barrier to improvement. Two organisations can, for example, be manufacturing different products for different markets, but the same process used in manufacturing the one product in organisation A can successfully be used to manufacture a different product in organisation B. To illustrate the point organisation A manufactures lipsticks whereas organisation B manufactures cylinders. The same process used for the tube of the lipstick is successfully used in manufacturing cylinders. Benchmarking can therefore be used as a tool to discover alternative practices that can then be implemented so as to deliver superior performance (MacDonald & Tanner 1996; Frazier 1997).

2.2.7.1 *The benefits of benchmarking*

Some important benefits of benchmarking are:

- Gaining ideas for improving processes and services from better or best organisations.

- Sharing knowledge and experience with others performing the same processes and practices in providing services or products that are critical to success.
- Turning the focus towards efficiency and effectiveness to ensure that processes and practices are competitive, as well as to improve planning for targets and the management of resources.
- CI as identified by clients or customers through performance information.
- Developing realistic stretch goals and strategic targets.
- Establishing realistic action objectives for implementation.
- Encouraging striving towards excellence, breakthrough thinking and innovation.
- Creating a better understanding of competitors and the dynamics of industry.
- Emphasising sensitivity to changing customer needs (Frazier 1997; MacDonald & Tanner 1996; Liston 1999).

DuBrin (2000:82) refers to benchmarking as "the process of a firm's [or organisation's] quality performance to that achieved by a competing firm [or organisation]." He also states that benchmarking is a basic total quality principle - comparing your organisation's performance to that of a world-class performing organisation.

Benchmarking proved to be a very valuable exercise in the activities of the AL group during this study. In some of the areas that were identified for improvement such as for instance, the lack of supervisory skills, best practice activities at other technikons were explored to benchmark and use in revised plans for improved actions.

Benchmarking with other institutions (competitive benchmarking) should not be limited exclusively to the same type of institution, but should look for best practices in performance for a certain function or operation, no

matter the source (Frazier 1997; Bitzer 2001). The Baldrige education criteria can, for example, be a useful tool for a higher education institution to provide a benchmark for future self-assessments regarding the progress of the quality transformation (NIST 2001).

In order to assess and investigate the quality transformation process in South African higher education, an investigation into quality assurance and process management internationally is necessary for the context of this study.

2.2.8 A process management culture

A process, according to Cook (1996:2) is: "...a series of steps or sequence of business activities of which the outcome is to achieve customer satisfaction by providing the customer with what they need, when they require it and in the manner which they expect it".

A shorter description of a process is a "set of activities by means of which an output or objective is achieved" (Oosthuizen, Köster & De la Rey 1998:160). Davenport and Short (1990:12) defines a process as "a set of logically related tasks [activities] performed to achieve a defined business outcome". It is generally argued that business processes have two important characteristics: they have internal or external customers and they cross organisational boundaries (Earl 1996).

For any business, company, unit or divisions to be able to deliver its product or services successfully, a number of these activities have to be undertaken. A process, therefore, always has input and output. The sub-processes or stages between input and output involve differing variables, such as the quality of activities involved, how they are organised, time scales and composition, cost, people resources, degree of difficulty,

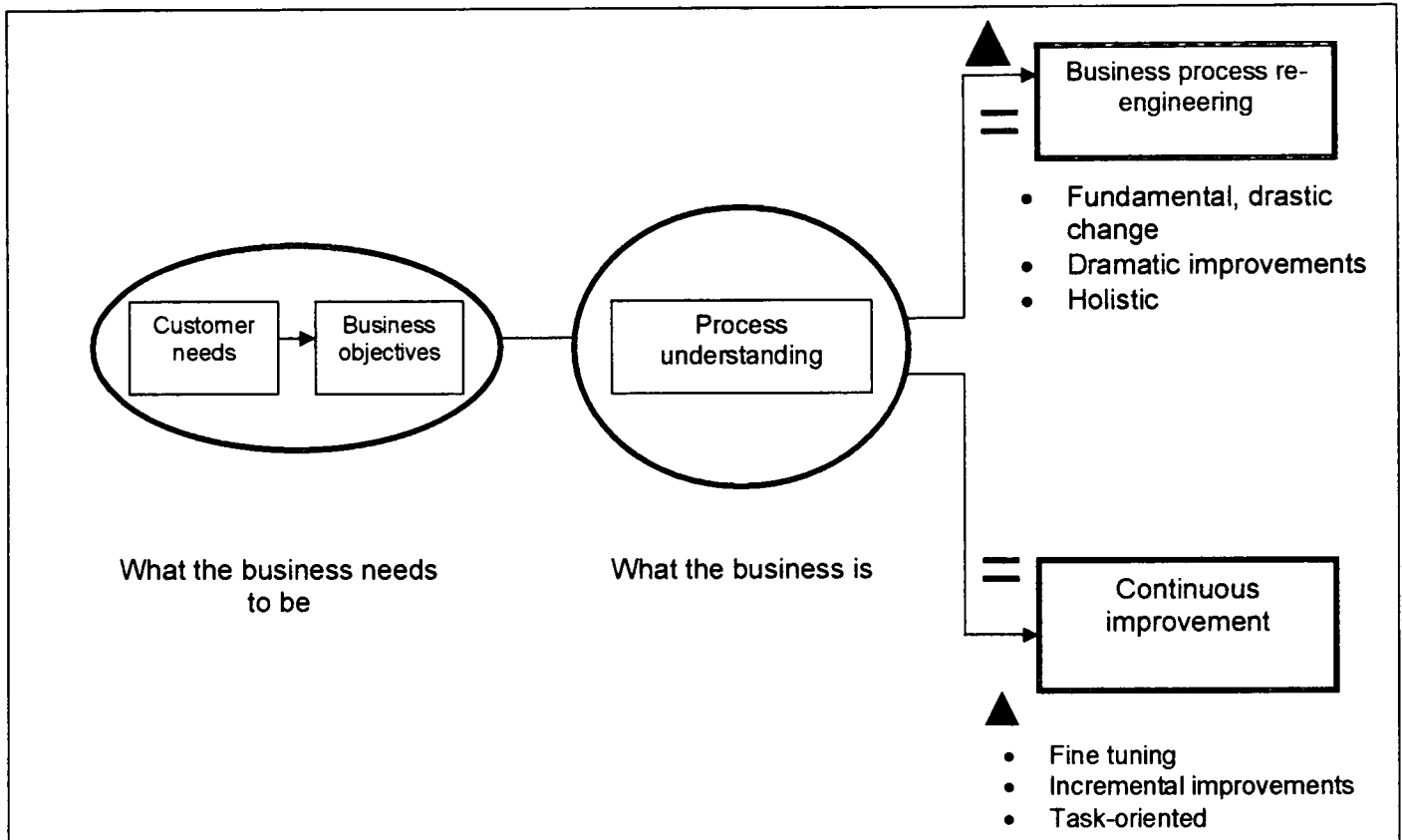
accuracy, speed and flexibility (Cook 1996). DuBrin (2000:101) describes a process as "a set of activities designed to achieve a goal...."

In order to review these variables in a process in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness, one needs to map the process. Another reason why one should map a process is that it is then measurable and one can identify areas for improvement or gaps. These gaps or areas for improvement can then be addressed and activities can be improved in order to improve and add value to the process in order to have an impact on the result or output of the process (Seymour 1995).

Process quality management (PQM) is a technique that was developed by IBM in Europe to help project managers get "the whole team on board, to ensure that everyone knows where the enterprise is heading, and agrees on what it will take to succeed". PQM was developed from studies done with customers to determine their needs (Oosthuizen *et al.* 1998:79).

It is important to note the components of *process engineering* in order to understand what *process re-engineering* is about. In this research it was necessary to know the difference between "continuous process improvement" and "business process reengineering" to be able to recognise if change in processes had to be incremental or with quantum leaps, if the focus must be current practice or rather to start a "new practice", if the participation must be "bottom up" or rather "top-down", etc. (Earl 1996:59).

Process engineering is clearly illustrated (in the figure below) by a successful American company (Texas instruments) that won the Malcolm Baldrige excellence award:

FIGURE 2.1: Components of business process engineering

Macdonald and Tanner (1996:10)

It is important in the management of the IO process to involve all the "stakeholders" that can add value to the process to know and understand what the common mission, objectives and critical success factors or key performance indicators of the process are. Knowing this will not only contribute to satisfy the students' (customers') needs but to exceed their needs. This can be seen as being on the road to true excellence (Oosthuizen *et al.* 1998; Lundquist 1996).

In my view it is necessary for the IO "unit" as such to adopt process thinking so that the IO's current performance can be improved by rethinking the way its "business activities" are organised. This should involve rethinking the way the IO delivers its service to the customer

(student) so that it satisfies or even exceeds the customer's needs and expectations. This means ensuring that the activities are undertaken for the student's (customer's) benefit and not for the ease of managing the IO process (Cook 1996; Oosthuizen *et al.* 1998; Makoni 2000; Earl 1996).

Many successful organisations are opting to manage by process instead of by task. DuBrin (2000) and Earl (1996) explain that to manage by process means that all team members focus on achieving the purpose of all the activity ("such as getting a product in the hands of a customer"), instead of focusing on a specialised task. When managing by process instead of task, employees take "collective responsibility for customers" (DuBrin 2000:217). This means that in the case of the management of an IO that not only the IO manager and the owner of the IO process, but all the stakeholders that add value to the process are *collectively responsible* for not only meeting the customers' (students') needs, but even *exceeding* the needs of the customers in the quest for excellence.

Process re-engineering is defined as: "...the radical redesign of work to achieve substantial improvements in performance" (DuBrin 2000:218). It is further explained that by mapping out the work processes, one can trace the path of a task in order to uncover possible "wasted steps" or "inefficiencies". These sub-processes/wasted steps/inefficiencies/areas for improvement that do not add value must be removed or changed. A result of re-engineering a process, is that work is organised "horizontally" rather than "vertically" (DuBrin 2000:218). People work together in teams rather than hierarchical reporting to supervisors or managers (Earl 1996; DuBrin 2000).

Cook (1996:81) describes process reengineering as: "... a method of bringing about dramatic change in the way a business [unit] does business". Key business activities need to be redefined to meet customer needs and this often means that a business has to be restructured or recreated in part or as a whole. Hammer as quoted in Macdonald and

Tanner (1996:45) defined re-engineering as a "fundamental rethink and radical redesign of business processes to achieve dramatic improvements...of performance". This means that continuous incremental improvement is not enough and cannot meet the competitive challenges of the market-place - major performance breakthroughs need to take place.

After the processes have been mapped in the IO process, some areas (sub-processes or tasks) called for improvement, redesign or even re-engineering in order to improve the whole process and to meet the customer (student) needs and expectations (refer to paragraph 7.5.1.1.3).

2.3 CONCLUSION

Given the state of flux in higher education concerning quality assurance and assessment, it is the ideal opportunity for institutions of higher learning to use creative and innovative ways of assessing, assuring and managing quality. This undoubtedly means change in the organisation as a whole. This will entail change to cultures of TQM, a learning organisation, a CI culture, a reflective practice culture, a customer focus culture, as well as internal and external benchmarking. An institution of higher learning that could manage to accommodate all these cultures and changes which will result in CI, will prove to be an excellent organisation. The opportunity now exists for a more flexible systematic framework to assess and assure academic performance excellence.

Competitive benchmarking with international higher education institutions and knowledge of the policies and perspectives regarding quality assurance in South African higher education can empower informed decision-making in technikons. Every process in the institution needs to be mapped and managed and should be benchmarked against "best practice". However, these processes and decisions have to be guided by the institution's notion of quality and quality assurance, as

well as the factors that influence quality assurance in higher education which will be discussed in the following chapter.

**Chapter 3**

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the notions of quality, factors influencing quality assurance, as well as international and national trends in quality assurance in higher education are discussed. Following this discussion a description of the policies and perspectives of quality assurance in the South African higher education landscape is given.

The changing higher education landscape internationally as well as nationally with regard to quality assurance and quality management is a continuous spiral of planning, action, reflection and revision. In this chapter the concepts of organisational changes and the organisational skills needed – as discussed in paragraph 2.2 - are brought into context with the challenges and demands of the changing landscape of quality assurance in the higher education sector.

In the past universities enjoyed the autonomy to plan, design and implement their own curricula and the content thereof. In the technikon sector, however, this was not the case (Van der Westhuizen, Strydom & Fourie 1999; SERTEC 1999). Curriculum and the setting of standards were primarily the task of SERTEC.

Subsequently a brief overview of the historical quality monitoring by SERTEC in technikons and the historical role of the QPU in universities is provided. Policies on quality assurance, programme assessment and accreditation will be analysed to point out their impact on quality higher education practices. The role of the CHE and its HEQC, of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the NQF will be contextualised.

3.2 NOTIONS OF QUALITY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

The term "quality" in any given service organisation is defined according to a variety of options in the literature (Frazier 1997; Stamatis 1996; Harvey & Green 1993; Strydom 1997a, 1997b; Westerheijden, Brennan & Maassen 1994; Green 1994). The most common definitions are based on the theories of the following quality gurus:

- **Juran:** Juran's quality improvement strategy stresses project-by-project implementation and the breakthrough sequence. He warns against taking shortcuts from symptom to solution without finding and removing the cause. In addition to statistical process control (SPC), he also provides several problem-solving tools. With his definition of quality as fitness for use, he is strongly oriented toward meeting customer expectations. By using his 12-point philosophy, Juran distils the famous trilogy which identifies plan, control and improve (Frazier 1997; Stamatis 1996; Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001).
- **Deming:** Deming's strategy tends to be a bottom-up process based on statistical tools. The emphasis of strategy seems to be on continual improvement and measurement. As he maintains, it is impossible to measure customer dissatisfaction, therefore he does not recognise the cost of customer dissatisfaction. He strongly believes in empowering workers to solve problems, provided that management gives them the necessary tools to do so. Deming distils the 14 points of his philosophy into a model of Plan-Do-

Check-Act (PDCA). This model symbolises the problem analysis process and quality improvement cycle. It also provides focus on defect correction as well as defect prevention (Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001; Stamatis 1996; Deming 1994).

- **Crosby:** Crosby's point of departure is to transform the quality culture. In his approach the involvement of everyone in the organisation in the process is stressed by the individual conformance to requirements. His 14 steps to provide management serves as a blueprint and checklist for management to initiate the process towards world-class quality. His approach is top-down (Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001; Stamatis 1996).
- **Taguchi:** Taguchi is focused on the function that defines any deviation from the target as a loss that someone will have to pay for. His strategy is difficult for the novice, but provides guidelines for improvement and cost considerations for the service industry (Stamatis 1996).

Each of these gurus in the field of quality presents positive and negative points – no definition is perfect. Therefore, each higher education institution or service organisation must define quality based upon its own objectives, goals, mission, culture and customers. It is not unusual for organisations to combine the best points and create its own definition of quality. This definition can be based on quality characteristics of what the customer desires, key quality characteristics that combine knowledge of the customer as well as the process and key process variables that have a cause-and-effect relationship with the key quality characteristics (Frazier 1997; Stamatis 1996; Liston 1999).

Seymour (1995:78) asks the question what exactly a statement such as we need to improve our quality, actually means. He adds the following questions: More important, how do you do it? Where do you begin? How do you know whether you are successful? How can you ensure that you will continue to improve? Clearly, the measurement of quality, is controversial (Frazier 1997:1). There is also no general agreement on the instrument to be used to measure the quality

of academic processes (Strydom 1997a), and academic quality is therefore hard to define. Literature emphasises the fact that academic quality and academic goals cannot be separated, but at the same time it is extremely important to have consensus about what is understood by the individual institutions to be an operational definition of quality in their unique contexts (Strydom 1997a; Stamatis 1996). According to Seymour (1995:78), "there must be a rigorous framework for performance improvement" and it is critical that one must have a "methodology for improvement".

Although quality is difficult to define, it must be judged within a context (Strydom 1997a). The quality of a technikon or university should be based on its core values, namely teaching, research and community service and should not exclude professional responsibility and external conformance to standards (Strydom 1997a; Frazier 1997; Westerheijden *et al.* 1994). It is also important to include all the requirements of the stakeholders in the mission, goals and the objectives of an institution to run these parallel with quality at the institution (Vroeijenstijn 1995; Liston 1999).

According to Harvey and Green (1993:11-27), there are six broad views of quality in relation to higher education:

- The **exceptional view** sees quality as something special, distinctive and élitist. In educational terms, linked to notions of excellence, of "high quality", it is unattainable by most.
- Quality as **perfection** is seen as a consistent or flawless outcome. If consistency can be achieved, quality can be attained by all.
- Quality as **fitness for purpose** is quality in terms of meeting customers' requirements, needs or desires. In education it is usually based on the ability of an institution to fulfil its mission or an instructional programme to fulfil its aims.
- Quality as **value for money** is quality in terms of return on investment. It is quality at a lower cost with a better outcome. Government is increasingly

demanding accountability from higher education in return for its subsidy. Students require value for money for their education.

- Quality as **transformation** is the notion of quality in terms of change from one state to another. In educational terms, "transformation" refers to the improvement and empowerment of learners and/or the development of new knowledge.
- Quality as **consistency** is the notion of conformance to specifications or standards (benchmark as measurement). It suggests increasing accountability in, for example, course design, student empowerment, etc.

Another issue in the debate on quality in higher education is the applicability of the ISO 9000 concept. According to Strydom (1997), ISO 9000 is more applicable to institutions offering service-oriented training instead of subject-oriented teaching and is therefore more applicable to technikons than universities. This view, however, might be altered in the new higher education landscape where universities and technikons need to register their instructional programmes within the NQF and see to it that mobility between institutions and programmes is possible. This could result in ISO 9000 becoming more popular with universities as well as technikons, because it ensures that quality performance is in place and performance measures are developed (Strydom 1997a; Liston 1999).

In an attempt to combine the business principles of the quality definition of the South African Excellence Model with that of an academic environment, Reg Mason, one of the founding members of the SAEF and a member of the Quality Committee of the Border Technikon, supplies the following definition:

"Academic Quality results from leadership which develops best-in-class policy and strategy, customer (student) and market (commerce and industry) focus, people (staff) management and efficient use of resources, information management with academic and operational processes with acceptable performance standards and measures having a positive impact on society (community), resulting in customer (student) and

people (parents and community) satisfaction, supplier and partnership performance resulting in sound academic and operational results (outcomes)" (Mason 1999).

In the final analysis, the notion of fitness for purpose and fitness of purpose with a focus on quality promotion instead of control of predetermined standards, is recommended for higher education institutions (Strydom 1997b).

3.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A secret formula or a specific programme does not achieve continuous quality improvement. There are no definite rules, regulations or a step-by-step manual on how to realise quality in higher education. Continuous quality improvement is a philosophy along the lines of TQM with a set of broad principles and values that provide guidance to restructure, improve and transform institutions (Frazier 1997; Liston 1999). Quality assurance, quality improvement and quality management are international phenomena with various approaches and applications (Bitzer & Malherbe 1995).

Higher education as a participant in globalisation has to invest in quality assurance to remain competitive and at the edge of technology developments in order to satisfy customer demands (Liston 1999; Frazier 1997; Lategan 1997). The financial implications of equity and increased access into higher education resulted in the reformulation of the values, missions and performance management systems in institutions (Lategan 1997). Developments and changes in the higher education landscape such as the aforementioned urged institutions to put mechanisms for quality in place. Besides national policies (as discussed in paragraph 3.5.3 later in this chapter) as an external influence on quality assurance and management, factors influencing quality promotion include

elements such as internationalisation, massification, technology, financial constraints, value-addedness, academic mobility and accountability (Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001; Lategan 1997).

3.3.1 Globalisation and internationalisation

Globalisation and the internationalisation of professions and occupations place additional demands on quality, especially in the area of academic assessment and educational standards (Letuka 2000; Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001; Lategan 1997). Services and products should be assessed against set standards resulting in continuous improvement and advancement (Lategan 1997). Through competitive benchmarking with global standards, South African qualifications should compete favourably (Letuka 2000).

The demands made by globalisation on higher education institutions, however, go beyond the development of cognitive skills and competences. It is expected of higher education to prepare its learners to apply their knowledge instrumentally as well as operationally in the national as well as the global economy (RSA DoE 2002).

3.3.2 Massification

The increase in student numbers, a wide variety of new and innovative instructional programmes, and accessibility into higher education are some of the factors impacting on the funding and expenditure of higher education institutions (Lategan 1997; De Haan, Hümmels & Claessen 1999). Government no longer prescribes how money should be spent, but leaves it to institutions to decide how their finances should be spent (De Haan *et al.* 1999). Some fear that massification of higher education might lead to lowering of standards, implying that increased student intake equals a lowering of standards (Fourie & Strydom 1999:18).

3.3.3 Technology

The rapid growth of technology has led to an "instrumentalistic, pragmatic, fundamentalistic and irrational view on the nature of knowledge" (Lategan 1997:77). Next to that there is a move away from the pure rationalistic analysis of knowledge to knowledge application. Is this new paradigm in the creation of knowledge scientifically justifiable and can quality be upheld in this paradigm (Lategan 1997)?

3.3.4 Financial constraints

The decrease in funding from government resulted in higher education institutions being forced to be more innovative and creative with their spending. Collaboration and co-operation with industry and other institutions as well as streamlining of programme offerings and resources are some of the responses from institutions in order to address efficiency and flexibility (Liston 1999).

3.3.5 Value-addedness

Quality can be instrumental in the monitoring and managing of the learning experience and the outputs (being able to meet objectives). Value is added when quality is significant in key processes such as product and service determining learning materials, structures and practices appropriate for achieving desired outcomes (Liston 1999; Lategan 1997).

3.3.6 Academic mobility

Learner mobility and progression are facilitated in the NQF in South African higher education. Horizontal and diagonal articulation is proposed in the NAP (RSA DoE 2002). This unique feature is designed to build flexibility into a framework that would otherwise remain rigid and fail to accommodate the majority of programmes and qualifications offered in the Higher Education and

Training Band (RSA DoE 2002). Internationally, the mobility of learners, educators and researchers implies that standards, qualifications and credits should be generic in academic quality (Lategan 1997).

3.3.7 Accountability

Higher education institutions are increasingly challenged by stakeholders such as the communities they serve, commerce and industry, taxpayers, parents and government to account for their quality as well as the relevance of their products and services (Lategan 1997; Liston 1999). The need for a systemic approach and report structure on quality management and improvement to demonstrate effectiveness and efficiency is increasing (Du Toit 2001).

3.3.8 Changing relationships between government and higher education

The complexity of higher education systems is making it more difficult for government to centrally control quality efficiently. Subsequently many governments, particularly in First-world countries, are handing authority and responsibility for quality over to higher education institutions, expecting full accountability in return (Letuka 2000; Liston 1999).

3.4 INTERNATIONAL TRENDS IN QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In response to the increasing demand on higher education through globalisation and marketisation, some countries have developed NQFs in an attempt to standardise their products as well as to emphasise the mobility and marketability of their graduates (RSA DoE 2002; Stetar 1999). Quality assurance and accreditation at international level are supported by values such as transparency, validation, accountability and improvement.

According to a number of studies on the variation in approaches to quality assurance in higher education, there seem to be three elements apparent to bring some systematisation in the different models used (Peace Lenn 1993; Neave & Van Vught 1994; Van Vught & Westerheijden 1994; Brennan 1997; Harman 1998b; Westerheijden 1998; El-Khawas 1998). These elements are:

- A variation in the definition of the notion of quality itself. It is clear that in most countries various definitions are used simultaneously, which leads to confusion and doubt in terms of what is actually meant by quality (Van Damme 2000).
- Another important variation in quality assurance mechanisms is the purposes or functions of the quality assurance system. Generally four purposes are distinguished, namely improvement of teaching and learning; public accountability; client information and market transparency; and steering of the higher education system in resources and planning (Van Damme 2000:11).
- A third dimension of variation in quality assurance mechanisms is the methodology used. Although there is considerable variation in methodologies used in international systems of quality assurance, in most cases similar key methodologies used for programme evaluations at institutions are similar, namely quality assurance based on self-evaluation; peer review by outside experts combined with site visits to complement internal self-evaluation; internal and external review complemented by statistical information and performance indicators; and a quality audit where institutions control the quality assurance process themselves (Van Damme 2000:11).

There are also important differences with regard to other dimensions of quality assurance mechanisms internationally, namely the responsible agency or unit; the voluntary or compulsory nature of participation; the focus on the review of programmes, disciplines or institutions themselves; the way and target audiences of reporting; the range of follow-up activities; etc. (Harman 1998a; Van Vught & Westerheijden 1994; Van Damme 2000).

Notwithstanding these important similarities and differences in approaches to quality internationally, there are some important congruencies worth noting in the international higher education landscape.

A review of some of the international trends on accreditation, quality audits and quality monitoring is now presented.

3.4.1 The United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom qualifications frameworks for higher education have been developed for Scotland and England as well as for Wales and Northern Ireland. The two frameworks share many common principles and components. They are also qualifications rather than unit standards-based frameworks and the process of integrating vocational qualifications onto these frameworks is in its initial stages (RSA DoE 2002). At postgraduate levels, the two higher education frameworks have common structures.

Higher education institutions in the United Kingdom are subjected to a range of quality monitoring procedures that are complemented by a variety of internal quality assurance mechanisms and procedures (Geall, Harvey & Moon 1997).

Similar to the South African higher education landscape, the United Kingdom also moved from a binary divide between polytechnics and universities to a unified quality assurance system externally monitored by the HEQC (Geall *et al.* 1997; Scott 1994).

A considerable amount of data about stakeholder views is generated that is directly or indirectly designed for quality improvement purposes, for example:

- Surveys of student views.
- Internal peer review of teaching.

-
- Internal audits of quality procedures.
 - External reviews of teaching and research.
 - Professional body scrutiny of programmes.
 - Surveys of recent graduates.
 - Employer views of graduates (Geall *et al.* 1997; RSA DoE 2002).

Internal and external quality monitoring are not static processes and develop in response to, for example, political and economic climates. The remove of the binary divide between universities and polytechnics in the United Kingdom over the last decade is a response to political and economical changes (Geall *et al.* 1997). Subsequently, partly in response to these changes, the budgets of universities and colleges have been cut and an elaborate quality control measure is being set up to ensure academic standards (Scott 1994; Geall *et al.* 1997).

The emphasis of external quality monitoring by the HEQC in the United Kingdom has been based on accountability rather than continuous improvement, but the HEQC subsequently introduced a Quality Enhancement Division to address this. However, the strong accountability and value-for-money approach of the British Government have weakened the impact of this division (Scott 1994; Geall *et al.* 1997).

Self-evaluation and internal review in universities and polytechnics were well established prior to the academic audit in the 1990s. This, however, was not the case with some of the older universities who had to clarify and document quality assurance procedures for the first time prior to quality assurance audit processes. On the positive side, these external monitoring procedures had the effect that additional internal procedures were realigned to integrate with external processes (Scott 1994; Geall *et al.* 1997).

3.4.2 Belgium

The competence over education in Belgium is transferred to the Communities. The Flemish Community system of quality assurance in higher education was installed in 1991 at university level and in 1994 for the *hogeschool* or non-university sector, very similar to that of the Netherlands (refer to paragraph 3.4.4). The interinstitutional associations of universities (VLIR) and *hogescholen* (VLHORA) are the responsible agencies and frequently collaborate with their Dutch counterparts in joint quality assessments of programmes in specific disciplines (Van Damme 2000; Alt, Coetzee, Genis, Jacobs, Jooste, Smit & Stephenson 2000). State intervention in this process and the follow-up of results are more limited in Belgium than in the Netherlands, since no real inspectorate exists for higher education in Flanders (Van Damme 2000). However, the state does organise a quality audit. This took place for universities for the first time in 1997/98. The quality audit reviews the internal and external quality assurance systems and procedures in all institutions and publicly reports on the quality of the quality assurance system itself. (Van Damme 2000; Alt *et al.* 2000). No public ranking or performance funding takes place on the basis of quality indicators.

Self-evaluation is the preferred quality assurance tool, with self-regulation through external peer evaluation as part of the university quality assurance. Larger institutions have a greater need for control and systematic approach to quality management systems and models, while smaller institutions have more informal structures and procedures (Van Damme 2000; Alt *et al.* 2000).

Smaller institutions are more able to experiment with systems, as evidenced by the *hogescholen* that apply ISO 9000 and the EFQM models. Quality assurance is a continuous process and not only a periodic response to external evaluations. Academics focus on the core values of their business, namely teaching, learning and research and put the necessary controls, mechanisms and instruments in place to ensure excellent service delivery and outputs (Van Damme 2000; Alt *et*

al. 2000).

3.4.3 New Zealand

There are a number of major similarities between quality management models adopted in New Zealand and in South Africa for accreditation and approval - the most obvious being the establishment of a NQF and the widespread use of unit standards to specify education and training standards (Hall & Woodhouse 1999).

Similar structures and policies to those of South Africa guide the New Zealand quality assurance monitoring and management (Hall & Woodhouse 1999; Woodhouse 2000):

- The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) is similar to SAQA and is also based on a NQF. Education and training are expressed in terms of unit standards submitted to the NZQA for approval and subsequent registration on the NQF with qualifications as outcome.
- New Zealand has a programme committee for polytechnics and a New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee to collaborate on course development and proposals for new courses and qualifications.
- Policies guiding New Zealand's Qualifications Framework and the quality system are:
 - The Government Green Paper.
 - A future qualifications policy for New Zealand.
 - A plan for the NQF and the Green Paper proposals relating to the future of the NQF.
- The Green Paper suggests a loss of statutory authority for universities. This issue is still under debate.

Woodhouse (2000) points out that, although the days of the external QAA is not over, the word "quality" has a wide-ranging meaning from academic excellence through national development to international recognition. The time is ripe to

take a more flexible approach to concepts of quality, qualifications, quality assurance and mutual recognition in New Zealand. External QAAs should become more "orchestrators" and "gatherers" of evidence rather than "direct...checkers" of quality (Woodhouse 2000: 26-27).

3.4.4 The Netherlands

The quality assurance model of the Netherlands is well known in the literature for its pioneering character. Publications dealing with this aspect are the result of the work of Van Vught, Maassen, Westerheijden, Frederiks and others, which had quite an impact on other countries (Van Damme 2000). The move in the Netherlands towards greater institutional autonomy and the emphasis on quality assurance since the mid-eighties, makes it significant in the international arena (Van Damme 2000). The state maintains a strong impact on the whole quality assurance process of the Netherlands, as it initiated quality assurance and continuously urges the institutional level to organise the quality assurance cycle as well as to report the results publicly (Van Damme 2000; Van Hartingsveld 1994; Tromp 1994). The responsibility for quality assurance moved from the institutional level to the inter-institutional associations (VSNU for universities and the "HBO-Raad" for the *hogescholen* or non-universities) as the responsible and co-ordinating agencies (Van Hartingsveld 1994). With accountability and improvement as the two main functions of this quality assurance system, the methodological level is a mix of internal and external quality assessment. Internal self-evaluation is the primary activity, followed by a peer review and site visits by so-called "visiting committees" (Van Hartingsveld 1994; Van Damme 2000). Reports are public and the press publicises tables of the performance of institutions in specific disciplines, although there is no real ranking of institutions as such (Van Hartingsveld 1994; Van Damme 2000). The state plays a crucial role in the whole evaluation process via the higher education inspectorate at the Ministry of Education. This inspectorate does a "meta-evaluation" of the reports and controls the evaluation follow-up (Van Damme 2000; Van Hartingsveld 1994). This relationship between state and institution combines internal

continuous improvement with external accountability. Formal accreditation of programmes and performance funding are in the experimental stages (Van Hartingsveld 1994).

In order to compare the international trends and perspectives with those of South Africa and note similarities and differences, it is necessary to take note of the existing policies and perspectives in South African higher education.

3.5 QUALITY ASSURANCE IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION: POLICIES AND PERSPECTIVES

South Africa is in a period of political and social transition and is faced with significant realities and challenges. As mentioned in paragraph 3.3, the global context in which higher education operates is marked by the increasing instrumentalisation and marketisation of higher education. However, at a national level, the post-apartheid context demands that South African higher education addresses the challenges raised by the developmental imperatives of equity, redress and reconstruction as a result of the country's history (RSA DoE 2002). These challenges are evident and broadly outlined in the NCHE Report: A Framework for Transformation (NCHE 1996) and aggregated in the White Paper 3 of the DoE (RSA DoE 1997a) followed by the Higher Education Act (RSA 1997) which established the CHE and the HEQC.

Saleem Badat, Executive Officer of the CHE emphasises the "triple challenge" as a point of departure of the NCHE of 1995, through to the Higher Education Act of 1997 and the White Paper 3 on Higher Education's Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education in South Africa:

- Overcoming social-structural inequities;
- contributing to reconstruction and development; and
- positioning South Africa effectively globally (Badat 1999; RSA DoE 1997a).

It is noted in the White Paper 3 that these challenges have to be confronted simultaneously and not sequentially. Many goals and initiatives are on the higher education transformation agenda, including:

- Quality assurance through assessment.
- The promotion of quality and the accreditation of programmes.
- The incorporation of higher education programmes and qualifications within an NQF designed to promote articulation, mobility and transferability (RSA DoE 1997a).

In South Africa significant differences exist among the different types of higher education institutions pertaining to quality assurance management and systems (Stetar 1999). The development of quality assurance "systems" in universities and technikons will now be reviewed to illustrate the significant differences and the way forward.

In order to address the quality assurance and monitoring of institutions and instructional programmes in higher education as part of the goals and initiatives of the higher education transformation agenda, it is necessary to look at both the technikon and the university sectors and their quality assurance systems. An overview of the quality assurance systems of both sectors is given.

It is important to note that in future universities and technikons will be guided by one single QAA in their quality processes. The HEQC was launched on May 2001. The HEQC is a learning organisation in its initial stages. It is guided by and bases its operations on SAQA within the NQF (refer to paragraph 3.5.3.9).

In the report commissioned by the IHEQC of the CHE critical perspectives were provided with regard to SERTEC and the QPU via the goals of quality assurance, namely improvement and accountability (Reddy, Baijnath, Brennan, Fourie, Genis, Noruwana, Singh & Webbstock 2000:42).

The report gives a detailed description of external evaluation as opposed to peer evaluation and self-evaluation in terms of the operations of SERTEC and the QPU as quality assurance agents (QAAs) for higher education.

Because of the very different nature of technikon and university education in the past, no generic framework existed to guide the external "audits" for quality in both sectors. SERTEC was established to guide the quality processes of technikon programmes, whereas the QPU initially did institutional audits with the idea to later develop assessment criteria for instructional programmes (Brink 1996). In the past the requirements for the monitoring of the quality of technikon programmes were drafted in co-operation with the CTP. All requirements and procedures were documented in a *Manual for the Evaluation of Standards at the Technikons*, later referred to as *Manual for Quality Assurance in Higher Education* (SERTEC 1998). The requirements and procedures have been regularly updated in terms of the outcomes and quality gaps that were identified in previous evaluations. This process commenced in 1991 in terms of the rules and regulations determined by the Council. Self-evaluation as a basis for the monitoring of education quality was introduced at the technikons in 1996.

To highlight some of the conceptual differences between the two QAAs used by technikons and universities respectively, the historical roles of SERTEC in technikons and the QPU in universities will subsequently be discussed.

3.5.1 The role of the Certification Council for Technikon Education (SERTEC)

SERTEC was initially established as a certification body responsible for the verification of examination results and the awarding of certificates to successful candidates. Technikons were subject to the policies and practices concerning quality laid down by SERTEC, established in 1986 (Van der Westhuizen *et al.* 1999). In terms of the SERTEC Amendment Act, 1993 (Act No. 185 of 1993),

SERTEC became an accreditation body for diploma and degree programmes and therefore mandated technikons to offer these (RSA 1993).

Requirements for the monitoring of the quality at technikons were drafted in co-operation with the CTP. As mentioned earlier all requirements and procedures were documented in a *Manual for the Evaluation of Standards at the Technikons* and regularly updated in terms of the experience of previous evaluations (refer to paragraph 3.5.1). The monitoring of the quality of technikon education and training commenced in 1991 in terms of such rules and regulations as determined by the Council. Self-evaluation as a basis for the monitoring of the quality of education was introduced at the technikons in 1996. Evaluation committees for **programme level** evaluation, **institutional level** evaluation and **infrastructural** evaluation were introduced.

For every four-year cycle, SERTEC appointed committees to carry out the evaluation by means of site visits to all technikons. Jacobs (1999b) indicates that the following evaluation committees at the institutional level of technikon education and research were appointed by SERTEC to assess all technikon instructional programmes due for assessment at all technikons:

- The examinations administration committee.
- The resources centre services committee.
- The experiential learning committee.
- The research capacity and maintenance committee.
- The committee for internal quality assurance policies, procedures and the implementation. (This committee was activated for the first time in 1999.)

SERTEC conducted mainly programme evaluation "audits" with some reference to the institutional level, but functions such as human resources, finances and rectorate (leadership) were not yet included in the institutional level audits (Strydom 1997b). The fact that SERTEC did not assess the institution as a whole, but only through a process of close co-operation among technikons,

employers and professional bodies at programme level as opposed to the institutional level is an area for improvement (Van der Westhuizen *et al.* 1999). Individual institutions themselves had to, for example, use a systemic framework such as the Malcolm Baldrige Education criteria or the SAEF framework in its quality self-assessment to integrate external accountability with internal continuous improvement.

Although the general consensus existed that the establishment and operation of SERTEC had improved the academic quality in technikons significantly, some of the criticism by the task team in the CHE report on SERTEC and the QPU against SERTEC included the following aspects, namely that:

- it promoted mediocrity because of the absence of clear performance indicators of excellent - and not just acceptable - standards;
- the methodology of assessment used was not holistic – it assessed only some of the processes of the technikon and not the technikon as a whole; and
- lack of training of panel members of evaluation committees, *inter alia*, resulted in poor feedback reports (Reddy *et al.* 2000).

According to Jacobs (1999a:7) SERTEC welcomed the establishment of the SAQA. The SAQA Bill was drafted by the legislators (with the assistance of SERTEC) on the basis of the content and aims of the SERTEC Act, 1986 (Act No. 88 of 1986).

The Executive Officer of SERTEC served on a task team of SAQA that formulated the requirements and procedures for the preliminary accreditation of private higher education institutions with a view to conditional registration with the Registrar of Private Higher Education Institutions. Such requirements were based on the infrastructure evaluation SERTEC conducts at technikons.

In anticipation of the establishment of the HEQC, SAQA accepted the role of a quality assurance body for the private higher education institutions. SAQA

contracted SERTEC and the QPU of the South African Universities' Vice-Chancellors' Association (SAUVCA) to conduct such preliminary accreditation. The QPU was since abolished.

In terms of the SAQA regulations, SERTEC had to register as an ETQA. SERTEC had to be subjected to moderation arranged by SAQA and it had to co-operate with the National Standards Bodies (NSBs) as appointed by SAQA to ensure conformation to standards.

As long as the SERTEC Act 1986 (Act No. 88 of 1986) remained functional, it constituted SERTEC as the certification authority for technikon and agricultural college education.

Decisions taken by the SERTEC Council remained valid during the period of transition, particularly regarding the planning of evaluations that took place during the transitional period. SERTEC activities were terminated in August 2001.

Government recognised the necessity for quality assurance in all higher education institutions. The experience of SERTEC since 1989 has had an influence on this decision of the Government.

Compared to the quality assurance approaches of the universities, the technikons had at least some "active" system of quality assurance at the time. While a full cycle of programme evaluation visits by SERTEC to technikons had already been completed in 1994, when the university system only commenced its preliminary investigations and the creation of a unit that could co-ordinate quality assurance at universities (Strydom 1997b).

In the case of universities each institution acted as its own accreditation and certification body in terms of its private Act through which it had been established. The issue of academic freedom and autonomy in universities has always influenced the establishment of a quality assurance system in comparison with the technikons' more closed and structured system of evaluation and

certification (Van der Westhuizen *et al.* 1999). At the system level, quality assurance of universities was done through the QPU.

3.5.2 The role of the Quality Promotion Unit (QPU)

The QPU existed from 1995 to 1999 and was primarily responsible for quality assurance in universities. The Education committee of the Committee of University Principals (CUP), now the South African Universities' Vice-Chancellors' Association (SAUVCA), proposed that this unit be established to guide universities in their quality assurance activities. Its focus was mainly on institutional audits rather than instructional programme audits as in the case of SERTEC (Reddy *et al.* 2000).

The QPU also focused more on improvement as a goal of quality assurance, whilst SERTEC's focus was mostly on accountability as another goal of quality assurance.

The QPU embarked on a schedule of auditing the mechanisms and procedures for quality assurance in universities. Participation in the evaluations of the QPU was voluntary and SAUVCA could not enforce compliance with recommendations from QPU audits (Van der Westhuizen *et al.* 1999; Brink 1996).

The QPU – founded voluntarily and paid for by the university system – based its principal scope and functions on the quality assurance system developed in New Zealand. The unit was seen as the most appropriate response in South Africa to emerging issues of accountability and quality management in universities (Woodhouse 1995; Van der Westhuizen *et al.* 1999).

One of the benefits of the QPU is that it gave South African universities some exposure to institutional quality assurance. This resulted in universities having a generally positive attitude towards quality assurance. As a result, universities

might not have the negative reaction to the HEQC and its activities as a QAA. The QPU did not exist long enough to really achieve all its goals, but at least it planted a good seed regarding quality awareness in the university sector, although this effort might have been stifled by the rather sudden closure thereof in 1999 (Reddy *et al.* 2000:36). During the review of the role of the QPU its scope of operation was central to discussions. The process of institutional audits had to be extended to university activities other than that of its core activities of teaching, research and community services. It also had to include activities such as the management of the institution, general administration, financial procedures and controls, staff development, academic support, institutional support, student support, and others (Reddy *et al.* 2000; Van der Westhuizen *et al.* 1999).

However, the importance of programme assessment and accreditation in South African higher education remained an important mandate in both the White Paper 3 and the SAQA Act (SAQA 1997; RSA DoE 1997a). In order to clarify the role of leading policies in the establishment of quality assurance in South African higher education, the role of the NCHE; the White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education; the Higher Education Act; the CHE; the SAQA Act; the NQF; and other relevant bodies related to quality assurance will be highlighted in the remainder of this chapter.

3.5.3 Leading policies in the establishment of quality assurance in South African higher education

As already mentioned, over the past decade various initiatives, such as SERTEC in the technikon sector and the QPU in the university sector, have been undertaken to develop and establish a workable quality assurance system for South African higher education. The absence of a formal action or a national strategic plan for the assurance and management of quality in higher education, prompted institutional planners and policy-makers to depend on international experts and recommendations from existing higher education policy documents

to develop a suitable quality assurance system for South African higher education (Van der Westhuizen *et al.* 1999).

The challenges raised by post-apartheid demands in South African higher education are evident in the post-1994 higher education policy documents. A post-apartheid policy and legislative context for higher education was broadly outlined in the NCHE Report: A Framework for Transformation (NCHE 1996) and consolidated in the Department of Education's White Paper 3 (RSA DoE 1997a), followed by the Higher Education Act (RSA 1997) which established the CHE and the HEQC (RSA DoE 2002).

3.5.3.1 *The National Education Policy Investment (NEPI) Report (1992)*

This report of the Post-Secondary Education (PSE) Research Group in 1992 was intended to identify and assess inadequacies, inequalities and inefficiencies of the existing PSE system. The NEPI Report included a range of broad policy options as well as the concept of quality assurance and management in PSE. The latter is linked to equity, access and development (NEPI 1992; Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001).

In terms of quality and development, the PSE system had to become one that would insist on quality and give a high priority to science, technology and the country's capacity for technology transfer. The concepts of quality and development encouraged PSE institutions to adopt equal-opportunity mechanisms whilst striving to maintain quality (NEPI 1992:116-117).

3.5.3.2 *The National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) (1996)*

The NCHE Report was published at the end of 1996 and dealt - with respect to academic planning and the curriculum - only with macro issues, emphasising the need to shift to a programmes-based (as opposed to

institution-based) definition of higher education which was to be realised through a new funding formula (NCHE 1996).

The NCHE gave its support to the establishment of a developmentally focused quality assurance system for higher education and promoted resource-based education and the funding of academic development. "The report makes it clear that a comprehensive, development-orientated quality assurance system is central to the establishment of a single co-ordinated higher education system and it also provides an essential mechanism for tackling differences in quality across institutional programmes" (Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001:12). It also supported the integration of education and training through a NQF on which it suggested all higher education qualifications should be registered (RSA DoE 2002).

The NCHE's belief that a comprehensive, development-orientated quality assurance system would be central to a single co-ordinated higher education system, created an essential mechanism to address quality differences across institutions and programmes (Van der Westhuizen *et al.* 1999). Provision was made for a HEQC as an umbrella body that could function with a focus on quality assurance at the institutional and programme levels, recognising that separate structures and procedures would be required to assess quality, research and productivity (NCHE 1996). This HEQC should operate within the framework of the SAQA Act underpinned by:

- "The formulation of criteria and procedures in consultation with higher education institutions.
- A focus on improvement rather than sanctions, with quality assurance and management not directly linked to funding.
- A combination of institutional self-evaluation and external evaluation" (NCHE 1996:12).

3.5.3.3 *The Green Paper on Higher Education*

Almost all of the NCHE's proposals on quality assurance and programme assessment and accreditation were supported by the Green Paper on Higher Education, published in December 1996 (RSA DoE 1996; Van der Westhuizen *et al.* 1999). This paper specified that the "quality assurance of programmes has been a priority within higher education internationally in recent years as a way of ensuring accountability and value for money ..." (RSA DoE 1996:32) and approved the proposal that quality assurance in higher education should be co-ordinated by a HEQC as an independent umbrella body. It also proposed that this HEQC should register with SAQA as the ETQA for higher education (RSA DoE 1996; Van der Westhuizen *et al.* 1999).

However, the functions and procedures propounded by the Green Paper displayed conflicting and contradictory perspectives on the quality assurance system. The fact that the HEQC was proposed to be a statutory body but at the same time it had to register as a HETQA with SAQA - which is also a statutory body - was not really workable! The relationship between statutory bodies such as the proposed CHE and those of universities and professional councils becomes even more complicated, taking into account their respective statutory powers (Van der Westhuizen *et al.* 1999).

3.5.3.4 *The White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (1997)*

The White Paper 3 built on the NCHE's recommendations by emphasising the need for higher education to become more responsive to the nation's social and economic needs. Steering mechanisms such as planning, funding governance and quality assurance could drive a single, national, co-ordinated system and support the NCHE's suggestion of a NQF (RSA DoE 2002; Van der Westhuizen *et al.* 1999). The White Paper seeks to

emphasise the political understanding of higher education more than the educational point of departure resulting in little information on the *process* of quality promotion and quality improvement within institutions (RSA DoE 1997a). The White Paper states clearly that the primary responsibility for quality assurance and management rests with higher education institutions. The advantage of this stance is that it allows initiative for institutions to develop their own quality assurance procedures within the guidelines provided in the proposed higher education legislation (Van der Westhuizen *et al.* 1999; Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001).

To facilitate understanding of the terms and content of the White Paper, it has to be read in conjunction with the recommendations of the NCHE and the Green Paper where more specific descriptions of the terms are supplied. The NCHE emphasised the meaning of quality and quality assurance, whilst the Green Paper focused on guidelines for the institutionalisation of quality assurance.

Although the White Paper states clearly that the primary responsibility for quality assurance and management rests with higher education institutions, the HEQC will function as a permanent committee of the CHE and will provide for quality assurance and management in line with the Higher Education Act. "The establishment of the HEQC, its registration with SAQA and its way of operating will be determined by the CHE within a framework of guidelines developed by SAQA" (Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001).

Although the functions of the HEQC will include programme accreditation, institutional auditing and quality promotion that have historically been the roles of SERTEC and the QPU at technikons and universities respectively, no mention of the respective roles of the latter is made in the White Paper (RSA DoE 1997a; Van der Westhuizen *et al.* 1999).

The HEQC's functions should operate within an agreed framework underpinned by:

-
- The formulation of criteria and procedures in consultation with higher education institutions.
 - A notion of quality assurance, focused on improvement and development rather than punitive sanction.
 - A mix of institutional self-evaluation and external independent assessment (RSA DoE 1997a:17-18; Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001).

3.5.3.5 *The Higher Education Act (1997)*

Acting upon the recommendations of the White Paper 3 on higher education, the Higher Education Act of 1997 makes provision for the CHE to establish a permanent subcommittee, the HEQC, with a mandate to:

- promote quality among constituent providers in higher education in order to facilitate the development of quality awareness and quality responsiveness in public and private provision;
- audit the quality assurance mechanisms that are in place at higher education institutions;
- accredit providers of higher education to offer programmes leading to particular NQF-registered qualifications, certifying that they have the systems, processes and capacity to do so [in relevant cases, this will be done co-operatively with professional councils and Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs).]; and
- co-ordinate and facilitate quality assurance activities in higher education within a partnership model with other ETQAs (RSA DoE 1997a:10; Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001).

The functions mentioned above must be conducted within the framework and requirements of SAQA's Criteria and Guidelines for ETQAs (SAQA 2000).

In terms of the Higher Education Act of 1997 (RSA 1997), the providers of higher education may offer higher education qualifications on the following conditions:

- They must be registered with the DoE as a provider.
- Each learning instructional programme must be accredited by the CHE.
- Each qualification must be registered on the NQF by SAQA.

Each of the three bodies – the DoE, the CHE and SAQA – has specific interests and responsibilities. Providers may proceed with the three in parallel, but all three requirements must have been met before they may commence enrolling learners for higher education qualifications (Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001:14-15).

According to the Higher Education Act (RSA 1997) the CHE of the HEQC must comply with the policies by SAQA in terms of Act No. 58 of 1995 for ETQAs (RSA 1995). The Higher Education Act also provides for the delegation of any quality promotion, quality assurance and quality management functions by the HEQC of the CHE to other appropriate bodies as long as it is in consultation with the CHE (CHE 2001a; Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001).

3.5.3.6 *The Council on Higher Education (CHE)*

The Higher Education Act of 1997 assigned to the CHE statutory responsibility for quality assurance and quality promotion in higher education, to be carried out through a permanent HEQC with the mandate to:

- promote quality assurance in higher education;
- audit the quality assurance mechanisms of higher education institutions;
and

-
- accredit programmes of higher education.

The CHE and HEQC must comply with the policies and criteria formulated by SAQA in terms of the Higher Education Act No. 58 of 1995 (CHE 2001a, 2002a).

The primary responsibility of the CHE as an ETQA will be to ensure that quality in the provision of qualifications in higher education is maintained and enhanced through evaluating and monitoring the capacity of higher education providers to deliver those qualifications effectively and efficiently, including:

- evaluating the assessment and moderation arrangements of providers;
- registering assessors for specified standards and qualifications in accordance with criteria that will be developed in consultation with providers and other stakeholders; and
- evaluating the responsiveness, relevance and coherence of provider qualifications in relation to their specified institutional mandates and missions (CHE 2001a:6).

3.5.3.7 *The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)*

The SAQA Act No. 58 of 1995 (RSA 1995) was promulgated even before the completion of the NCHE. This Act provides for the establishment of bodies responsible for the registering and monitoring of the standards of education providers in offering programmes that are approved by the relevant NSBs and registered on the NQF (Van der Westhuizen *et al.* 1999). SAQA oversees the development and implementation of the NQF: "The NQF is essentially a quality assurance system in which the development and registration of standards and qualifications is carried out by Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs) reporting to National Standards

Bodies (NSBs), while the quality assurance is looked after by Education and Training Quality Assurance bodies (ETQAs) that carry out their function in co-operation with providers and moderating bodies" (RSA DoE 2002:25).

In March 1998 SAQA issued the Regulations for NSBs, which simultaneously established the main parameters of the NQF itself.

The SAQA Act No. 58 of 1995 describes the primary functions of SAQA as the following (RSA 1995):

- To oversee the development of the NQF.
- To formulate and publish policies and criteria for:
 - the registration of bodies that are responsible for establishing standards and qualifications, that is NSBs and Standards Generation Bodies (SGBs);
 - the accreditation of bodies responsible for the monitoring and auditing of the quality of the teaching and learning provision for the achievement of registered standards and qualifications, that is ETQAs.
- To oversee the implementation of the NQF, which includes:
 - registering SGBs, NSBs, standards and qualifications; and
 - accrediting ETQAs.
- To ensure international comparability of registered standards and qualifications (RSA DoE 1997a, 2002; Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001; RSA DoE 2002).

SAQA is now in the process of formulating operational criteria and guidelines for the implementation of the processes and systems of the NQF (SAQA 1999; SAQA 2000).

The NQF has eight levels (of which Levels five to eight are dedicated to the Higher Education Band of the framework) in 12 organising fields. SAQA's Regulations for NSBs specify requirements that must be met for any particular proposed set of learning outcomes of a programme to be accepted as a qualification, for example that a programme should:

- add value to the qualifying learner;
- provide benefits to society and the economy;
- comply with the objectives of the NQF; and so on (RSA DoE 2002).

One of the features of the SAQA Act was that the NQF was to be brought into being as an evolving project under the guidance of SAQA, working hand-in-hand and in consultation with relevant stakeholders. This has the result that, from time to time, SAQA lays down legal requirements as regulations (SAQA 1997; RSA DoE 2002).

With the development of the NQF, SAQA allowed the original conception to be considerably modified. Some of the significant changes included the acceptance that qualifications can be registered on the NQF, even if they are not based on unit standards, but instead have specified exit outcomes, with integrative formative and summative assessment of the whole qualification. Effectively, this means that more than one qualification of a particular kind can exist, since there can be both unit standard-based versions and those that have specified exit outcomes (RSA DoE 2002).

Another "modification" of the NQF conception was that NSBs can recognise as well as establish SGBs and that, as a result, there can be more than one SGB in a given subfield. In addition, such SGBs can be recognised as being provider-specific, sectoral or national (RSA DoE 2002).

Originally there should have been one ETQA for each band in the NQF. The HEQC has been given this umbrella function for the Higher Education and Training Band. However, with professional councils and boards becoming candidates to function as ETQAs and since the passing of the Skills Development Act, the creation of many SETAs - which will be ETQAs by law - the original model of quality assurance has become more complex (RSA DoE 2002). This has led to confusion because of both the original and this model being reflected in the SAQA Act itself (SAQA 1997). However, basic elements of the NQF, which impact on higher education academic planning and curriculum design, remain the NQF alignment of all qualifications as well as the fact that all qualifications must have purpose statements and specified outcomes and must be assessed according to assessment criteria which serve the purpose of the qualification. This includes the recognition of prior learning (RPL) that must be explicitly provided for in the description of qualifications to be registered (SAQA 1997; RSA 1998; SAQA 1999).

3.5.3.8 *The National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) (2001) and the New Academic Policy (NAP) (2002)*

The implementation vacuum that was left after the publication of the White Paper in 1997 (according to the NAP) is being addressed by the National Plan (RSA DoE 2001). The National Plan outlines an implementation framework for achieving the vision and goals of the White Paper. The consultative process that started with the establishment of the NCHE in 1995 and continued through to the publication and discussions concerning the CHE's report entitled *Towards a New Higher Education Landscape: Meeting the Equity, Quality and Social Development Imperatives of South Africa in the 21st Century* (2000) is now being brought to a close (RSA DoE 2002).

The goals of the National Plan are the achievement of the transformation objectives set out in the White Paper and it is in the process of ensuring coherence of provision of higher education at a national level. It also sets out to ensure that the expenditure of public funds is accounted for; that limited resources are used effectively and efficiently; and that the quality of academic programmes is improved across the system (RSA DoE 2001:6).

In addition, the National Plan promotes the diversification of the type and range of programmes offered in the system and this, in turn, should be linked to the diversification of institutional missions and plans (RSA DoE 2002).

The National Plan furthermore established a National Working Group (NWG) that made specific recommendations regarding the restructuring of the institutional landscape at the end of 2001 and warned against unnecessary regional duplication of programme development and delivery (RSA MoE 2001; RSA DoE 2002).

It is hoped that the NAP will contribute to the implementation of the National Plan by facilitating outcomes such as:

- Increased participation rates.
- Increased graduate outputs.
- A broadened social base of students.
- Increased recruitment of students from Southern African developing countries.
- Enhanced cognitive skills of graduates.
- Diversity through mission and programme differentiation.
- Programme and infrastructural collaboration (RSA DoE 2002:30-31).

The NAP aims to provide a detailed academic planning framework for the design and specification of qualifications and the programmes that deliver them for an integrated higher education sector (RSA MoE 2001). The NAP aims to replace the "inherited pre-1994 legislative and academic policy

context" that is no longer "appropriate" (RSA DoE 2002:12). Existing policies it seeks to improve are:

- "A Qualification Structure for Universities in South Africa – NATED Report 116 (99/02)
- General Policy for Technikon Instructional Programmes – NATED Report 150 (97/01)
- Formal Technikon Instructional Programmes in the RSA – NATED Report 151 (99/01)" (RSA DoE 2002:12).

This academic planning framework should be in line with the principles underpinning higher education policy, the regulatory context of the SAQA and the HEQC's requirements for the accreditation and evaluation of programmes (RSA DoE 2002:31).

"Overall, the New Academic Policy, in combination with the National Plan, the three-year rolling plans, the new Funding Framework, the HEQC's requirements for institutional audit and programme evaluation and accreditation and SAQA's requirements for the registration of qualifications will demand that higher education institutions develop a far greater planning and monitoring capacity than hitherto. Senior Managers of higher education institutions face an enormous intellectual and practical challenge to develop this capacity in their institutions in such a way that it facilitates, rather than detracts from, the core higher education business of teaching, learning and research" (RSA DoE 2002:127).

3.5.3.9 *The Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC)*

One of the operational responsibilities of the CHE, a statutory body (see paragraph 3.5.3.6), is to establish and run a quality assurance system for higher education through a permanent subcommittee, known as the HEQC (Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001; CHE 2001a).

In 1999 the interim HEQC (established by the CHE) prepared a founding document that was circulated among relevant stakeholders. The founding document included, *inter alia*:

- That investigative work should be done on quality assurance work performed by quality assurance bodies in higher education in other countries to benchmark with South African views.
- The challenge facing the CHE for a single quality assurance and management system or framework that would be feasible for both technikons and universities and public as well as private institutions.
- The challenge to combine internal self-evaluation with external accountability to an external agency such as the HEQC (Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001).

The Interim HEQC investigated what kind of quality assurance and management systems existed within different professional councils; what the work and qualifications were; and whether these councils already had some ideas about possible partnerships or a relationship with the HEQC (Reddy *et al.* 2000; Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001).

Although the HEQC was officially launched in May 2001 as South Africa's higher education's Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), it has not yet commenced its operations fully. According to the report by the interim HEQC working group there are particular challenges facing the HEQC and some recommendations were made to address or prevent these. These challenges include *inter alia*:

- institutional audits;
- programme evaluation and accreditation;
- follow-up visits to institutions (site visits);
- quality improvement; and

- peer review.

Along with these challenges are the problems posed by a lack of professional experienced manpower to effect these challenges. The HEQC as a learning organisation should assure quality in higher education by employing professional and suitably experienced staff to carry out its operations, implementing its regulations and requirements as per institutions. It should also have its activities self-assessed and peer reviewed to continuously improve its activities. It should furthermore operate within the NQF (Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001; Reddy *et al.* 2000; Singh 2000).

The NQF is an outcomes-based education and training framework for education and training standards and qualifications. In addition, it is a framework for transformation of which quality enhancement and promotion are integral parts. Objectives of the NQF include:

- The creation of an integrated national framework of learning achievements.
- The facilitation of access to, as well as mobility and progression within education, training and career paths.
- The enhancement of the quality of education and training.
- The acceleration of the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities.
- The contribution to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large (SAQA 1998; SAQA 1999; SAQA 2000).

In July 2000 the CHE commenced its duties as an accreditor for private higher education institutions instead of SAQA and applied to be accredited as an ETQA for higher education.

The importance of partnerships for quality assurance in higher education is stressed by the need that exists for an ETQA forum where quality-related issues among the HEQC, SETAs and ETQAs of professional boards could be clarified. SAQA will consider the establishment of such a forum to the benefit of ETQAs, especially those that are just starting out (Singh 2000). For a sound and workable institutional quality assurance and management system to be established for higher education, the views of all stakeholders should be taken into account (Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001).

The HEQC of the CHE, in accordance with the Higher Education Act of 1997 and the responsibilities of the ETQA, interprets its mandate as follows:

- "Promote quality among constituent providers in higher education in order to facilitate the development of quality awareness in public and private provision.
- Audit the quality assurance mechanisms of higher education institutions.
- Accredite providers of higher education to offer programmes leading to particular NQF-registered qualifications by certifying that they have the systems, processes and capacity to do so. In relevant cases, this will be done co-operatively with professional councils and SETAs.
- Co-ordinate and facilitate quality assurance activities in higher education within a partnership model with other ETQAs" (RSA 1997:10; CHE 2001a:6).

The aforementioned functions will be executed within the framework and requirements of SAQA's Criteria and Guidelines for ETQAs. The primary responsibility of the HEQC as an ETQA will be to ensure that the quality of provision of qualifications in higher education is maintained and improved through evaluating and monitoring the capacity of higher education providers' effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of qualifications. This will include:

-
- Evaluating the assessment and moderation arrangements of providers.
 - Registering of assessors for specified standards and qualifications in accordance with criteria which will be developed in consultation with providers and other stakeholders.
 - Evaluating the responsiveness, relevance and coherence of provider qualifications in relation to their specified institutional mandates and missions (SAQA 1999:6; Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001:23).

The quality assurance and management system at the present moment in South Africa is in the crucial phase where it needs to move from policy formulation to policy implementation (Van der Westhuizen *et al.* 1999:362). It is clear that South African higher education has a complex regulatory environment, as well as a variety of experience and capacity available for the assurance and management of quality in the higher education system (CHE 2001a, 2001b; Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001). It is therefore wise for the HEQC to gradually phase in its work over time with quality promotion and support as the first phase, followed by the development and pilot testing of quality assurance and management instruments and criteria; the development of quality relevant capacity; and the shaping of partnership arrangements with other role-players such as professional councils and SETAs. The full operational phase will follow during which the HEQC will have the role of validating the quality offerings of registered providers using "rigorous accountability criteria" and "enforcing sanctions where required" (CHE 2001a:9; Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001:24). During this phase the initial emphasis is likely to be more on the auditing of quality assurance and management systems of registered providers, followed by more fundamental programme evaluations similar to SERTEC operations prior to the existence of the HEQC.

Once the HEQC is fully operational, it is expected that external holistic evaluation through site visits and the use of peer review, in addition to qualitative and quantitative performance indicators, will take place in a

cyclical manner. As soon as the HEQC is convinced that quality assurance and management capacity has been well established across a large spectrum of higher education providers, it will increasingly base its validations on the self-evaluation reports of registered providers (CHE 2001a, 2002a; Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001). However, the ideal of the HEQC to phase in quality assurance gradually might be threatened by the pressures for accountability and value for money as quality expectations in the National Plan (RSA DoE 2001).

One of the critical success factors of the HEQC's existence is the "development of an analytical and self-reflective approach to quality assurance premised on continuous self-assessment, both within the HEQC and the providers which it accredits" (CHE 2001a:15). The HEQC's policies, programmes and implementation strategies will also be externally evaluated in five-year cycles.

3.6 CONCLUSION

The time has come for technikons to face the challenge to change from an "inspection" type of quality assurance system to a more holistic approach that will also foster a culture of research and continuous improvement. The opportunity now exists for a more flexible systematic framework to assess and assure academic performance excellence within the parameters set by national policies.

Knowledge of the policies and perspectives regarding quality assurance in South African higher education will empower informed decision-making in technikons. This, in turn, will form the basis for continuous improvement through self-assessment and quality management. Self-assessment as a systemic approach to academic excellence will be discussed in the next chapter.



Chapter 4

THE ROLE OF SELF-ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions are facing increasing challenges regarding, *inter alia*, quality cost and market place every day. Most educators and business leaders believe that these challenges will intensify and become even more complex (Ivy 2001; NIST 2001; CHE 2001b). Higher education institutions are also challenged to assess their readiness, competitiveness, competitive edges, niches and readiness to respond to these challenges by using some sort of self-assessment tool or criteria (NIST 2001; CHE 2002a). One of the principles underpinning the agreed-upon framework of a single, coordinated higher education system in South Africa as stressed by the NCHE, is that the procedures should include a mix of institutional self-evaluation and external independent review and assessment (NCHE 1996:110; Fourie & Strydom 1999).

In the previous chapter the roles of SERTEC, the QPU and the HEQC in assessment in higher education were discussed. It became evident that all of these "frameworks" or "instruments" used for assessment in programme accreditation or evaluation are not holistic in nature. Only some of the processes in the institutions were evaluated and/or assessed (SERTEC 1999; QPU 1997). The CHE sets out a document proposing a programme accreditation system for the HEQC. The relatively newly HEQC's approach to quality is to develop a framework based not only on fitness for purpose within a national framework that allows for differentiation and diversity, but also to incorporate transformation and value for money (CHE 2001a; CHE 2002a). This framework, however, will not be holistic and does not include assessing *all* the processes in a higher education institution. However, an audit approach will be followed and accreditation of new programmes is a recognition status

which will be granted for a stipulated period of time depending on the duration of the programme after a three-step evaluation process has indicated that the programme meets or exceeds minimum thresholds of educational quality. Existing programmes will be re-accredited by differentiating between non-professional programmes and professional programmes (CHE 2002b). The CHE makes available a document proposing a programme accreditation system for the HEQC. The proposals were developed while taking into account local and international systems and approaches to accreditation, as well as the requirements of the HEQC's statutory quality assurance responsibilities in the current national higher education context (CHE 2002a). The proposals also contextualised self-assessment in the "audit" process.

4.2 WHAT IS SELF-ASSESSMENT OR SELF-EVALUATION?

What exactly does "assessment" mean? Is it the same as "evaluation"? What does it mean in the context of higher education and, more specifically, in the context of an instructional programme (Du Toit 2001)? According to the Houghton Mifflin Electronic Dictionary which was consulted, "assessment" means the "act of assessing; appraisal or and amount assessed as for taxation" (Houghton Mifflin Company 1998). It is also described as "measurement, appreciation, estimation". Assessment is a way of measuring progress (RSA DoE 1997b:32); a structured process for gathering evidence and making judgements about an individual's performance in relation to registered national standards and qualifications (SAQA 1999:6); a way of measuring what you understand, know and can do (Education Information Centre 1996:84). Evaluation is described by the Houghton Mifflin Dictionary in the following way: "to ascertain or fix the value or worth of and to examine and judge carefully; appraise" (Houghton Mifflin Company 1998). In the context of higher education and an instructional programme at technikon level one can describe assessment as evaluating, examining, judging or appraising something very carefully. Based on the definition of SAQA (1999:6), assessment is defined as: "The structured process of identifying, gathering and interpreting evidence about a learner's achievement in order to assist the learner's development, improve the process of learning and teaching and make judgements about the learner's achievement of outcomes in relation to registered national standards and qualifications".

"Self-assessment" or "self-evaluation" therefore means the evaluation or appraisal of oneself, especially in relation to certain objective standards. For the purpose of this study, self-assessment and self-evaluation are used interchangeably, meaning evaluation or appraisal of oneself in relation to certain objective standards or goals.

Self-evaluation is not only relevant as a basis for a quality assurance system in higher education, but also very important in continuous quality improvement (CQI) in an instructional programme as well as an IO (CHE 2001b; Du Toit 2001; Fourie & Strydom 1999). As the core business and primary function of a technikon as a higher education institution is teaching, learning and research, it is vital that self-assessment takes place in the design and delivery process of education (CHE 2001b; Du Toit 2001; Fourie & Strydom 1999). The HEQC's model for accreditation intends to "move the system towards a self-accreditation philosophy that strongly embraces an institutionally managed evaluation system" (CHE 2002a:13).

The evaluation or assessment of oneself in relation to certain objective standards or goals is systematically approached by the model of the SAEF. This model is primarily an instrument for self-assessment and the 11 criteria of the model are founded on a set of core values which are meant to be basic elements of TQM. The core values or fundamental concepts underpinning the SAEF model are:

- Customer focus.
- Results orientation.
- Leadership and consistency of purpose.
- Continuous improvement and innovation.
- People development and involvement.
- Processes and management by facts.
- Supplier partnerships.
- Public responsibility.

According to the SAEF, the definition of self-assessment, is a ...
"comprehensive, systematic and regular review of an organisation's activities

and results referenced against a model of performance excellence. The self-assessment process allows the organisation to clearly identify its strengths and areas in which improvements can be made. It culminates in planned improvement actions which are then monitored for progress" (SAEF 1999:3).

In the booklet used for self-assessment which makes use of the Southern African Developing Countries (SADC) quality model for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that is based on the SAEF model, self-assessment and performance improvement are linked and defined in the following definition: "Self-Assessment is a full, formal and regular review of an organisation's activities and results, measured against certain criteria. These criteria may be used to identify strengths and areas for improvement in an organisation. This analysis should be done as part of strategic planning activities" (SAFRI 2001:3).

An organisation's performance is measured against the criteria of the quality model. After performance has been assessed, targets will be set and plans made for continuous improvement in the priority areas. This process allows management to focus on areas that will have the utmost effect on the organisation (SAFRI 2001). The management team will then assess how well its changes are working by repeating the self-assessment process at appropriate intervals, usually on an annual basis. The emphasis is on continuous improvement in all the areas and activities of an organisation (SAFRI 2001).

4.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-ASSESSMENT

The need for a process or system of self-assessment in not only business organisations but also in higher education institutions is real and have been addressed in the literature by authors such as Fourie and Strydom (1999); Van Rensburg (2000); Pounder (2000); Alt (1998); Newton (1999); Verkleij (1999); Finch, Helms and Ettkin (1997); the CHE (2002) and others.

The benefits of structured self-assessment in an institution or organisation is embedded in the concepts that self-assessment will assist to:

-
- measure performance on a wide range of key institutional performance indicators, such as student/stakeholder, education service and outcomes, operational and financial (SAFRI 2001; NIST 1998; NIST 2001);
 - examine processes and results affecting all key stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff and the community (NIST 1998; NIST 2001);
 - improve institutional communication and performance, with resources aligned to achieve institutional goals (NIST 1998; NIST 2001);
 - link the activities of the institution with its results (SAFRI 2001; SAEF 2000);
 - identify strengths and areas for improvement (SAFRI 2001; SAEF 2000);
 - find out how far the organisation/institution has progressed towards performance excellence and continuous quality improvement (SAFRI 2001; SAEF 2000);
 - compare the institution's performance with its own targets (NIST 1998; NIST 2001);
 - compare the institution's performance with that of other institutions (SAFRI 2001; NIST 2001);
 - set targets for CQI in priority areas (SAFRI 2001; SAEF 2000);
 - decide where to focus resources on improvement activities (SAFRI 2001);
 - serve as a working tool for understanding and improving performance and for guiding planning and opportunities for learning (NIST 1998; NIST 2001);
 - promote institutional and personal learning (NIST 1998; NIST 2001);
 - ensure that the institutional quality assurance management system based on self-assessment can contribute positively towards institutional trust, openness, honesty, listening, communication in addition to increasing effective group functioning in solving problems within the institution (Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001);
 - achieve a common sense of purpose and direction for everyone in the institution (SAFRI 2001; NIST 1998; NIST 2001);
 - provide a highly structured, fact-based approach to assessing the organisation or institution and the measuring process periodically (SAEF 2000);
 - create a common language and conceptual framework for the way the organisation or institution is managed and improved (SAEF 2000);
 - improve the development of the institutional plan and strategy (SAEF 2000); and

- integrate the various improvement initiatives into normal operations (SAEF 2000).

The outcomes of a self-assessment exercise based on the SAEF framework and questionnaire approach have the advantage that they supply the institution with a list of strengths and areas for improvement and a score that can be used to measure future improvement actions against set criteria (SAEF 1999; SAFRI 2001).

However, it is important to note that there are some important strategies to take cognisance of which contribute to or could hinder successful self-assessment (Smout & Stephenson 1999; Newton 1999; Fourie & Strydom 1999), namely:

- Self-assessment processes, much like quality improvement, should be driven by a senior person and there has to be commitment from the top (a "top-down" and "bottom-up" approach).
- The manner in which the assessment process is conducted, is critical; a non-threatening environment is crucial.
- Involvement of the entire unit or organisation at all levels is essential.
- Measures used must be of a relative nature (comparative analysis rather than stand-alone scrutiny should take place).
- There must be a commitment to "closing the loop".
- The provision of appropriate resources such as reliable data and dedicated staff is important (i.e. adequate human and financial resources).
- Regular, detailed, interactive feedback through information provision, consultation, discussions with particular attention to progress made, problems identified and successes achieved, is necessary.
- Participants should set their own goals (within the parameters of the broader institutional mission) against which they could be evaluated. (A strong focus should be on action planning with targets, timescales, responsibilities and priorities.)
- Performance indicators and performance measures should be clear.
- Small incremental quality improvement steps towards CQI should be taken.
- Information should be centralised, easily understood and widely available.
- Students should be involved and feedback should be channelled back to them.

-
- Transparency should be more than a good intention; it is often the controversial data which galvanises staff into action.
 - Participants should be encouraged to think creatively and be rewarded for achieving set goals. Solutions are usually best when they emanate from the people most affected.
 - Good practice should be identified and shared and there should be mechanisms for identifying as well as disseminating good practices.
 - Diversity should be recognised and catered for.
 - Threats should be seen as opportunities for positive change.
 - Self-assessment should be used as an opportunity for organisational learning and cultural change (refer to paragraph 2.2).
 - There should be a shift from a "resource-led" to a "problem-solving" culture.
 - Time frame pressures can constructively assist the process by focussing minds.
 - It should be stressed that responsibility for academic planning and quality assurance cannot be delegated to a committee or an individual. Both require ongoing and widespread commitment across the technikon or university community.
 - In addition, problems associated with both academic planning and quality assurance are likely to be similar in nature and can therefore be addressed concurrently, for instance, maintaining morale; dealing with political sensitivities and rumours; levels of confidentiality; and inherent tendencies to "protect turf" rather than looking at the bigger picture.

Similar to TQM, self-assessment is team-based and crossfunctional. It does not only call for academic, administrative and support staff input, but also for student involvement and feedback (Newton 1999; Schonberger 1995; Pounder 2000). The dangers of ritualism and tokenism, staff resistance, suspicion of management motives, in addition to a breakdown of reciprocal accountability and mutual trust are very real and should not be ignored (Newton 1999; Smout & Stephenson 1999; Pounder 2000).

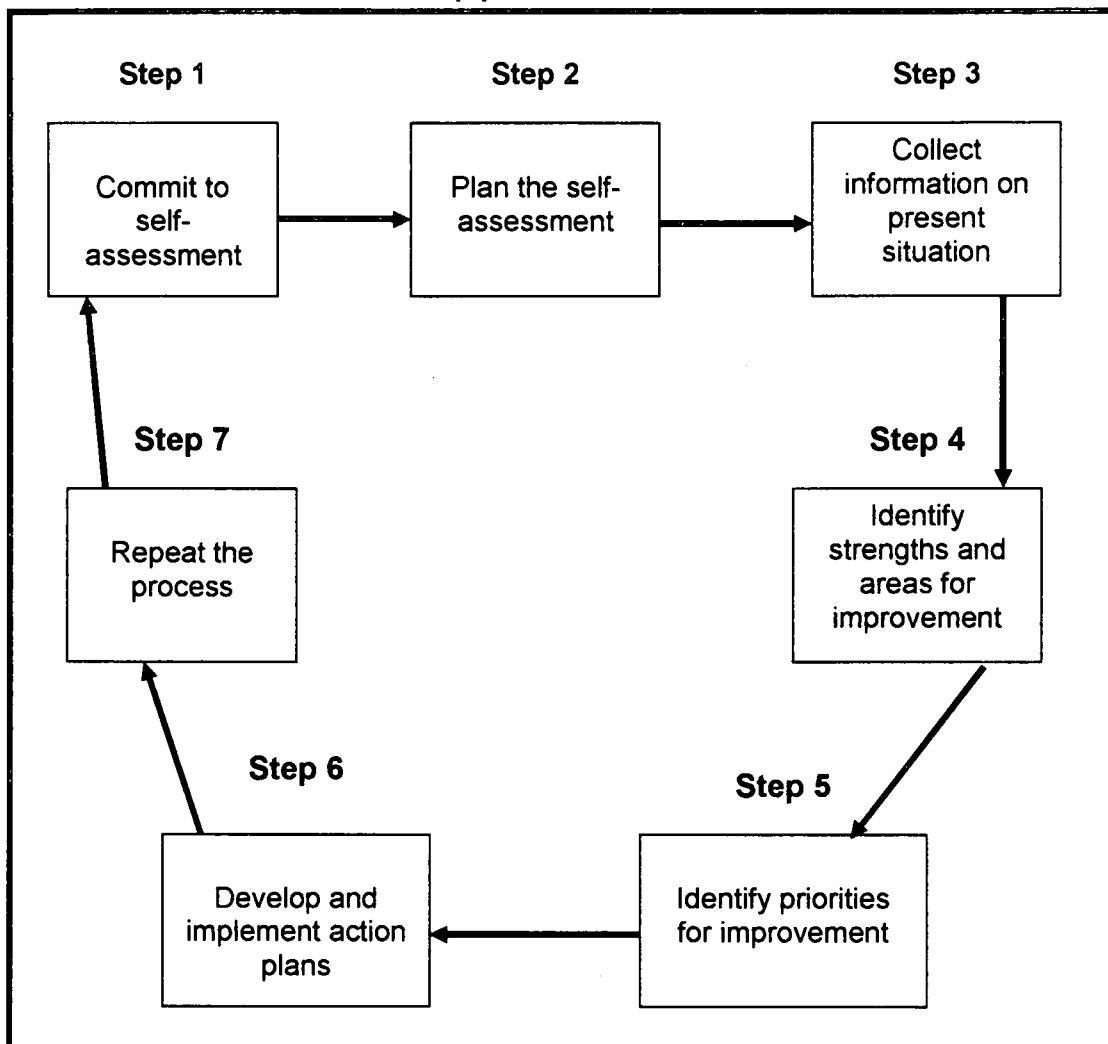
One of the factors mentioned by various writers such as Newton (1999), Smout and Stephenson (1999) and Schonberger (1995) that can influence self-assessment is "closing the loop". After establishing an action plan, the implementation and review of the action plan constitute an important part of the

self-assessment cycle (Owlia & Aspinwall 1997; Fourie & Strydom 1999). The cyclic nature of the self-assessment process becomes imminent in the quest for continuous improvement.

4.4 THE CYCLIC NATURE OF THE SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS

In the higher education sector and in industry the cyclic nature of the self-assessment process can be illustrated in different sub-processes. The self-assessment process illustrated in the SAEF model and the Southern African Initiative of German Business (SAFRI) is holistic of nature and describes the process and its sub-processes as used by large businesses and small and medium enterprises. Another self-assessment process of the sub-processes in an academic environment such as a university and a technikon is discussed. There are common points in both of these schematic diagrams and the two industries can benefit from each other's processes.

The self-assessment process in an institution or organisation consists of seven steps according to the SAEF model (SAFRI 2001):

FIGURE 4.1: The seven-step process of self-assessment

(Adapted from SAFRI 2001.)

Step 1: Personal commitment. The leadership of the institution or unit must be committed to the principle of self-assessment or the exercise will be in vain (SAFRI 2001).

Step 2: Plan and prepare for self-assessment. This step includes committing oneself to self-assessment (to be clear in one's mind regarding the reasons for conducting a self-assessment); determine what responsibility each person in the institution or unit will have in the process; a clear plan as to when one wants to start the assessment; a plan as to when one will finish the assessment; communication with the people of the institution or unit as to why one is going to conduct a self-assessment of the institution or unit; and decide what will happen (SAFRI 2001).

Step 3: Collect information from your managers and staff – "Where are we now?" This step includes answers to questions such as:

- What do we do about this?
- How well do we do it?
- What results are we achieving?

As many people as possible should be involved in this process for the following reasons:

- The person who does a job will know more about the job and its problems than anyone else.
- One will obtain good information and "buy-in" regarding any changes to be made, because people are involved.

In this process one must endeavour to stay objective, not to undervalue one's strengths and not to be overly critical of one's performance (SAFRI 2001).

Step 4: Identify one's institution's or unit's strengths and areas for improvement. In order to identify strengths, one should ask the question: *What do we do well?* In order to identify areas for improvement, one should ask: *Where could we improve?* (SAFRI 2001).

Step 5: Identify the priority opportunities for improvement. This is where the management team and oneself have to identify improvement priorities. It is necessary to identify those that are most practical and important to one's institution. They could include the following aspects:

- Making more use of the strengths by building on what one does well, because it could create a competitive advantage for one.
- Working on those areas for improvement that will have the most impact on the institution or unit.
- Identifying those enablers (criteria that deal with how an organisation or institutions is run, or how it operates) that will have the most impact on the results one wants to achieve.
- A preparedness to challenge the way one does things. Ask people for their ideas. Share one's ideas with others. Be constructive and look forward.

-
- Do not to expect a "quick-fix" for anything, as one is on the road of continuous improvement (SAFRI 2001).

Step 6: Develop and implement action plans based on the opportunities one has identified. Here one will need to:

- communicate the self-assessment results to the people involved;
- develop targets and plans regarding what and one is going to improve, as well as allocate responsibility to individuals and set dates for achievement;
- decide what resources in terms of people, money and information are needed to implement the plans;
- set dates for "report back" meetings and review progress at each meeting; and
- make the necessary changes to ensure that one achieves one's targets (SAFRI 2001).

At universities and technikons this part of the self-assessment was not always followed through effectively. This sub-process was sometimes only done in preparation of another external review, only to be resumed when the next round of external audits were due (Letuka 2000; Newton 1999). Ideally the development and implementation of action plans based on the areas identified to be improved, should be reviewed and operationalised annually (Letuka 2000; Muller 1997; Du Toit 1998).

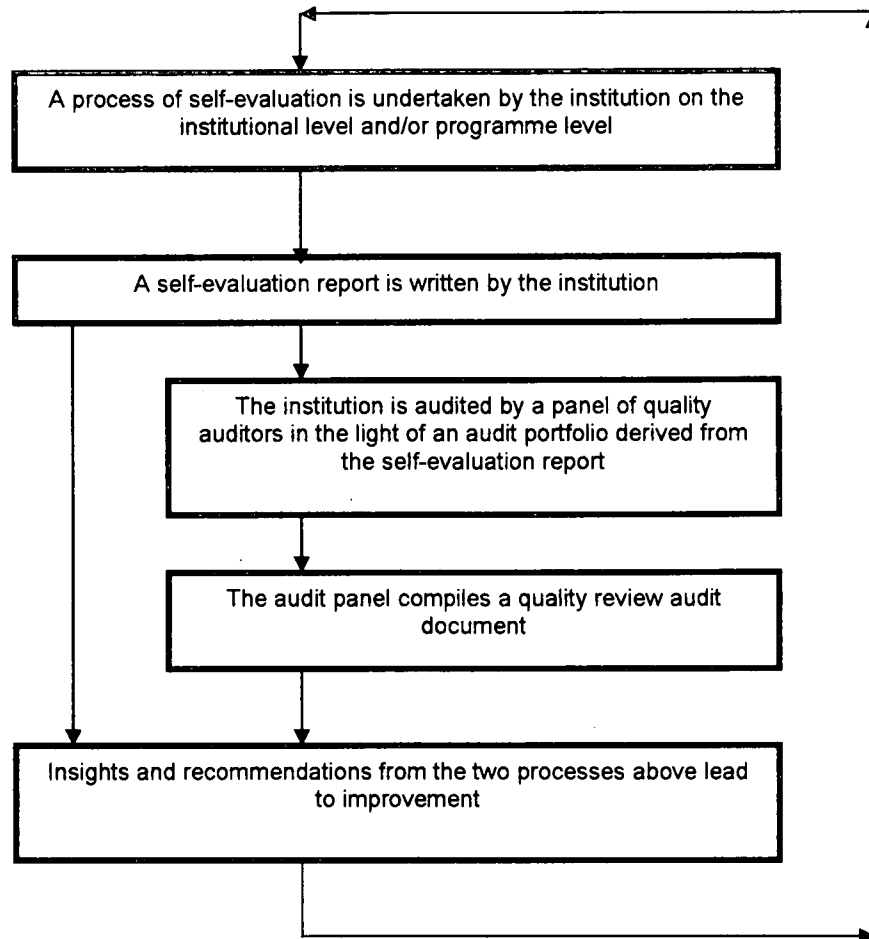
Step 7: Repeat the self-assessment process. The process of self-assessment is cyclical and must be repeated at regular intervals (SAFRI 2001). In a document of the QPU (1997:8) on self-assessment at universities it is recognised that the self-assessment process is cyclic and that it also needs to be repeated from time to time to measure progress. It should therefore not be a once-off activity.

According to Newton (1999), in the United Kingdom higher education there are seven stages and components of a self-assessment approach that are similar to those of the SAEF framework as well as to the university and the technikon approaches. These stages are:

- Defining the purpose (Why do you want to self-assess?).
- Planning.
- Assembling information and evidence.
- Making judgements based on evidence collected.
- Reporting the evidence and judgements.
- Taking action.
- Monitoring outcomes.

The self-assessment process at universities is schematically illustrated in the diagram as depicted in Figure 4.2:

FIGURE 4.2: The cyclic nature of the self-assessment process at universities according to the QPU



(QPU 1997:9)

Although the QPU is not in operation any longer, the documents produced by the Unit still prove to contain relevant information. The QPU stressed the importance of self-assessment for the internal quality assessment of a university (QPU 1997:16). History showed that the internal self-assessment at universities was undertaken in preparation of external reviews and no longer necessarily, in preparation of strategic planning and CQI (Letuka 2000:18).

In technikons the process was more rigorous because of the audit function that SERTEC served and which lasted up and till its termination in August 2001 (refer to paragraph 3.5.1). Programme evaluations took place in a three-year cycle with a self-evaluation report as prerequisite to SERTEC site visits to technikons (SERTEC 1998).

SERTEC introduced an extension to its accreditation process of technikons by introducing a self-evaluation procedure by the technikons with respect to each instructional programme. This was deemed to be appropriate with the introduction of a degree structure into the technikons (SERTEC 1998).

One of the areas to improve after SERTEC's first cycle of visits to technikons, was the fact that evaluation panels (peer evaluation) that based their visits on mechanisms of accreditation according to norms and standards, did not receive any information from the technikons prior the site visits. This area was addressed with the introduction of self-assessment exercises and reports sent to SERTEC prior to the evaluation panel visits (SERTEC 1998).

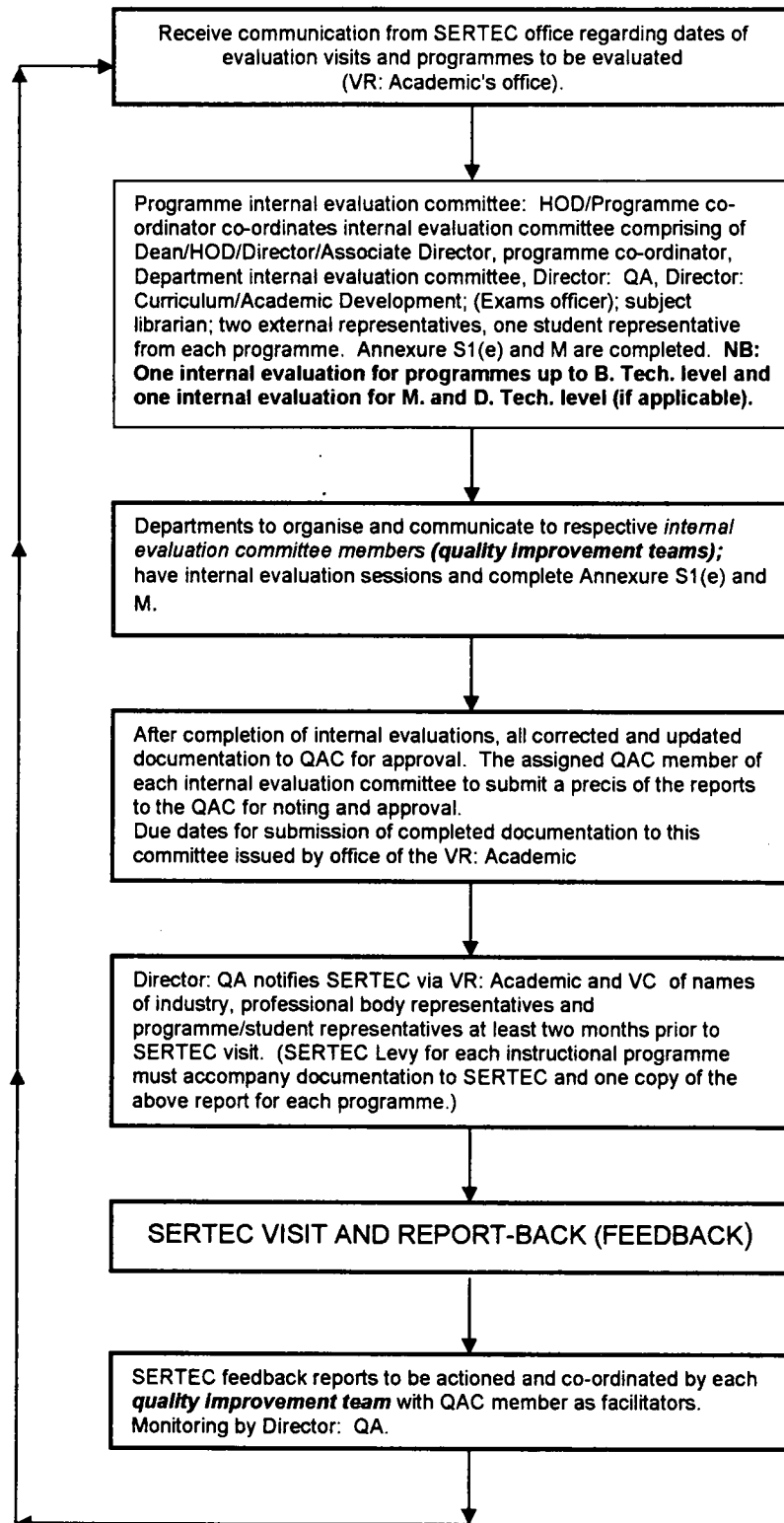
Although SERTEC required institutions to do self-evaluation reports prior to site visits for the accreditation of programmes, it did not visit technikons for whole-institution evaluations. In other words, only some institutional functions were evaluated (in a cycle) during one visit, for example, the resource centre as a unit, the examination section or the student administration, support and counselling section of the technikon at a specific date and time per three-year cycle. However, the generic information required for all self-evaluation reports prior to site visits for the accreditation of programmes included the following:

- The institutional mission statement.
- The research policy of the institution.
- The resource centre supply and integration.
- Examination administration.
- Student assessment procedures.
- Student administration, support and counselling.
- Academic staff profile.
- Administrative support staff profile.
- Technical support staff profile.
- Staff development practices.
- Provision of other infrastructure.
- Laboratory provision and utilisation such as practical rooms, studios, workshops, computer laboratories, etc.
- Student computer support and integration into specific programme(s).

-
- The purpose and outcomes of the programme (in terms of the SAQA requirements).
 - Curriculum and syllabus content.
 - Educational methodology (its applied career orientation).
 - The assessment of students.
 - Admission to and output from the instructional programme (input throughput and output rates).
 - Experiential learning (documented guidelines; administration; student placements; records; and employers reports).
 - Market relatedness of programmes at regional and national levels.
 - The evaluation of programme success (performance indicators, strengths, weaknesses; evaluation procedures).
 - The role of the Senate in programme approval and student promotion.
 - The role of present and former students in curriculum process, advisory committee, programme approval, student promotion, etc.
 - A list of participants in the self-evaluation and a description of the procedure followed (SERTEC 1998:7-21).

A diagrammatic illustration of the activities that took place prior to SERTEC site visits based on information received from the Peninsula Technikon, ML Sultan Technikon and the Border Technikon, was done by myself as assigned to me as a member of the quality assurance committee of the Border Technikon in June 2000. An abbreviated version of the process map is illustrated below:

FIGURE 4.3: The self-assessment process in preparation of the external audit by SERTEC based on the requirements of Annexure S1(e)



The cyclic nature of self-assessment is neither new nor the only cycle in the continuous improvement process. We see the cycle of continuous endeavour to close the loop of improvement in Deming's "Plan, Do, Check and Act (PDCA) cycle"; the cyclic nature of AL and AR; the cyclic nature of the self-reflective process; and, more specifically, self-assessment at instructional programme level (Winchip 1996; Zuber-Skerritt 1996; Fourie & Strydom 1999).

In order to move to an explanation of the different approaches and techniques to self-assessment, it would assist to clarify the different understandings among self-assessment or self-evaluation, an audit and an award. The way the concept of self-assessment is communicated within an institution or an organisation, is very important. In addition to emphasising the difference among audit, self-assessment and an award, it is vital to use language that will be acceptable to the culture within the institution or organisation. In some organisations, the expression "self-assessment" is not used and expressions such as "organisation assessment", "quality fitness review", "business management assessment" and "quality value" are more suitable to the culture of the organisation (SAEF 2000; Webbstock 1997; Webbstock 1999a; Pun & Chin 1999). This is an important step in gaining a common understanding and commitment to the self-assessment process.

Table 4.1 illustrates the differences among an audit, self-assessment and an award:

TABLE 4.1: Audit, self-assessment and award

AUDIT	SELF-ASSESSMENT	AWARD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance against a set standard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positioning against a framework takes place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It can be in the format of a competition.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is often carried out by an external body or auditor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is best done by the institution or business itself, perhaps facilitated by a specialist. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a marketing tool and a form of publicity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The focus is on doing things right and on corrective action taken. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The focus is on strengths and areas for improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a way of recognising a level of achievement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It can tend to be historical. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is both historical and forward looking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is historical.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The auditors own the evaluation and feedback report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The self-assessment team owns the assessment and feedback report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It involves a judging process, while the assessment and feedback report goes to the judges as well as to the institution or organisation that applied for the award.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The objective of an audit regarding motivation is neutral. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The aim is to motivate all those involved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is very motivating for those receiving or winning the award.

(Adapted from SAEF 2000.)

For some institutions or organisations the word "quality" can evoke strong dissent, while the use of the words "excellence" or "continuous improvement" enables a much wider acceptance and a positive attitude (SAEF 2000; Schonberger 1995). It is therefore meaningful to decide on an appropriate self-assessment approach as well as a technique that is congruous with the unique culture of the institution or organisation.

4.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT APPROACHES AND TECHNIQUES

Self-assessment can be initiated in the institution or organisation as a whole or an independent unit of the organisation or institution. The culture and structure

of the organisation as well as the benefits desired, will influence the particular approach that is adopted (SAEF 2000; Ivy 2001).

A number of different approaches to self-assessment are used internationally. It may be helpful for organisations contemplating self-assessment to be aware of these. In the following paragraphs five different approaches - as discussed in SAEF (2000) - will be described in broad terms, while some of the advantages and disadvantages of each approach will be outlined. It is important to note that any of the approaches may be used in combination or adapted to meet the specific needs of the organisation and that these approaches to self-assessment are not the only ones. Every day, organisations are adjusting and adapting approaches to meet their individual needs and to suit their own organisational culture (SAEF 2000; Newton 1999).

Whichever approach is used eventually, the key point to remember is that self-assessment is about the continuous performance improvement of an institution or unit (NIST 2001; SAEF 2000; SAFRI 2001; Smout & Stephenson 1999; Newton 1999; Pounder 2000). The most critical phase of the process is embedded in the action planning and implementation phases. It is important, however, for the institution to respond to the following questions after having completed the self-assessment (SAEF 2000; SAFRI 2001; Newton 1999; Verkleij 1999a):

- What identified strengths should be maintained to maximum effect and/or developed and exploited even further?
- What identified areas for improvements does one acknowledge and see as paramount for the organisation to address?
- What identified areas for improvements does one acknowledge, but will not pursue because they are not core to one's organisation?
- How is one going to monitor progress against the agreed improvement actions?
- Where are we now (to take stock)?
- Where do we want to get to (objective setting)?
- What do we need to focus on (target setting)?
- How do we get there (identifying tasks, roles and responsibilities)?
- How are we doing (review progress, formative evaluation)?

-
- How have we done (success checks, final review, summative evaluation)?

Institutional self-assessment is considered to be a crucial quality assurance mechanism in higher education (Kells 1988; Peace Lenn 1992; Fourie & Strydom 1999). However, the criteria employed in self-assessments tend to ignore the overall organisational effectiveness and culture of the institution. This is a significant omission given that there is widespread agreement in classical management literature that organisational effectiveness is a central concept in theory and in practice (Cameron 1986; Edwards 1986; Lewin & Minton 1986; Quinn & Cameron 1983; Quinn & Rohrbaugh 1983). Organisational effectiveness through self-assessment is also considered to be an area crucial to the delivery of high quality higher education (Williams 1995; Pounder 2000). It is therefore crucial for institutions and organisations to choose the appropriate self-assessment approach suitable to their unique culture and identity.

The different approaches to self-assessment are discussed in two main categories, namely:

- Fact-based (evidence to support conclusions) approaches such as the workshop, *pro forma* and award simulation approaches.
- Perception-based approaches such as the questionnaire and the matrix chart approaches (SAEF 2000; SAFRI 2001).

4.5.1 An award simulation approach

This approach is based on facts and evidence collected in the organisation or unit where self-assessment is taking place. The findings are documented during and after the self-assessment process. The self-assessment process is carried out in such a manner that the institution or unit is simulating a scenario where it would enter for an award. Assessors could originate from another division or unit of the same organisation if it is a unit carrying out the self-assessment process. If the whole organisation is undergoing the self-assessment process, assessors could be external.

A typical process would include the following steps:

- The management team of the unit or institution agrees to undertake self-assessment, using the award simulation approach.
- A project manager is appointed to manage the whole process - including the role of report architect – the person compiling the report in its final format.
- Members of the management team take responsibility for one or more specific areas in the unit or institution and specific members are assigned to be part of a report-writing team.
- The report-writing team undergoes training in report-writing.
- The report-writing team gathers data and compiles sections of the report.
- The report architect merges the different section and compiles the final report.
- The report writers give a presentation to the senior manager.
- The senior manager accepts the report (ownership) as a fair representation of the unit/institution.
- A team of assessors is trained and a copy of the report is sent to this team for assessment.
- The individual assessors identifies strengths and areas for improvement and scores the report. Scoring will depend on the type of assessment model used, for example the SAEF model or the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria for Education.
- The assessors, led by a senior assessor, reach consensus and produce a feedback report to the management team of the unit or institution.
- The management team then prioritises the identified strengths and areas for improvement and agrees on ownership and action plans.
- The management team monitors action plans regularly during the period between annual self-assessments to ensure continuous improvement.

Although this approach is potentially the most time-consuming and resource intensive, it is also very comprehensive. It will provide one of the most accurate scoring profiles, allowing for legitimate comparisons with scoring profiles of units/institutions applying for an award (SAEF 2000).

4.5.1.1 *Advantages of the award simulation approach to self-assessment*

This approach results in a list of strengths and areas for improvement put together by a team of trained assessors that can be used to drive improvement actions.

The process of writing the information down provides a powerful and concise way of reflecting the culture and performance of the organisation. As it is a written report, it can be referred to repeatedly, providing an important reference.

Once the first report has been completed, subsequent reports are relatively easy to complete with a high degree of accuracy and consistency.

This approach provides an excellent opportunity for involvement and communication during the data-gathering process. When completed, it also provides a communication document to be shared among the people within an institution/unit, the community, its customers, partners and others with an interest in the institution/unit. Some institutions or organisations use the report as part of their marketing when tendering for business.

This approach provides a learning opportunity in preparing an application for an award and provides an easy way for units within an institution to compare processes and results, while examples of good practice(s) can also be shared (SAEF 2000).

4.5.1.2 *Disadvantages of the award simulation approach to self-assessment*

The danger exists that management can delegate most of the work, resulting in less involvement by the management of the unit/institution. It is a time-consuming and intricate exercise that needs dedication and commitment.

It can be seen as an exercise in creative writing covering up the real areas for improvement and issues to be dealt with. For institutions or units in the initial stages of the journey to performance excellence, this approach may be too ambitious as a first attempt at self-assessment (SAEF 2000).

4.5.2 A *pro forma* approach

One way of reducing the amount of work in undertaking and documenting the self-assessment is to create a set of *pro formas*. In the framework of the SAEF one could, for example, use one page for each of the 41 criterion parts. The 11 criteria of the framework or model are leadership; policy and strategy; customer and market focus; people management; resources and information management; processes; impact on society; customer satisfaction; people satisfaction; supplier and partnership performance; and business results. Each of the 11 criteria has criterion parts that form the total of 41 parts. (A more detailed discussion on the SAEF framework will take place in paragraph 5.7 of the thesis.)

A description of the criterion and criterion parts will be printed at the top of the page with areas to address beneath it. The rest of the page will be subdivided into sections for strengths, areas for improvement, and evidence. (Refer to Table 4.2 for an example of a completed *pro forma* for one of the criteria of the SAEF framework. The *pro forma* in Table 4.2 is for illustration purposes only and contains fictitious information. The format of the *pro forma* will be repeated for each criterion part used in self-assessment based on the SAEF framework.

TABLE 4.2: An example of a completed *pro forma*

1. Leadership How the behaviour of the executive team and all other leaders inspires, supports and promotes a culture of performance excellence.		
1a. How leaders visibly demonstrate their commitment to a culture of performance excellence.		
Areas to address* could include how leaders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • act as role models, leading by example; • make themselves accessible, listen and respond to their people and the community; • are active and personally involved in improvement activities; • review and improve the effectiveness of their own leadership. 	Strengths: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership role taken by the CEO. • Managers first to attend self-assessment training, then lead ongoing training. • Effectiveness assessed by employee survey and 360° appraisals. 	Areas for improvement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No integrated process to manage activities. • Activities not subject to regular review.
Evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEO's statements on performance excellence. • Visits by CEO to various community functions, customers and suppliers. • Several members of senior managers directly involved in self-assessment training. • Perceptions of staff on their leaders' behaviour from surveys of 1994, 1996, 1998. 		
Approach: 40 %	Deployment: 60 %	Overall score: 50 %**

*the "areas to address" are fully listed in the SAEF document (SAEF 2000).

**the scoring process is explained in the SAEF documentation (SAEF 2000:14-15).

(Adapted from SAEF 2000:21.)

This format of self-assessment document could be prepared by individuals or teams from within the institution or organisation and scored by trained assessors. The institution or unit doing the self-assessment can have the results of the self-assessment checked by teams independent of the institution or unit (SAEF 2000).

A well-constructed set of *pro formas* can form the basis for the strategy of an institution or unit and independent unit improvement plans can be developed from this information. As in the case of the other approaches to self-assessment, this process should be repeated at appropriate intervals to promote continuous improvement (SAEF 2000).

4.5.2.1 *Advantages of the pro forma approach to self-assessment*

Although the data-gathering part of this process might be as long as the award simulation approach, the task of preparing the pro forma, one page per criterion part, is easier and less time-consuming than drafting a full award style report.

The *pro forma* approach provides a list of strengths and areas for improvement for easy reference. This approach allows people to document the evidence upon which strengths, areas for improvement and scores are based (SAEF 2000).

4.5.2.2 *Disadvantages of the pro forma approach to self-assessment*

The collection of *pro formas* does not fully represent a complete holistic picture of the institution, but only a summary of the position of the institution or unit that is being assessed (SAEF 2000).

4.5.3 A workshop approach

The workshop approach requires the active involvement of the management team of the unit or institution performing the self-assessment. The management team is responsible for gathering the data and presenting to peers the evidence gathered at the workshop. This provides the starting point for the management team to reach consensus on the strengths and areas for improvement of the institution or unit being assessed. According to the literature of the SAEF, experience has shown that two people, fully trained as assessors, are needed to facilitate this process successfully (SAEF 2000). Ideally, one of the assessors should be from that part of the institution being assessed and the other from another part of the institution to balance subjectivity and objectivity in the self-assessment exercise.

The workshop approach process ideally has five steps or sub-processes:

The **first step** is training of the management team, starting with about three hours of preparatory reading prior to attending a one-day training event.

During this one-day training, the morning session is spent in revising the SAEF framework (if it is the chosen framework used) and the scoring technique.

The afternoon session is utilised to experience a brief simulation of the scoring technique and the consensus process. This exercise prepares the management team for the actual workshop to be held.

The **second step** is the gathering of data. This sub-process needs sufficient time and can be one of the early learning opportunities for the management team.

The **third step** is the scoring of the criteria during the actual workshop based on the presentation of information gathered during the data-gathering exercise. The team must ensure that nothing relevant to the criterion part has been omitted. Discussion and agreement on strengths and areas for improvement take place and team members then score individually based on the information supplied. The individual scores of members are shared with the group and then consensus must be reached. This is where the facilitators need the experience and skills of the assessor training to be able to guide the management team to consensus (SAEF 2000).

The **fourth step** is to agree on improvement actions. It might be ambitious to immediately agree on action plans at the same workshop, but the management team should agree on a later date at which action plans will be agreed upon. Usually individual members of the team will take ownership of specific areas related to their areas of expertise to develop a set of proposals to be presented at the subsequent action-planning workshop.

Step five is when progress is reviewed against action plans as part of the normal business review process of the institution or unit and not as a separate activity.

As with the other approaches, this process should be repeated at appropriate intervals to ensure continuous improvement. The workshop could be a one-

day or a two-day event, depending on the size of the institution or unit (SAEF 2000).

In terms of resources required, this approach does not take as long as the award simulation process, but on average, is likely to take longer than the questionnaire or matrix chart approaches.

4.5.3.1 *Advantages of a workshop approach to self-assessment*

This approach actively re-enforces the management team's commitment and understanding of the management framework used by their institution or unit.

Discussion and agreement by the management team on the strengths and areas for improvement help to build a common understanding on the current state of the institution's or unit's state. This results in ownership of the outcomes by the management team and facilitates its subsequent prioritisation and agreement to action plans.

This approach is an opportunity for the management team to use as a team-building exercise as well.

An agreed list of strengths and areas for improvement that can drive improvement actions is produced (SAEF 2000).

4.5.3.2 *Disadvantages of a workshop approach to self-assessment*

This approach is less robust and rigorous than the award simulation approach.

It can be a high-risk approach and needs excellent preparation and facilitation to ensure the management team is fully prepared and comfortable with the process. Ground rules for behaviour during the workshop should be mutually agreed upon and understood prior to the commencement of the workshop.

Evidence of the deployment of various institutional processes can be difficult to assess. This can lead to concerns as to the true relevance of the list of strengths and areas for improvement.

In this approach there is also scope for unrealistic scoring (SAEF 2000).

4.5.4 A questionnaire approach

It is important to note that this approach is based on perceptions and not necessarily facts or evidence gathered. Some institutions or units use simple "Yes/No" questionnaires as reflected by the sample in Table 4.3, as a method for widespread data-gathering in support of more elaborate self-assessment processes such as the workshop approach described in paragraph 4.5.3.

TABLE 4.3: A sample of a "Yes/No" questionnaire used in self-assessment

1. Leadership	Yes	No
• Do the leaders create an environment to achieve success?		
• Do the leaders encourage people to contribute ideas, views and opinions?		
2. Policy and strategy	Yes	No
• Are the policy and the strategy of the organisation (institution or unit) based on feedback from the customers and suppliers?		
• Does the organisation (institution or unit) use benchmark performance of "best-in-class" to help formulate policy and strategy?		

(Adapted from SAEF 2000.)

Other institutions, units or organisations use more sophisticated questionnaires as the primary method for analysing strengths and areas for improvement. This information is then used to establish the basis for the institution's or the unit's improvement plan. An example of this type of multiple choice responses in the questionnaire is provided in Table 4.4.

TABLE 4.4: An example of a self-assessment weighted response questionnaire

4. People management	D	C	B	A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does your institution/unit have a process which is respected by the staff for regular appraisals and which includes training as well as career development needs? 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have effective two-way communications been achieved with the staff and would they agree that they are well informed and their opinion valued? 				

D: Not started C: Some progress B: Considerable progress A: Fully achieved

Source: SAEF (2000)

The SAEF has developed a comprehensive multiple choice questionnaire entitled *Determining Performance Excellence: A Questionnaire Approach* which covers all aspects of the SAEF framework. Copies of the questionnaire are available from the SAEF office or on the internet at www.saeef.co.za (SAEF 2000).

The questionnaire approach is one of the least resource intensive approaches and can be completed very quickly, provided an existing and proven questionnaire is used. It is a fairly quick and easy approach to gather information on the perceptions of people within an institution or a unit (SAEF 2000).

4.5.4.1 *Advantages of a questionnaire approach to self-assessment*

The questionnaire approach is simple to use. A basic awareness training is sufficient to prepare people for the completion of the questionnaire.

The approach readily involves many people within the institution or the unit and the presentation of the outcomes is simple and easy to prepare. The questionnaires are not difficult to interpret into meaningful results in a reasonably short period of time. The type of questions asked can be customised to suit the culture of the different institutions or units being assessed.

This approach provides a good introduction to the culture of self-assessment in an institution or a unit. The information gathered from the questionnaire enables the institution or the unit to segment the feedback by function and level of operation.

This approach can be used parallel with the workshop approach to provide a more balanced view of deployment for the management team of the institution or the unit.

The questionnaire approach can be used to facilitate group discussions among teams with regard to the opportunities for improvement within their respective units.

4.5.4.2 *Disadvantages of a questionnaire approach to self-assessment*

Experience has shown that the excessive use of questionnaires in an institution or a unit may result in a low return rate. Not everyone in the institution or unit may understand the meaning of the questions, which may lead to skewed responses.

Wide circulation of the questionnaires can raise expectations among people within the institution or unit, therefore the use of this approach will need careful positioning. Depending on the type of questionnaire used, it is not always possible to determine why people have certain perceptions about the unit or institution. This approach does not generate a list of strengths and areas for improvement (SAEF 2000; Salkind 1997).

One must ensure that the questionnaire does not make unreasonable demands on the respondent(s) and does not have a "hidden agenda" (Salkind 1997). The questionnaire must contain questions that can be answered and that are objective, as well as straightforward (Salkind 1997). The questionnaire should furthermore contain clear and explicit directions as to how it should be completed and how it should be returned (Salkind 1997). The cover letter accompanying the questionnaire is of the utmost importance and can make or break the success of an exercise or project.

The purpose of the questionnaire and the importance of the study or exercise must be clearly stated as well as a time estimate provided so that people know when to return it (Salkind 1997).

4.5.5 A matrix chart approach

This approach is less resource-intensive and quicker to use than the award simulation approach, provided that an existing matrix chart is used. However, the resource and time requirements will increase considerably if an institution or a unit chooses to create its own matrix chart. This approach is particularly suited for use by small teams.

The matrix chart approach involves the creation of an institutional or unit-specific achievement matrix within a management framework such as, for example, the SAEF. It typically consists of a series of statements of achievements against a number of points on a scale of 0 – 100 % or 1 – 10 with 10 being the best score. Table 4.5 represents part of a matrix chart as an example of what can be developed.

TABLE 4.5: Part of a matrix chart with statements of achievements against a scale of 10 – 1 with 10 being the best deployed

	People management	Resources and information management	Processes
10	All actions are directed towards realising the full potential of all employees.	The organisation's resources are deployed effectively to meet policy and strategy objectives.	Key value-added processes are understood, formally managed and continuously improved.
9	Employees are empowered to run their business processes.	A process is in place to identify additional resources that can be used to strengthen competitive advantage.	The existence of a formal quality management system can be demonstrated.
8	The human resources plan for the unit supports the institution's policy and strategy for continuous improvement.	A system is in place to review and modify the allocation of resources based on changing business needs.	Process performance is demonstrably linked to customer requirements.
7	A process is in place to encourage creativity and innovation among all employees.	A process is in place for identifying, assessing and evaluating new technologies and their impact on business.	A mechanism is in place for developing and using appropriate measures that evaluate key processes.

(Adapted from SAEF 2000:26.)

Although every institution or unit is different and may face different issues, these matrix diagrams can help in understanding the criteria in a more practical manner. The matrixes also offer teams a means to assess their progress quickly and simply (SAEF 2000).

The matrix chart can be used at any level within the institution, either by the management team or by a representative cross-section of the people from the institution or the unit undergoing self-assessment.

The matrix chart can form part of a four-step workshop approach that can assist management teams to become involved and take ownership of the

planning and implementation of continuous improvement within their unit or institution. The four steps in the process are the following:

- **The briefing** that is held to introduce team members to the performance improvement matrix and to clarify expectations with regard to the process.
- **The individual rating** takes place after briefing each team member on how to mark their own rating of the unit being assessed by using for example colour coding or ticks.
- **The consensus meeting** that takes place approximately one week later where the team meets for a full day consensus workshop assisted by a trained facilitator. Although the facilitator does not have to be fully trained as an awards assessor, his/her role is to use questioning and facilitation techniques to assist the team to agree on their rating.
- **The action planning meeting** is when the assessment team uses consensus rating and discussion notes as a basis for producing and implementing a plan of action for improvement (SAEF 2000).

It will be beneficial to repeat the workshop every six to 12 months as part of a continuous review of progress.

4.5.5.1 *The advantages of a matrix chart approach to self-assessment*

The matrix chart approach to self-assessment has certain advantages, for example:

- It is simple to use and basic awareness training is sufficient to initiate action.
- The approach can be used to involve everyone in the self-assessment process.
- It provides a practical way of understanding the criteria.
- It provides a means for teams to assess their progress quickly and easily. Progress can be readily displayed while gaps can also be clearly demonstrated, giving an indication of what to do next.

- This approach process is good for facilitating team discussions and to use as a team-building exercise.
- Involving the management team of an institution or a unit in developing its own matrix chart can be a powerful development process. It forces focused discussion, consensus-reaching and articulation of collective vision and steps towards achievement in all criteria (SAEF 2000).

4.5.5.2 *Disadvantages of a matrix chart approach to self-assessment*

A matrix chart approach to self-assessment has certain disadvantages as well, however, for example:

- This approach does not provide an "Award standard" self-assessment and does not result in lists of strengths and areas for improvement.
- Scoring and benchmarking against equivalent benchmarks are not really possible (SAEF 2000).

4.6 LEVELS AND AREAS FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT

As previously mentioned, there is no single "right" way to perform self-assessment. In selecting an approach, the institution or unit will need to consider the implications of alternative approaches or systems in terms of time, cost and the quality of outcomes. These considerations need to be set within the context of the institution's culture and the desired outcomes of the process (refer to paragraph 2.2 on organisational cultures). Given the culture of the institution, for example, which self-assessment approach will have the greatest opportunity of being successful the first time the process is undertaken? Is the desired outcome of the self-assessment an accurate score which can be used to compare the institution or unit against the best in class, or is the requirement for something that is easy to apply and involves many people?

It is not possible to define a single approach that will work successfully at all levels for all institutions or units. Each institution or unit will need to develop or combine different approaches that meet its own requirements and circumstances. However, factors such as the support and commitment of senior managers are as crucial at operational level as at corporate or

independent unit level.

The main objective for institutions or units that have deployed self-assessment through either work teams or operational levels is to encourage and stimulate continuous improvement activities and improve teamwork. The secret is to choose an approach that will assist the institution or unit to meet the objectives it set itself when starting the self-assessment exercise, whether it is at institutional level, academic unit level, instructional programme level or at IO level (SAEF 2000; Jacobs 1997; Geall, Harvey & Moon 1997; Du Toit 2001).

4.6.1 Self-assessment at the institutional or organisational level

As previously mentioned, the primary purpose of undertaking self-assessment should be to drive continuous performance improvement throughout the entire institution or unit. However, the process of self-assessment itself does not improve the institution or unit (Geall *et al.* 1997; Jacobs 1997; Newton 1997).

Self-assessment provides a "moment in time" or a snapshot picture of the status of the institution, usually expressed in terms of strengths, areas for improvement and in the case of the application of an award, a score. However, nothing will change in the institution as a result of all this activity if the outcomes are not acted upon (SAEF 2000:32; Newton 1997). Feedback from institutions and organisations with self-assessment experience indicates that there is a greater chance of success - not just in conducting the self-assessment, but also in managing the outcomes - if the senior management team is actively involved in the process and has a sound grasp of the management model or framework used as well as of its rationale (SAEF 2000; Newton 1997).

Newton (1997) points out that self-assessment can be undertaken for a variety of purposes, both external and internal drivers. Brennan, Frazer and Williams (1995: Preface) draw the attention to some of the dangers and pitfalls of self-assessment. They firstly argue that, if motivated exclusively by public relations' concerns, self-assessment can develop into self-deception. Secondly, where assessment is externally imposed, this may encourage

compliance or concealment. Thirdly, "...there are dangers of producing an evaluative process which is paper-driven and bureaucratic" (Brennan *et al.* 1995:5). Newton adds that there is a danger that the use of any quality procedures and tools can result in "ritualism" and "tokenism", with participants primarily engaged in learning and following "the rules of the game" (Newton 1997:244). According to Brennan *et al.* (1995:5), self-assessment is primarily an academic rather than an administrative task for academic institutions: "Self evaluation is about whether educational objectives are being achieved and whether current practice can be improved upon".

The scope and limitations of the self-assessment processes should be seen as a means and not an end. It cannot replace decision-making and, if incorporated in national quality assurance systems, it may easily become self-promoting exercises (Verkleij 1999a).

Brennan *et al.* (1995:244) and Du Toit (2000) highlight the ongoing balance sought between accountability and internal continuous improvement as two fundamental purposes of self-assessment. By identifying strengths and areas for improvement, the institutions are able to see themselves as they "really are". This results in the institutions being able to work towards being accountable to a number of internal and external agencies (Brennan *et al.* 1995; Harvey 1994; Vroeijenstijn 1995).

When self-assessment at institutional level is done for the purpose of improvement, this can lead to a self-positioning process; an external review to validate the self-assessment process and outcomes (fitness of purpose and fitness for purpose); decision-making and implementation (action plans); and internal evaluation, reconsideration and adjustments of the strategic plans of the institution (Verkleij 1999a).

4.6.2 Self-assessment at the instructional programme level

Up to the discontinuation of SERTEC on 31 August 2001, its philosophy pertaining to instructional programme evaluation was committee-based on a four-year cycle of evaluations per programme. One evaluation committee per programme evaluated programmes at technikons and consisted of a

representative from the same field of expertise from another technikon as convenor; representatives from the relevant professional organisations; employer representatives; and a current or past student from the programme.

The committee was supplied with the necessary information from the office of SERTEC, while copies of the self-assessment reports of the technikon were sent to these committees a month prior the "site-visit" to the technikon to be evaluated. Up to 50 programmes in terms of a pre-arranged schedule were evaluated per semester.

Committees then drafted reports with recommendations on-site. Such findings were reported to the technikon management and staff in a public session on the second day of the two-day visit. Technikons were then provided with an opportunity to challenge any statements that were factually incorrect. At the subsequent SERTEC Council meeting, the Council considered the recommendations of the committees and communicated any decisions to the rectorate of the technikons by means of correspondence.

Depending on the seriousness of the areas for improvement which had been reported, the SERTEC Council could take one of the following decisions:

- That the technikon might be accredited to offer such a programme for a next period of four years.
- That the technikon might be requested to report in writing to SERTEC Council within one year on the improvements of the areas to be addressed.
- The technikon might be revisited within 18 months.
- Alternatively, the technikon might be requested to close a programme that could not deliver adequate training for the purposes intended in the programme. Technikons appeared to prefer closing such programmes themselves rather than being instructed to do so (SERTEC 1999; Du Toit 2000).

In most cases technikons made an effort to improve the situation to meet the minimum standards required by SERTEC. This description given in the previous paragraphs was part of the SERTEC programme assessment

component of the SERTEC model. Technikons had to comply with SERTEC requirements by law. Industry and professional organisations were expected to participate and give input in the evaluation processes (SERTEC 1999; Du Toit 2000).

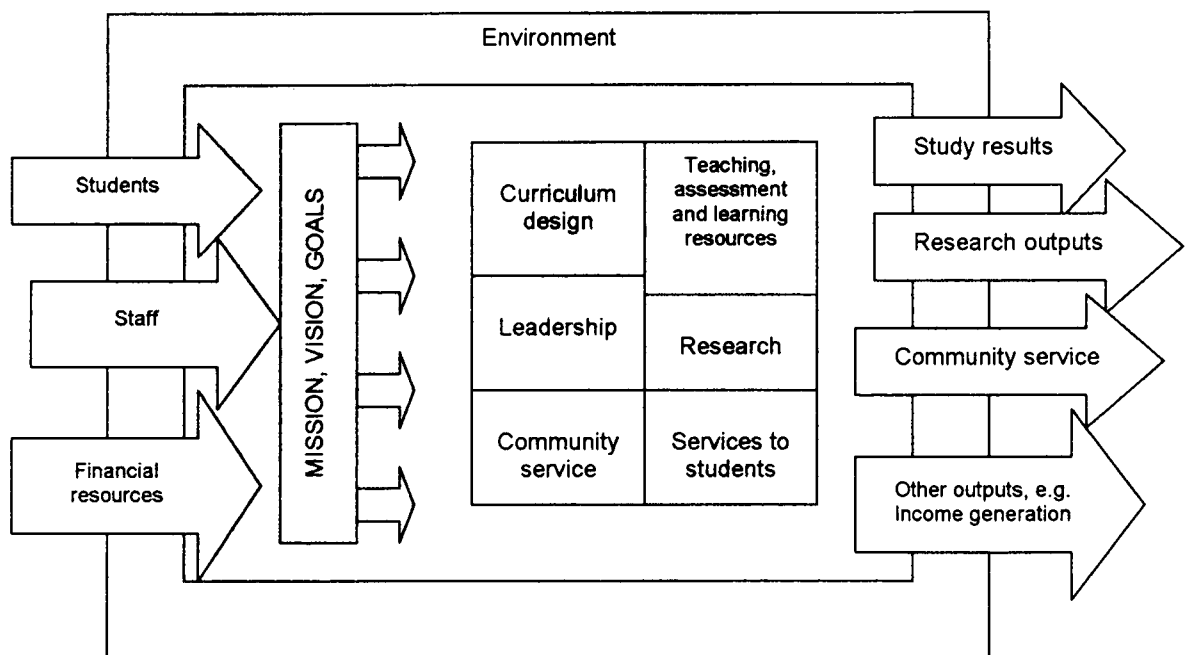
The following criteria or areas needed to be addressed in the self-evaluation (self-assessment) report as prescribed by SERTEC:

- Institutional self-evaluation.
- The institutional mission statement.
- Research policy.
- Resources Centre supply and integration.
- Examination Administration.
- Student assessment procedures.
- Student administration, support and counselling.
- Academic staff profile.
- Administrative support staff profile.
- Technical support staff profile.
- Staff development practices.
- Provision of other infrastructure.
- Laboratory provision and utilisation.
- Student computer support and integration.
- Purpose and outcomes of the programme.
- Curriculum and syllabus content.
- Educational methodology.
- Assessment of students.
- Admission to and output from the instructional programme.
- Experiential learning.
- Market relatedness.
- The evaluation of programme success.
- The role of the Senate.
- The role of present and former students.
- Participants in self-evaluation (a list of members that participated in the self-evaluation exercise) (SERTEC 1999).

With the discontinuation of SERTEC activities, technikons now have the responsibility to carry out self-assessment processes at IO level, using their own individual methods or instruments (Du Toit 2000; Strydom 1997b).

The self-assessment of universities at instructional programme level was not as rigid and prescriptive as that of the technikons. Guidelines for instructional programme review and self-assessment could be based on the work of Kells and Nilsson (1995) as represented in Figure 4.4

FIGURE 4.4: A model for an instructional programme self-assessment process



(Adapted from Kells, H & Nilsson 1995.)

In Figure 4.4 the blocks which are two-toned, indicate areas of focus for a self-assessment process, with accompanying question prompts for self-examination in each of the areas and an indication of the types of information or evidence on which the assessment can be based. Such a process is not designed to be implemented in a linear and rigid manner (Webbstock 1999b; Kells & Nilsson 1995). Each instructional programme might focus on discrete parts of the process and not necessarily the same ones in all programmes. Newly established instructional programmes might, for instance, work through their mission, vision and goals because this was necessary and a matter of priority to their functioning at the time. What is

important, is that all the different prioritised areas of change in instructional programmes should be conceived of within a broad, simple, but coherent framework. The authenticity of the process (regardless in which order it was carried out) is validated, either by the programme co-ordinator, the head of the school, the dean of the faculty and then by the external quality review panel such as a panel from the HEQC (Webbstock 1999b; Strydom 1997b; Newton 1999; Newton 1997).

Patience and timing are important in developing processes that will genuinely lead to improvement. In self-assessment, the ownership should be at the level at which the instructional programme or academic unit or institution's activities are undertaken, in which space for reflection within the instructional programme, academic unit or institution is created (refer to paragraph 2.2.5) (Webbstock 1999b; Lundquist 1996). Through the concentration of the improvement of the instructional programme, academic unit or institution, in self-assessment processes owned as closely as possible to where those activities are undertaken, it should be able to demonstrate accountability, without sacrificing improvement (Webbstock 1999b; Lundquist 1996).

Self-assessment at IO level has not yet been formalised in a systematic framework that can become part of the normal daily activities and routine in the academic unit of an institution (Jordell, Karlsen & Stensaker 1994; Du Toit 2001; Rear 1994). Annual self-assessment and review of progress at instructional programme level, academic unit level or institutional level resulted in written self-assessment and plans, with targets set for the following year and the three-year-rolling planning period. However, this type of formal self-assessment exercise has not yet spiralled down to IO level at technikons (Rear 1994; Du Toit 2001).

4.6.3 Self-assessment at the instructional offering level

As known by now the unit of analysis in this study is the management of an IO process in Border Technikon. How does one assess the process of management in general? A generic framework or basket of activities/measures such as results, financial performance over a period of three years and customer satisfaction are used to measure or assess the

level of excellence of management. This internal assessment tool can be used by anyone with an interest in the process or that can add value to the process in preparation of external auditing processes or for the purpose of continuous improvement in the IO, institution or unit.

How does one measure the management of an IO process? Student results over a period of time, for instance, as well as the results of learning are measured and reported on. What about the delivery of the learning material as an example of other subprocesses of the IO process? So how does one then successfully assess the management of an IO like REM? Is it possible to assess without mapping the processes involved in managing the IO first? Currently at technikons assessment takes place on some of the subprocesses of the process of managing an IO, but not necessarily systematically, holistically and collectively (Du Toit 2000). The question arises if one shouldn't first identify all the subprocesses that construct the IO process and then assess the results of these subprocesses against a generic systematic framework. Can this effectively result in identified areas for improvement and strengths that can assist the IO manager in drawing up action plans to address these? I will attempt to address these questions in Chapter seven.

In this study it proved to be necessary to first map the process of what is perceived to be the IO process. This question is addressed in Chapter seven where process-mapping and concepts such as gap analysis, process improvement, process redesign and process re-engineering are discussed in the context of the management of the IO process of REM.

In order to build up realistic departmental or unit plans which contribute to faculty plans and which, in turn, are the foundation of the institutional planning process, IO self-assessments should be part of a unit's or a department's regular updating of basic documentation in an instructional programme (Rear 1994; Jordell *et al.* 1994; Frederiks, Westerheijden & Weusthof 1994).

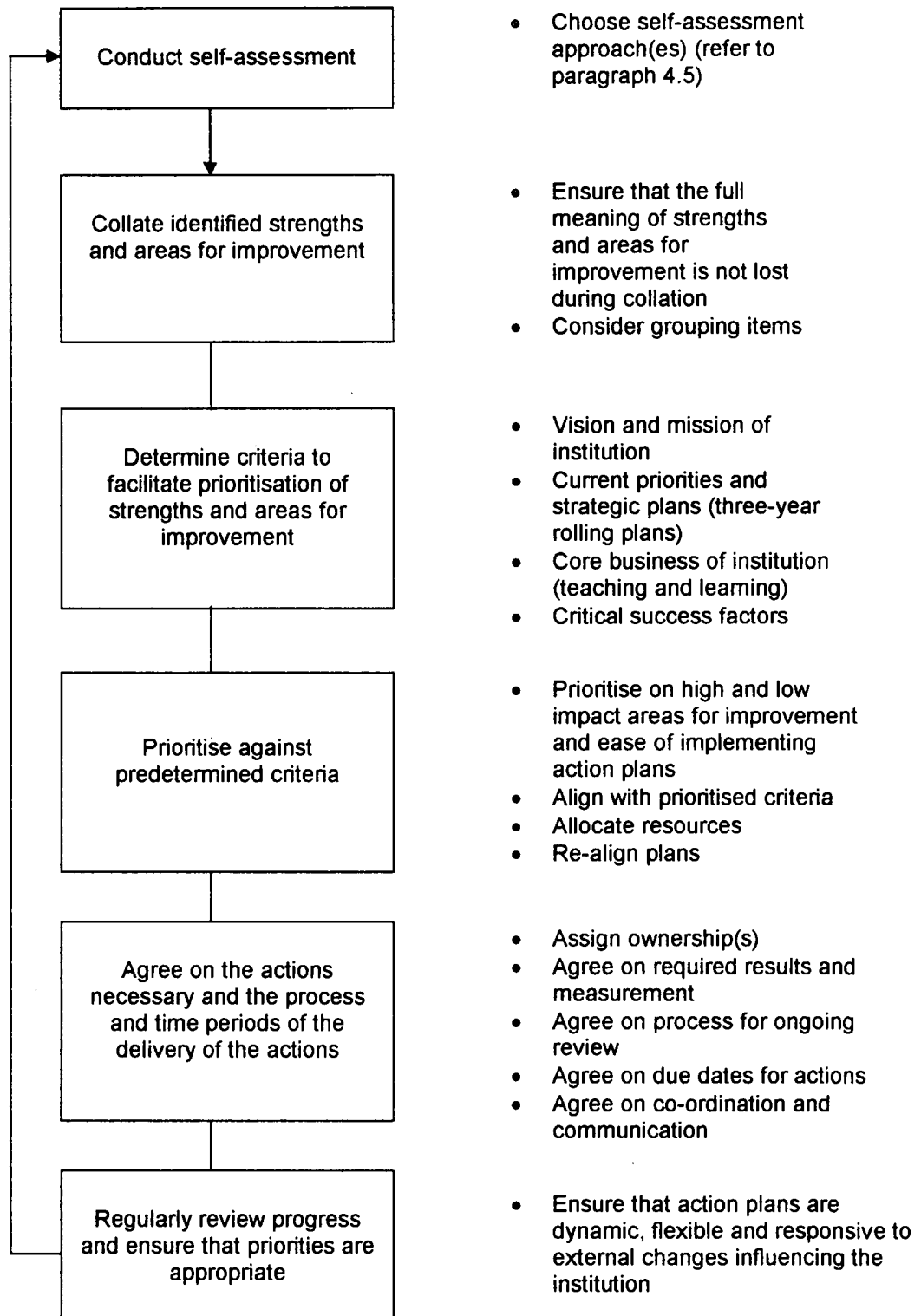
The management of an IO and its self-assessment process at this level are reported on in Chapter seven of this thesis.

4.6.4 Linkages among self-assessment, the institutional or unit planning process and action plans in improved quality assurance processes

The primary purpose of undertaking self-assessment should be to drive continuous performance improvement throughout the entire institution. Self-assessment is seen as the cornerstone of quality assurance in higher education. However, the process of self-assessment does not in itself improve the institution (SAEF 2000; Lundquist 1996; Pounder 2000; Van Rensburg 2000; Strydom 1997b; Strydom 1998; Webbstock 1999b; Westerheijden 1997; Karathanos 1999; Kells 1995). Self-assessment merely provides a snapshot of the status of the institution, usually expressed in terms of strengths and areas for improvement and in some cases of awards applications - a score. Positive change in the institution, unit or instructional programme depends on the action taken on the outcomes of the self-assessment activity (Webbstock 1999b; Alt 1998).

Feedback from institutions and organisations with experience of self-assessment indicates that there is a greater chance of success - not just in conducting the self-assessment, but also in managing the outcomes - if the senior management team is actively involved in the process and has a sound grasp of the instrument used for the self-assessment (SAEF 2000; Webbstock 1999b; Lundquist 1996).

FIGURE 4.5: Linkages among self-assessment, the institutional planning process and action plans



(Adapted from SAEF 2000:33.)

The timely and clear collation of the self-assessment results is vital to the success of the exercise. Even after a short period of time, poorly phrased notes may not be understandable any longer.

The establishment of priorities for action ensures that a high level of motivation is maintained following the self-assessment rather than morale sinking in a situation where it is perceived that there are too many issues to resolve.

The use of tools such as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats analysis (SWOT) and high/low impact and Phase of Change, can help people understand the areas which are both in need of improvement and important to the continued existence of the institution. Such techniques will also highlight those areas where the institution has strengths that need to be maintained or developed still further (SAEF 2000; Lundquist 1996).

Action plans for improvement should not be made in isolation, but should recognise the priorities of the institution and the external influences such as national policies that may be exerted (SAEF 2000; Webbstock 1999b; Frederiks *et al.* 1994).

Action planning and delivery should be co-ordinated and there needs to be visible and specific accountability. These actions should be recognised and integrated into the institution's planning cycle (Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001; Alt 1998; Verkleij 1999a).

As with any other activity, progress in implementing the improvement actions should be regularly reviewed and the whole process of linking self-assessment and institutional planning should also be reviewed and improved for the next self-assessment exercise (SAEF 2000; Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001).

4.7 CONCLUSION

It is evident that the practice of self-assessment in South African universities and technikons, although undergoing development and changes, still largely consists of a combination of traditional practices applied selectively (Webbstock & Ngara 1997). National policy on quality assurance and the

operationalisation of the HEQC as the external quality auditing and programme accreditation body will require more rigorous, regular and systematic self-assessment practices in specifically universities, but also technikons (Webbstock & Ngara 1997).

Any self-assessment and quality assessment system can only be as good as those who must implement it, participate in it. These individuals must furthermore be prepared to adjust and modify processes in order to continuously improve (Philogène 1997:470).

South African institutions in higher education are privileged, because they can benefit from a vast reservoir of proven practices of self-assessment and external reviews, designed to fulfil the institutional needs of feedback as part of their strategic planning (Verkleij 1999a). Such self-assessment processes will be based on development in three contexts, namely the scientific context, the professional/societal context and the institutional context. The higher education policy and the shape of the national quality assurance system are only some of many contextual variables (refer to paragraph 3.5.3) (Verkleij 1999a). Self-assessment processes, incorporated in national quality assurance systems, may easily become self-promoting exercises. The outcomes of self-assessment processes provide sufficient background information to answer almost all, if not all, questions raised by external quality assurance agencies (Verkleij 1999a).

Both the New Zealand and the Australian experiences illustrate that the process of self-assessment and how the self-assessment report is compiled, can result in quality improvement independently of prescriptions set out by external bodies (Hall, Woodhouse & Jermyn 1997; Candy & Maconachie 1997; Alt 1998).

Commentators in many countries such as New Zealand, Australia and Sweden are suggesting that it is time to switch from accountability models of external quality monitoring (based on self-assessment) to approaches that place a primary focus on continuous improvement (Lundquist 1996; Du Toit 2000; Hall *et al.* 1997).

To be effective, a quality improvement process must be both continuous and driven by the people who can effect real change – for example, in the case of teaching and learning, it means the teachers, students and learning support staff (Lundquist 1996; Pounder 2000; Webbstock 1999b).

Self-assessment promotes a process of open, responsive collegial reflection on purpose, procedures and practice. Self-assessment, unlike peer review or performance indicators, offers the basis for a bottom-up process of CQI combined with top-down internal and external audit (Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001; Webbstock 1999b; Du Toit 2000; Candy & Maconachie 1997; Verkleij 1999a).

Removing any "threat" associated with self-assessment is also necessary if CQI is to be honest, meaningful, achievable and without resistance. Self-assessment should be seen as an opportunity rather than a threat. Self-assessment should neither in any direct way be linked with the distribution of resources, nor with the potential termination of instructional programmes, contracts or performance-related pay (Lundquist 1996; Candy & Maconachie 1997; Webbstock & Ngara 1997; Pounder 2000).

Self-assessment is not only considered to be a crucial quality assurance mechanism in higher education, but should also be at the centre of an institutional review process designed to establish the potential of higher education institutions for accreditation by an external body (Strydom & Van der Westhuizen 2001; Webbstock 1999b; Verkleij 1999a; Pounder 2000). In the next chapter models and systemic management approaches to institutional effectiveness and quality assurance will be discussed.

A graphic of a rolled-up scroll with the text 'Chapter 5' written on it. The scroll is partially unrolled at the top and bottom. The text 'Chapter 5' is in a bold, sans-serif font. There is a small vertical text 'R. L. L. L.' on the right side of the scroll.

Chapter 5

A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO THE MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Efforts to adopt the TQM philosophy at higher education institutions, are increasing (Willis & Taylor 1999). The fundamental purpose of TQM is to serve the customer better and to exceed the customer's expectations. One of the most important customers of a higher education institution is the employer that hires the graduates. Others are the students themselves and the staff employed at the institution (Willis & Taylor 1999; Owlia & Aspinwall 1997). Analysing higher education as a system, reveals its complexity when compared to a manufacturing setting. Although there are some similarities with a manufacturing system, the more humanistic nature of education makes it more complex (Owlia & Aspinwall 1997). The dynamic interaction of lecturer and students coupled with the fact that the products of the system themselves have direct effects on the process again, are some of the reasons. Difficulties in defining customer requirements, while there is a variety of stakeholders (such as students, parents, employers, academic staff, government and the community) having different interests, adds to the complexity (Owlia & Aspinwall 1997; Du Toit 2001; Gallagher & Smith 1997). This characteristic of a higher education system, however, cannot overshadow the need for an operational definition of quality that provides a way for continuous

improvement. Quality concerns have spread from manufacturing and service environments to the public sector and the public as well as private educational systems. An increasing number of higher education institutions are adopting a TQM approach to improve the institution's ability to attract and retain students by implementing processes to continuously improve quality (Willis & Taylor 1999; Caleb 1995; Klaus 1996; Owlia & Aspinwall 1997).

Seymour (1995:78) enquires: "What exactly does a statement such as 'We need to improve our quality' actually mean? More important, how do you do it? Where do you begin? How do you know whether you are successful? How can you ensure that you will continue to improve?" The measurement of quality, clearly, is controversial. There is also no general agreement on the instrument to be used to measure the quality of academic processes. According to Seymour (1995:78), "there must be a rigorous framework for performance improvement" and it is critical that one must have a "methodology for improvement".

Seymour (1995:33) distinguishes between "organisational focus" and "process focus", and states that the latter is clearly a superior methodology for improving quality and productivity in an organisation. He furthermore states that a process approach is not merely a "shift in language" or a "minor change in individual responsibilities", but a "very different and demanding way of operating an organisation".

One of his lessons for improving quality and productivity in Higher Education includes: "The capacity of a system is limited by its bottlenecks", meaning that an institution interested in improving its performance, must search for bottlenecks and then work hard to increase capacity. If one can minimise the resources used and still produce – thereby eliminating bottlenecks - the desired results, one can speak of an efficient and effective process or, at macrolevel, an efficient and effective organisation (Seymour 1995:33).

The focus of this chapter is on systemic management approaches to quality assurance in higher education. The question asked by researchers such as Woodhouse (1999), Jacobs (1999) and Strydom (1997) is why an institution needs an external quality assurance agency besides its own internal QM

mechanisms. The reasons for this could possibly be addressed by the approaches and mechanisms of validation and verification listed by Woodhouse (1999) and the South African HEQC. Possible reasons, approaches and mechanisms mentioned by Woodhouse (1999) include the fact that:

- there should be mutual recognition of external quality assurance agencies such as the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and Institutions of Professional Engineers (the "Washington Accord");
- there is a need for the recognition of qualifications nationally;
- there needs to be employability of students;
- benchmarking and benchmarking clubs can enhance quality education;
- there must be standards to ensure quality education;
- ISO 9000 certification can be a quality assurance mechanism; and
- quality awards can be a form of recognition of performance excellence.

The external quality assurance agency, such as the HEQC in South Africa, is a body that interacts with institutions and operates by monitoring, reviewing and validating the peer and other activities of institutions and other agencies. Mechanisms it might use at an institutional level include:

- An institutional audit.
- Evidence from international benchmarking.
- Evidence from international consortia.
- Accreditation by foreign accreditors.
- Accreditation by validating institutions (such as the UK Open University).
- Accreditation by international accreditors.
- Evidence from ISO 9000 certification.
- Evidence from the achievement of quality awards.
- Evidence from professional association accreditation [such as the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA)] (Woodhouse 1999; CHE 2002a).

A factor that seems to be omitted in the HEQC's approach to institutional audit and by various other accrediting bodies, is the central concept in theory and in

practice of *organisational effectiveness* (Pounder 1997, 2000; Williams 1995). According to Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983), the quality dimension is an important dimension of any or all quality models of organisational effectiveness, but organisational effectiveness does not necessarily form part of all quality models. Organisational effectiveness criteria perceived by acknowledged experts in the field of organisational analysis to be common to all organisations are associated with four models, each emphasising its own foci and means and ends (Pounder 2000), namely:

- *The Rational Goal Model* which emphasises control and external focus and stresses planning and goal-setting (as means) and productivity and efficiency (as ends);
- *The Human Relations Model* which emphasises flexibility and internal focus and stresses cohesion and morale (as means) and human resources development (as ends);
- *The Internal Process Model* which emphasises control and internal focus and stresses information management and communication (as means) and stability and control (as ends); and
- *The Open System Model* based on flexibility and external focus. It emphasises adaptability and readiness (as means) and growth and resource acquisition (as ends).

Quinn and Rohrbaugh's analysis revealed that the quality dimension did not fit into one particular model of organisational effectiveness and the authors concluded that quality "may be an important element of any or all [of the models]" (Quinn & Rohrbaugh 1983:371). It is therefore important for the institution to agree on a definition of quality in line with its mission and values and then use an aligned QM approach to manage its quality activities.

5.2 DEFINING "ACADEMIC QUALITY"

One of the major challenges to empirical investigations of quality in institutions has been the difficulty in defining precisely what quality is (refer to Chapter three, paragraph 3.2). For example, several conceptual differences have been proposed regarding various approaches to the question of quality specific to higher education (Winn & Cameron 1998). The most frequently appearing

approaches to and definitions of quality in the higher education literature are summarised by Winn and Cameron (1998). These are more broadly summarised by Cameron (1997) in Tables 5.1 and 5.2:

TABLE 5.1: Major approaches to Quality in Higher Education literature

Approach	Definition	Example
Resource	"Resource quality" refers to those commodities which are inputs to the institution and are used in its various functions and activities	Human, intellectual, physical, financial resources
Content	"Content quality" refers to the excellence of an institution in terms of what it teaches (Astin 1985)	Exposure to liberal arts and sciences
Outcomes	"Outcome quality" focuses on conformance to mission specifications and goal achievement (Bogue & Saunders 1992)	Student /alumni achievement
Value-added	"Value-added view of quality" refers to the educational impact of the institution on its students and faculty (Astin 1985)	Difference between outcomes and inputs
Productivity	"Productivity view of quality" refers to those institutions that can do more with less – those that are more efficient	Ration of outcomes to inputs
Constituency-based	"Constituency-based quality" focuses on the needs of an institution's users – a "social service station"	Satisfaction of students, parents, alumni, faculty, community, governments, donors, recruitment agencies, etc.
Reputation	"Reputational view of quality" refers to broad name-brand recognition	Rankings and ratings

(Adapted from Cameron & Whetten 1996; Cole 1995)

TABLE 5.2: Major definitions of "quality"

Approach	Definition	Example
Transcendent	"Quality is neither mind nor matter, but a third entity independent of the two ... even though Quality cannot be defined, you know what it is" (Pirsig 1974:179).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Innate excellence ▪ Timeless beauty ▪ Universal appeal
Product-based	Quality refers to the desirability of the product features.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Durability ▪ Extra desired attributes ▪ Wanted features
User-based	Quality is fitness for use (Juran 1992).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Satisfies customers ▪ Meets needs ▪ Fulfill expectations
Manufacturing-based	Quality means conformance to requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reliability ▪ Adherence to specifications ▪ Variation within tolerance limits
Value-based	Quality means best for certain conditions... (a) the actual use and (b) the selling price.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ration of outcomes to inputs
Constituency-based	Constituency-based quality focuses on the needs of an institution's users – a "social service station"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Performance at an acceptable price ▪ Value for the money spent ▪ Affordable excellence
System-based	Quality is a system of means to economically produce goods or services which satisfy customers' requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Utilising accepted quality procedures ▪ Quality processes ▪ Integrated approach
Philosophical	Quality means that the organisation's culture is defined by and supports the constant attainment of customer satisfaction through an integrated system of tools, techniques, and training (Sallis 1993).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Management philosophy ▪ Lifestyle ▪ Mindset

(Adapted from Cameron & Whetten 1996.)

A wide variety of attributes have emerged from these various definitions which have been identified as core aspects of organisational effectiveness or organisational quality (Deming 1986; Garvin 1988; Juran 1992). Examples are:

- Continuous improvement in all activities and in all people.
- Customer satisfaction for internal and external customers.
- Efficient deployment of resources.

- Employee, supplier and customer development and recognition.
- Environmental well-being.
- Exemplary, visionary and aggressive leadership.
- Fast response time.
- Full participation of employees, suppliers and customers.
- Lifelong relationships with customers.
- Long-range perspectives.
- Partnerships upstream, downstream and across functions.
- Prevention of error by designing in quality.
- Process mapping and process improvement (refer to Chapter two, paragraph 2.2.8 & Chapter seven, paragraph 7.2).
- Providing customer value.
- Quantitative measurement and management-by-fact.
- Root cause analysis.
- Shared values, vision and culture.
- Standard quality tools [such as statistical process control (SPC)].
- Top management sponsorship and involvement.
- Waste reduction and cost containment.

This list is by no means comprehensive, but it does point out the tremendous diversity of dimensions, attributes and definitions that are included in discussions of quality. The systematic and reliable investigations are extremely difficult to conduct because of this very fact. It is often neither clear which definition of quality is being considered, nor which dimensions are being included (Cole 1995; Winn & Cameron 1998).

Within a university or a technikon one is often quite aware of departments or research groups that show "quality". One discusses it informally, but as soon as one tries to formalise it - especially when one tries to introduce selective decision-making based on quality differences - debates start about the nature of quality, assessment procedures and the authority or competence of the proposed assessors start (Verkleij 1999b). It is true therefore that quality has very different meanings, depending on who is defining the quality criteria and for which purposes quality assessment procedures are used. Harvey and Green (1993), as cited in Fourie and Strydom (1999), provide a systematic

overview of quality definitions found in the literature on higher education and distinguish among five broad categories of definitions:

- Quality as exceptional.
- Quality as perfection or consistency (zero errors).
- Quality as fitness for purpose (mission-orientated and consumer-orientated).
- Quality as value for money.
- Quality as transformation (Verkleij 1999b; Fourie & Strydom 1999).

One must therefore accept that quality is relative in the eyes of the beholder and in terms of the circumstances in which it is expressed and used. One needs to choose a definition that fits into the culture of the institution, into the approach to QM and the circumstances in which one wants to use it (Verkleij 1999b; Pirsig 1974; Harvey & Green 1993).

5.3 THE ROLE OF A SYSTEMS APPROACH IN QUALITY MANAGEMENT (QM) IN HIGHER EDUCATION

For a number of years the systematic approach to "guaranteeing" quality in education has been topical internationally (Degenaar & Van Kemenade 1998; Karathanos 1999). Much experience has been obtained in the assessment of educational quality internationally. However, educational institutions wish to pay more attention to internal coherence in policy, as well as to the implementation and assessment of educational processes, finance, personnel issues and management. To monitor the effectiveness of higher education processes in a rapidly changing landscape requires focus on the transformative core processes of learning and teaching, as well as the fostering of innovation (Corder, Horsburgh & Melrose 1999; Degenaar & Van Kemenade 1998). Professionally students and staff must be given a place within a system of QM. Higher education institutions are expected to satisfy the expectations and established norms, and - where necessary - implement improvements. For the alignment of policy throughout all levels in the institution and to generate cyclic working methods, a system of TQM is important (Degenaar & Van Kemenade 1998; Corder *et al.* 1999).

At present a national QM system in higher education in South Africa is very necessary because of various factors, including the following (Webbstock 1999a, 1999b):

- The clear indications nationally (see Chapter three, paragraph 3.5.3.9) that institutions will have to demonstrate their accountability through external review processes.
- The fact that there will be severe resource constraints on institutions and they will have to do more with less. A concern for the quality of educational provision is existing upon increasing numbers of students in the system as a whole and within particular institutions.
- By concentrating on quality assurance for the purpose of improving educational activities, the public confidence in institutions is likely to increase and the perceived need for outside control likely to decrease.
- Vast quality differentials between higher education institutions in South Africa need to be addressed through, *inter alia*, registering programmes on the NQF, ensuring that higher education programmes offered at least meet minimum standards set under the auspices of the HEQC.
- There is a growing need to evaluate the transformation process of institutions. It is not enough to plan for and introduce change without ensuring that there are feedback mechanisms on the effectiveness of the various change efforts. Quality assurance and evaluation should lead to greater certainty about the strengths of an institution's efforts to transform and to the identification of what still needs to be changed, improved and updated (refer to paragraph 2.2).
- Quality assurance in its present form in institutions is piecemeal, not systematically applied and not sufficiently based on self-assessment processes (refer to paragraph 4.3). A culture of self-assessment for continuous improvement needs to be developed. In general, while many quality assurance processes (e.g. departmental reviews and external examination and moderating) are in place in some institutions in South

Africa, they are often not applied systematically and mechanisms with respect to follow-up are not well developed. They are also seldom based on self-assessment, which should be the cornerstone of an internal quality assurance system in a learning organisation (refer to paragraph 4.3).

- Information on effective innovative practices needs to be shared. Improvement is dependent on the availability of information. While there may be many improvement efforts occurring in some institutions, information about such efforts is often not sufficiently collated or disseminated, and does not therefore feed sufficiently into the change process. The sharing of best practices, both within particular institutions and with similar departments between institutions, is useful in promoting improvement. Benchmarking practices, i.e. where departments compare themselves with similar departments at one or more other institutions, is one mechanism useful in stimulating improvement (refer to paragraph 2.2.7).
- Whole areas of the institutions' operations have been relatively neglected with respect to assuring quality. Existing quality assurance procedures or mechanisms are better developed in some areas of institutions' activities than others are. Teaching and learning, for instance, being a more challenging area in which to determine quality, has generally been a neglected area in comparison with research.

According to Brunyee (2000, 2001), both external and internal quality assurance management are included in the national debate and we must now ensure that both formative and summative resource-based and performance-based quality assurance systems are established. It is currently the ideal time to ask fresh and new questions and "...different questions for different times" (Freed & Klugman 1997).

The debate includes the challenge of balancing external accountability with internal continuous improvement (quality control and QI as components of quality assurance) on a national, an institutional as well as an instructional programme level (Brunyee 2000; Du Toit 2001; Rowley 1996). The challenge posed to higher education institutions is to move from "ensuring

maintenance of minimum standards and accountability" to systems of self-assessment and evaluation that promote organisation-wide continuous improvement in the quest for excellence (Brunyee 2000; CHE 2002b).

SAQA has circulated documents such as *Quality Management Systems for ETQAs* (August 2000), *Quality Management Systems for Education and Training Providers* (August 2001) and *Criteria and Guidelines for Providers* to guide the QM System approach for providers in higher education (SAQA 2001). The main aim of these documents is to provide guidelines for the establishment of QM systems for providers (refer to definitions in Chapter one, paragraphs 1.8.25 & 1.8.36). The most prominent QM systems used worldwide are discussed and the SAQA quality approach is located in terms of dominant approaches such as the Baldrige Award concerning Education Criteria for Performance Excellence, the European Quality Award Criteria to Education and Training, The Australian Quality Award, The Deming Prize, The ISO 9000/2000 QM Code of Practice, The South African Excellence Model, the Balanced Business Scorecard, The Scottish QM System and others (SAQA 2001:8). Some of these QM systems and approaches are discussed in the following paragraphs and, where possible and appropriate, an "education context" has been included.

TQM concepts can and should be used to improve the core business process of institutions in higher education – teaching and learning and to, *inter alia*, fill the gap between students' achievements and employers' expectations (Vazzana & Winter 1997; Verkleij 1999b).

5.4 TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT (TQM) IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

Over the past decade the topics "quality", "quality assurance" and "(total) quality management" have become a central preoccupation of hundreds of thousands of organisations in Europe. It was the industrial world which first recognised that much of the growth and economic success of Japan could be attributed to the consistent focus of companies on quality and QI. Since the mid-eighties in particular, European firms have started to adopt the concepts

and methods of TQM for meeting the quality level which customers expect and for continuously improving the quality of products and services they deliver.

Although TQM is a relatively simple concept, putting it to work in a higher education setting has proved challenging (Coate 1991; Lam & Zhao 1998; Tan 1997). The language of TQM comes from the manufacturing industry, not education, and the teamwork approach to problem-solving is unfamiliar to most middle management educational managers. Matthews (1993) describes the progress of TQM implementation at the American higher education institutions and identifies the missing elements and major barriers of implementing TQM in these institutions. He indicates that, while progress has been made in the areas of curriculum development and handling of operational problems, TQM has hit an academic wall in the overall direction of the institution and the functional areas of teaching and research. The following four major barriers to applying TQM at the institutional and functional levels are identified (Matthews 1993):

- *The highly generic and inappropriate nature of an average institution's mission.* Most higher education institutions have a highly generic mission. They try to satisfy a wide range of very diverse interests and thus end up trying to hit multiple targets with a single arrow. While the mission generally satisfies nobody, it is also insufficiently vague and all-encompassing enough to infuriate nobody and thus it can be conveniently put aside and forgotten.
- *A lack of agreement within the academic environment as to the meaning or implications of "quality and excellence".* Given the nature of academic endeavours, quality and excellence are highly subjective and often difficult to define. It is relatively easy to identify those areas in which efforts to achieve superior performance will be made (teaching and research being two of the most obvious). The measurement of an actual performance towards these noble goals poses serious problems, since there are no universally agreed-upon measures for quality and excellence.
- *The independence of key individuals within the academic environment.* The twin concepts of academic freedom and tenure have resulted in higher education institution administrations that have limited control over key

personnel, especially those with tenure. Therefore, it is very difficult for a vice-chancellor or principal of an institution to include everyone in QI efforts.

- *The reluctance of institutional leaders to play an aggressive and creative role in TQM implementation.* Given the last two challenges, the leaders of many academic institutions have been somewhat reluctant to grapple with the application of TQM to their own institutions.

Tan (1997) lists the following reasons why most organisations find it hard to initiate and maintain TQM:

- Large size, diversity and locations of organisations.
- Resistance to changes in behaviour, habits and relationships between leaders and employees.
- Lack of conviction that TQM works.
- The weak organisational performance ethics and challenges.
- Reward of individuals rather than teams by organisations and intrinsic preference for individual over group accountability.
- Most organisations do not understand what quality means and how to measure it.

Realising these barriers to TQM implementation, Mathews (1993) suggests the following steps for TQM implementation:

- Identifying the institution's primary stakeholders.
- Developing a specific competitive quality-based mission.
- Establishing internal measures for quality and excellence in specific and identified areas.
- Determining who has to commit to the chosen standard.
- Establishing motivation for those unwilling to commit to quality and excellence.
- To understand and evaluate constantly the profitability, productivity, ability and quality to review current performance and capability.
- Forming quality progress teams.
- Reporting, recognition and rewards.

It is argued that these steps will help institutions to introduce quality and excellence into all aspects of academic life and at all levels of staff (Mathews 1993; Tan 1997).

Based on some universities' experiences the successful implementation of TQM in a higher education setting depends on observing the six key principles listed in the following paragraphs (Coate 1991; Tan 1997; Lam & Zhao 1998):

- *Support from the top:* It is essential to have a firm commitment to TQM from the chief executive officer of the institution. Deming (1986) found this to be the single most important step in implementing TQM throughout an organisation.
- *Find a champion:* Implementing TQM requires a long-term commitment (five years), a good deal of time (up to 20% of the normal workload) and money (at least \$60 000.00 per year). A person with considerable authority must champion TQM from inception to implementation.
- *Action:* TQM should not be researched exhaustively. The steps necessary to form and operate a team should be learned and then a team should be started. Only by practical experience can an institution discover how TQM really operates.
- *Teams are everything:* The essence of TQM is the action team devoted to process improvement. These teams must be adequately trained. The TQM process will ensure that solutions are implemented.
- *Breakthrough planning helps:* Although not included in all TQM programmes, breakthrough planning helps align departments, integrate the existing strategic planning processes and focus on processes that can make a difference.
- *Try the service side first:* In a higher education institution, the service side is an easier place to start implementing TQM than is the academic side. Begin with a unit that is having trouble; that recognises it needs help; and that will appreciate being helped. Early success is necessary to develop momentum.

TQM can change the way design and delivery of instruction is viewed and carried out in higher education institutions (Gallagher & Smith 1997; Vazzana &

Winter 1997). The TQM philosophy can be adopted in higher education within a systemic QM framework to assist in institutional effectiveness.

Having reviewed the literature on the theory and applications of TQM in higher education internationally, there appears to be no apparent reason for rejecting the applicability of TQM as a "general philosophy" (Owlia & Aspinwall 1997:541). If there are problems with its introduction in this environment, their roots should be sought in the system itself rather than the philosophy (Owlia & Aspinwall 1997; Yong & Wilkinson 1999).

The use of quality awards has spread to many countries such as America, Japan, Australia, Europe and recently South Africa. The Japanese Deming Award, the American Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and the EFQM Award are perhaps the most well known, but there are also a number of similar awards (Degenaar & Van Kemenade 1998; Winn & Cameron 1998; Lundquist 1996; Pun, Chin & Lau 1999). The Swedish Institute established the Swedish Quality Award (SQA) in 1992 for Quality (SIQ), and it is similar to the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. It has been used in many parts of Swedish Society. A study to see if the criteria of the SQA could be used in higher education was made in 1994 at the Division of Quality Technology and Statistics at Lulea University (Lundquist 1996). Another pilot study into a method for improving the quality of higher education based on the EFQM model was undertaken at several hogeschole in the Netherlands from October 1995 onwards (Degenaar & Van Kemenade 1998).

5.5 THE EUROPEAN FOUNDATION FOR QUALITY MANAGEMENT (EFQM) IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

The basic model of the method is derived from the design to distribute and stimulate integral quality thinking throughout Europe.

The basic module illustrates that Leadership (criteria 1) gives content and guidance to Policy and Strategy (Criteria 2), People Management (Criteria 3) and Resources Management (Criteria 4). These are the institutional conditions by means of which the Process Management (Criteria 5) can be appropriately implemented (viewed as the educational learning process, execution and

development of education). This determines the extent of the Customer Satisfaction (Criteria 6), People Satisfaction (Criteria 7), and Impact on Society (Criteria 8). These criteria, in their mutual coherence, lead to the desired Business Results (Criteria 9), under which the results that issue from QIs are also included (Degenaar & Van Kemenade 1998:3). The assumption of the model is therefore that Customer Satisfaction, People Satisfaction and Impact on Society are achieved through Leadership, driving Policy and Strategy, People Management and Resources and Processes, leading ultimately to excellence in Business Results (Degenaar & Van Kemenade 1998:3).

The core values and concepts (or criteria) of the European Quality Award and their subdivisions (criterion parts) are the following:

- *Leadership*: Includes the vision on quality; the personal involvement of management in continuous improvement; the way management recognises, appreciates and supports staff initiatives towards continuous improvement; management's contribution to the development of the institution through external activities; and the extent to which management reflects upon its own actions.
- *Policy and strategy*: The presence of plans on policy and other documents; policy development and the involvement of stakeholders in the process; the communication of policy to all stakeholders; and the testing and improving of policy and strategy, including benchmarking with other fellow institutions.
- *People management*: This criterion includes the extent to which people policy is applied and integrated in the strategic objectives of the institution; the extent to which staff planning is linked to institutional objectives and strategies; the way in which assessment, remuneration and feedback from staff is dealt with; the extent to which attention is given to staff well-being and morale; and the extent to which attention is paid to professional guidance and development of personnel.
- *Resources*: The extent to which financial resources, material resources, information technology, knowledge and experience, as well as information on external environment are used to achieve the best results.

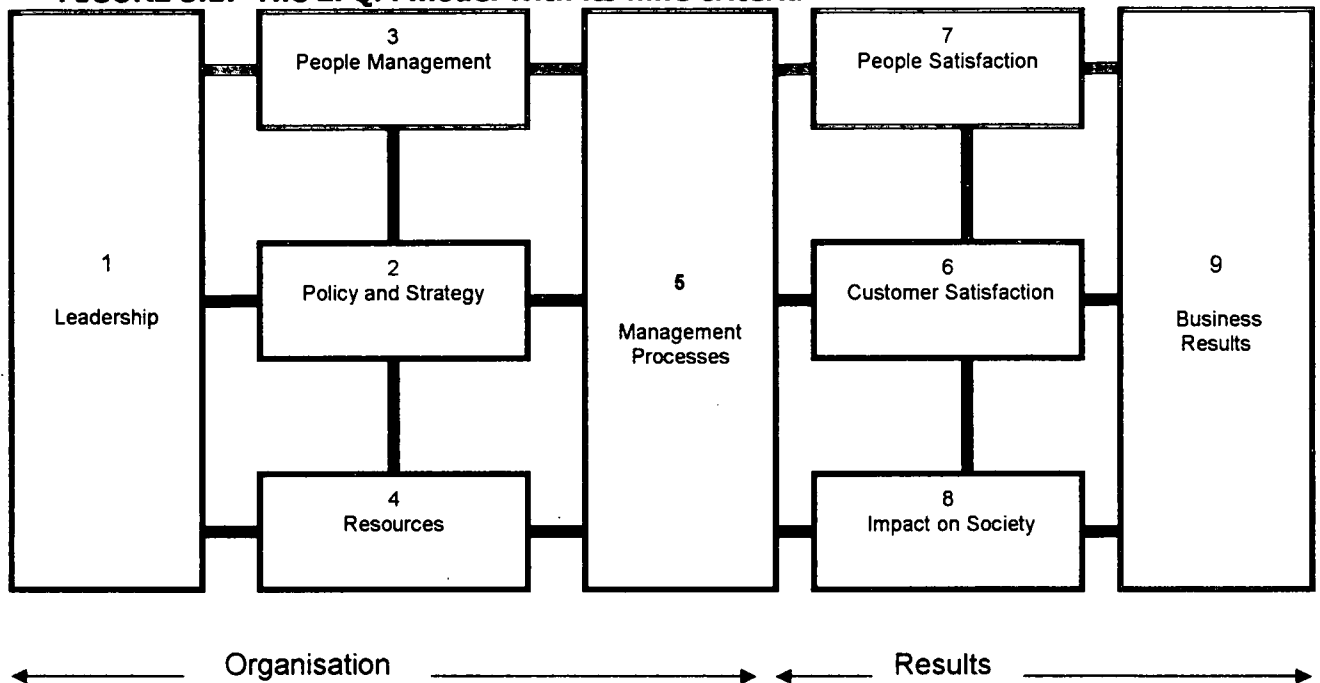
- *Processes:* The management of processes in the process of educational development and implementation involves external analysis; formulating the vision on the profession and education; constructing the curriculum; designing the study course components; controlling, planning, carrying out student activities; carrying out lecturer activities; counselling the study career and internal analysis.
- *Customer satisfaction:* This criterion addresses customer satisfaction on the part of the students and on the part of the professional field. Customer satisfaction regarding the students deals with how the institution provides student facilities, help and support to its students; protection of the rights of its students; supplying information to its students; participation of students; dealing with student complaints; and determining the business results in view of the students.

On the part of customer satisfaction in the professional field the criterion addresses to which extent the institution has insight into the wishes and expectations of the professional field; the extent to which the institution applies itself to the management of business contacts; and the way in which the institution determines what the business results of the education is.

- *People satisfaction:* A subdivision is made between the appreciation that staff members have for their task and function, their work environment and aspects concerning the institution (their involvement in the institution).
- *Impact on society:* This criterion addresses the extent to which the institution has a vision on its position and image in the community and the extent to which it has insight into its current contribution to and influence on society as part of its core business.
- *Business results:* Business results refer to both financial (returns on sales) and operational results such as graduation percentages and study results.

This system focuses strongly on "self-assessment". The self-assessment is a comprehensive, systematic and regular review of the institution's activities. The benefits are perceived to be:

- A rigorous and structured approach to business improvement.
- An assessment based on facts and not individual opinions.
- A means to achieve consistency of direction and consensus on what needs to be done.
- A means to educate the people in the organisation [institution] on how to apply, in a meaningful way, the principles of TQM.
- A means to integrate various quality initiatives into normal business operations.
- An objective assessment against a set of criteria which have become widely accepted across Europe.
- A means of measuring progress over time.
- Process-induced improvement activities focused where they are most needed.
- A methodology for application at all levels ranging from the individual business [academic] unit to the organisation [institution] as a whole.
- A means to create enthusiasm among the people within the organisation [institution] and give fresh impetus to their pursuit of business excellence (SAQA 2001:9, 10).

FIGURE 5.1: The EFQM model with its nine criteria

(Degenaar & Van Kemenade 1998:4.)

In the higher education context the nine criteria have been elaborated into five developmental stages. These developmental stages indicate a direction of incremental improvement from Stage 1 to Stage 5 and each stage implies the attainment of the previous stage. These stages are:

- *Stage 1 Activity-oriented:* With educational activities as the central issue, most emphasis is placed upon the rectification of problems as they occur. QM takes place at the fundamental level of lessons, modules, components of the instructional programme and it is dependent on the commitment of the individual professional. Working methods and culture are mainly informal and there are few procedures or directives.
- *Stage 2 Process-oriented:* The education process and the management thereof are central. Processes should be mapped out and gaps for improvement identified. QM takes place in the work processes and responsibility for policy is now becoming the responsibility of the educational team or the academic unit. Recording and documenting of procedures take place.

- *Stage 3 System-oriented:* The whole institution is controlled, including supporting departments, while the management of all processes is governed by internal and external customer orientation. Although there is a formulated and agreed quality policy, it is in its initial stages of implementation. Exchange of knowledge and skills takes place from the academic unit level to the rest of the institution and actions are carried out in line with procedures and directives.
- *Stage 4 Chain-oriented:* Maximum use is made of the knowledge and capacities of the institution in relation to its customers and other interested parties, while the institution continuously anticipates the desires and requirements of the customer and visibly provides solutions to problems or the improvement of the customer's situation. Services rendered are appraised and data analysed to improve the quality. Knowledge and expertise are exchanged institution-wide as well as with competitors. Procedures and directives are formulated, carried out and improved institution-wide in conjunction with the professional field.
- *Stage 5 TQM:* TQM is anchored internally and externally, while the vision and the policy of the institution are formulated with all stakeholders. Actions are carried out in line with policies and procedures throughout the institution. External developments and stakeholders guide policy generation and QI (Degenaar & Van Kemenade 1998).

The EFQM model promotes continuous improvement in every criterion and every stage as translated from Deming's PDCA cycle. Individuals and teams within an institution should Plan, Do, Check and Act in a cyclic manner to improve the quality level of the institution (Deming 1986; Degenaar & Van Kemenade 1998).

5.6 THE MALCOLM BALDRIGE EDUCATION CRITERIA FOR PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE

The "Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence" is one of a number of similar instruments to be used in self-assessments. It is similar to, *inter alia*, the Swedish Quality Award used in Sweden and to the European Quality Award. The intention is that it provides support in working with CQIs. The use of this instrument in higher education in the United States of America

is successful and attracts increased participation from education institutions across America (NIST 2001; Winn & Cameron 1998).

The education criteria for performance excellence of the Baldrige framework are built upon a set of interrelated core values and concepts. These values and concepts are embedded beliefs and behaviours found in high-performing institutions and organisations. They form the foundation for integrating key requirements within a results-oriented framework that forms a basis for action and feedback. The core values and concepts are as follows:

- *Visionary leadership:* Senior leaders should set directions and serve as role models to create a student-focused, learning-orientated climate with clear values and expectations.
- *Learning-centred education:* The key characteristics of learning-centred education include the fact that high developmental expectations and standards are set for all students; that academics understand that students learn in different ways; that primary emphasis on active learning is provided; that formative assessment and summative assessment is used to measure progress; that students and families are assisted in using self-assessment to chart progress; and that focus is on key transitions such as school-to-school and school-to-work.
- *Institutional and personal learning:* Institutional learning includes both continuous improvement of existing approaches and adaptation to change. Learning should be a regular part of the daily work of students, academics and other staff. It should be practised at personal, academic unit/department and institutional levels. Personal learning can result in more satisfied and versatile academics and staff who stay with the institution, institutional cross-functional learning and an improved environment for innovation.
- *Valuing academics, staff and partners:* Valuing academics and staff means committing to their satisfaction, development and well-being. Increasingly this means more flexible work practices tailored to academics and staff with diverse workplace and home life needs. Education institutions need to

build internal and external partnerships to better accomplish overall goals, internal being co-operation among leadership, academics and staff such as agreements with unions and external partnerships being with other schools, suppliers, businesses, community and social service organisations.

- *Agility:* Agility requires a capacity for faster and more flexible response to the needs of your students and stakeholders. All aspects of time management and performance are important and should be part of the key process measures.
- *Focus on the future:* This requires understanding the short- and longer-term factors that affect the institution and the education market. It includes, *inter alia*, developing academics and staff, creating opportunities for innovation and anticipating public responsibilities.
- *Managing for innovation:* Innovation is no longer strictly the undertaking of research, but is important for providing continuously improved educational value to students and for continuously improving all educational and operational processes.
- *Management by fact:* Performance measurement should focus on student learning, based on a comprehensive and integrated fact-based system – one that includes input data, environmental data, performance data, comparative and competitive data as well as academic, staff, cost data and operational performance measurement. Analysis supports a variety of purposes such as planning, reviewing your overall performance, improving operations, change management and comparing your performance with comparable institutions or with "best practices" benchmarks.
- *Public responsibility and citizenship:* These responsibilities refer to basic expectations of the institution related to ethical practices and protection of public health, safety and the environment. Practising good citizenship refers to leadership and support – within the limits of an institution's resources – of publicly important purposes.

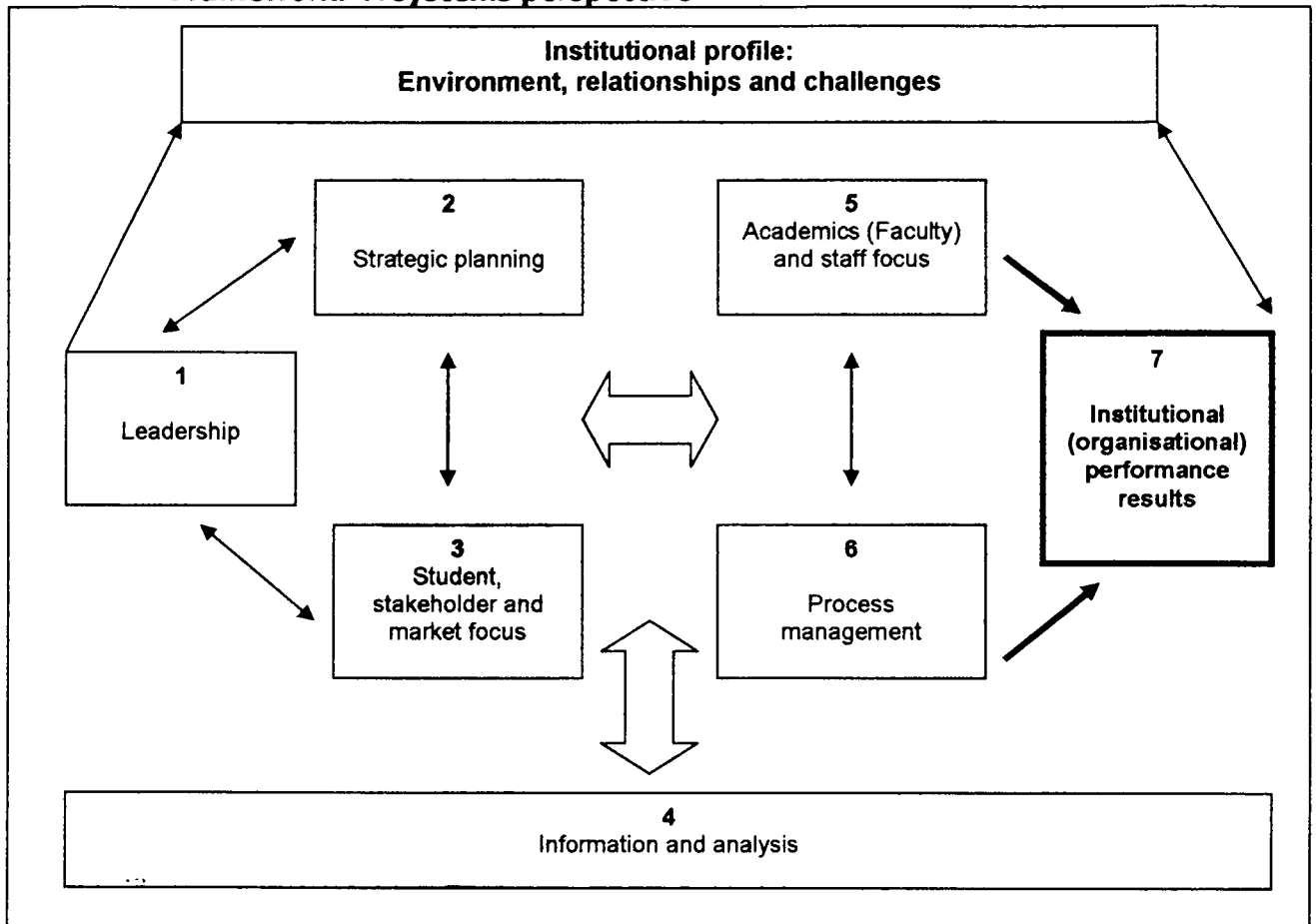
- *Focus on results and creating value:* Performance measurements of an institution need to focus on key results. Results should be used to create and balance value for the students and key stakeholders – the community, employers, academics, staff, suppliers and partners. The use of a balanced composite of leading and lagging performance measures results in effective communication of short- and longer-term priorities, as well as the monitoring of actual performance and it provides a sound basis for improving results.
- *Systems perspective:* The Baldrige Criteria provide a systems perspective for managing the institution to achieve performance excellence. The core values and the seven criteria of the Baldrige Framework form the building blocks and integrating mechanism for the system. A system perspective means managing the whole institution, as well as its components, to achieve success (NIST 2001; DeBaylo 1999; Karathanos 1999).

These core values and concepts are embedded in seven criteria or categories, namely:

- Leadership
- Strategic planning
- Student, stakeholder and market focus
- Information and analysis
- Faculty (academics) and staff focus
- Process management
- Institutional (organisational) performance results.

Figure 5.2 provides the framework connecting and integrating the categories (criteria).

FIGURE 5.2: Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence Framework: A systems perspective



(NIST 2001:5)

From top to bottom, the framework has the following basic elements:

- *Institutional or organisational profile:* The institutional profile (top of the figure) sets the context for the way the institution operates. The environment, key working relationships and strategic challenges serve as an overarching guide for the institutional performance management system.
- *System:* The six Baldrige Criteria in the centre of the figure that defines the institution, its operations and its results, form the system. "Leadership" (Criterion 1), "Strategic planning" (Criterion 2), and "Student, stakeholder and market focus" (Criterion 3) represent the leadership triad. These criteria are clustered together to emphasise the importance of a leadership focus on strategy, students and stakeholders. Senior leaders set the institutional direction, create a learning environment for the institution and

seek opportunities for the institution. "Faculty (academics) and staff focus" (Criterion 5), "Process management" (Criterion 6), and "Institutional performance results" (Criterion 7) represent the results triad. The institution's academics and staff and its key processes accomplish the work of the institution that leads to performance results.

All actions point toward institutional performance results – a composite of student, stakeholder, budgetary and financial and operational performance results, including academics and staff results and public responsibility.

The horizontal arrow in the centre of the framework links the leadership triad to the results triad, a linkage critical to institutional success. Furthermore, the arrow indicates the central relationship between "Leadership" (Criterion 1) and "Institutional performance results" (Criterion 7). The two-headed arrow indicates the importance of feedback in an effective performance management system.

The "Information and analysis" (Criterion 4) is critical to the effective management of the institution and to a fact-based system for improving performance. Information and analysis serve as a foundation for the performance management system.

The seven criteria shown in the figure are subdivided into items (criterion parts) and areas to address. There are 19 items or criterion parts, each focusing on a major requirement. Criterion parts consist of one or more areas to address. Institutions that apply to take part in the awards process address their responses to the specific requirements of these areas (NIST 2001).

5.6.1 Key characteristics of the Education Criteria are:

The key characteristics of the Education Criteria are as follows:

- The Education Criteria focus on institutional performance results.
- The Education Criteria are non-prescriptive and adaptable.

- The Criteria support a systems perspective to maintaining institutional-wide goal alignment.
- The Criteria support goal-based diagnosis.

5.6.2 Integration of key education themes

For the adaptation of the Business Criteria for Performance Excellence to Education, several important education concepts have been given careful consideration and are addressed throughout the Education Criteria.

5.6.2.1 *Mission specificity*

Although education institutions typically share common aims, individual organisational missions, roles and programmes vary greatly. If an institution uses a single set of criteria such as the Baldrige Education Criteria to cover all its institutional requirements and activities, it means that these requirements need to be interpreted in terms of the institution's own mission. This is necessary because specific requirements and critical success factors differ from institution to institution (NIST 2001). It is for this reason that the effective use of the Criteria depends on putting these mission requirements into operation consistently across the seven criteria of the Criteria Framework. "Strategic planning" (Criterion 2), for example needs to address the institution's key mission requirements, setting the stage for the interpretation of the other requirements. Results reported in the "Institutional performance results" (Criterion 7) need to reflect results consistent with the institution's mission and strategic objectives (NIST 2001).

The Baldrige Education Criteria are very explicit in the area of student learning, as this requirement is common to all education institutions, regardless of their larger missions. The institution is expected to show year-to-year improvements in its mission-specific results to demonstrate the effectiveness of its performance improvement efforts (NIST 2001).

5.6.2.2 *Customers*

In the Education Criteria, the focus is on students and stakeholders as the key beneficiaries of educational programmes and services. The adaptation of the Business Criteria to education includes a specific approach for defining key student requirements. This approach distinguishes between students and stakeholders for purposes of clarity and emphasis. Stakeholders include parents, employers, other schools and communities (NIST 2001).

Education institutions must not only address the different requirements of current and future students, but also the variety of requirements of the various stakeholders. Stakeholder requirements are twofold, namely requirements directly related to the institution's educational services and requirements of the stakeholders themselves. In addition, the successful operation of an institution may depend on satisfying accreditation, environmental, legal and other requirements (NIST 2001).

5.6.2.3 *Concept of "Excellence"*

The concept of "Excellence" built into the Criteria is that of "value-added" demonstrated performance. The concept of "Excellence" is used because it places the major focus on teaching and learning strategies; it poses similar types of challenges for all institutions, regardless of resources and/or incoming student preparation/abilities; it is most likely to stimulate learning-related research and to offer a means to disseminate the results of such research; and it offers the potential to create an expanding body of knowledge of successful teaching/learning practices in the widest range of institutions.

The "Performance" concept in the Education Criteria means that the institution should view itself as a key developmental influence on students (though not the only influence) and that the institution should seek to understand and optimise its influencing factors, guided by an effective assessment strategy (NIST 2001).

5.6.2.4 *Assessment strategy*

A well-conceived and well-executed assessment strategy is the key to the success of the concept of "Excellence" in the Education Criteria.

The characteristics of such a strategy should include the following:

- Clear links should be established between what is assessed and the institution's mission and objectives. This does not only mean what the students know, but also what they are able to do.
- There should be a strong focus on improvement of the students' performance, the faculty's capabilities and the institution's programme performance.
- An embedded, ongoing assessment with prompt feedback loops should be an integral component.
- The assessment should also be based on curricula, reference appropriate criteria and it should address the key learning goals and the overall performance requirements.
- Clear guidelines should be established regarding how the institution's assessment results will be used and how they will not be used.
- There should be an ongoing evaluation of the institution's assessment system itself to improve the connection between assessment and student success. Success factors should be developed on an ongoing basis based on external requirements such as those derived from the institution's markets and from other institutions.

5.6.2.5 *Primary focus on teaching and learning*

Although the Education Criteria Framework is intended to address all institutional requirements, including research and service, primary emphasis is placed on teaching and learning. This is done for three main reasons:

- Teaching and learning are the principal goals of education institutions. Therefore, sharing successful teaching and learning strategies and methods would have a significant impact on improving the education institutions nationally.
- Only a small percentage of education institutions engage in research. Peer review systems exist to evaluate research. Funding institutions and businesses provide channels of much research. Much of the research performed in education institutions involves students as part of their own overall education. Thus, the educational role of research is incorporated in the Education Criteria as part of teaching and learning.

The Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence is a practical framework derived from a seven-part framework used in the Business Criteria. This adaptation to education is largely a translation of the language and basic concepts of business excellence to similarly important concepts in education excellence. A significant practical benefit of using a common framework for all sectors of the economy is that it fosters cross-sector co-operation and sharing of best practices information (NIST 2001).

5.7 THE SOUTH AFRICAN EXCELLENCE FOUNDATION (SAEF) MANAGEMENT MODEL

Through the EFQM which liased with the SAQI and which was based on the European and American Baldrige models, the excellence programme for South Africa was introduced (*Daily Dispatch* 1999). The SAEF was founded as a Section 21 non-profit organisation responsible for maintaining and promoting the model or framework in support of national economic competitiveness and good governance, training assessors in the use of the model and managing a national awards process (SAEF 2000).

The SAEF's management framework or model is an assessment framework that enables an institution or organisation to examine its policies and practices through self-assessment. It is a comprehensive diagnostic framework for self-assessment that addresses both hard and soft governance issues. It is fully measurable because of its structured approach to gap analysis. It makes

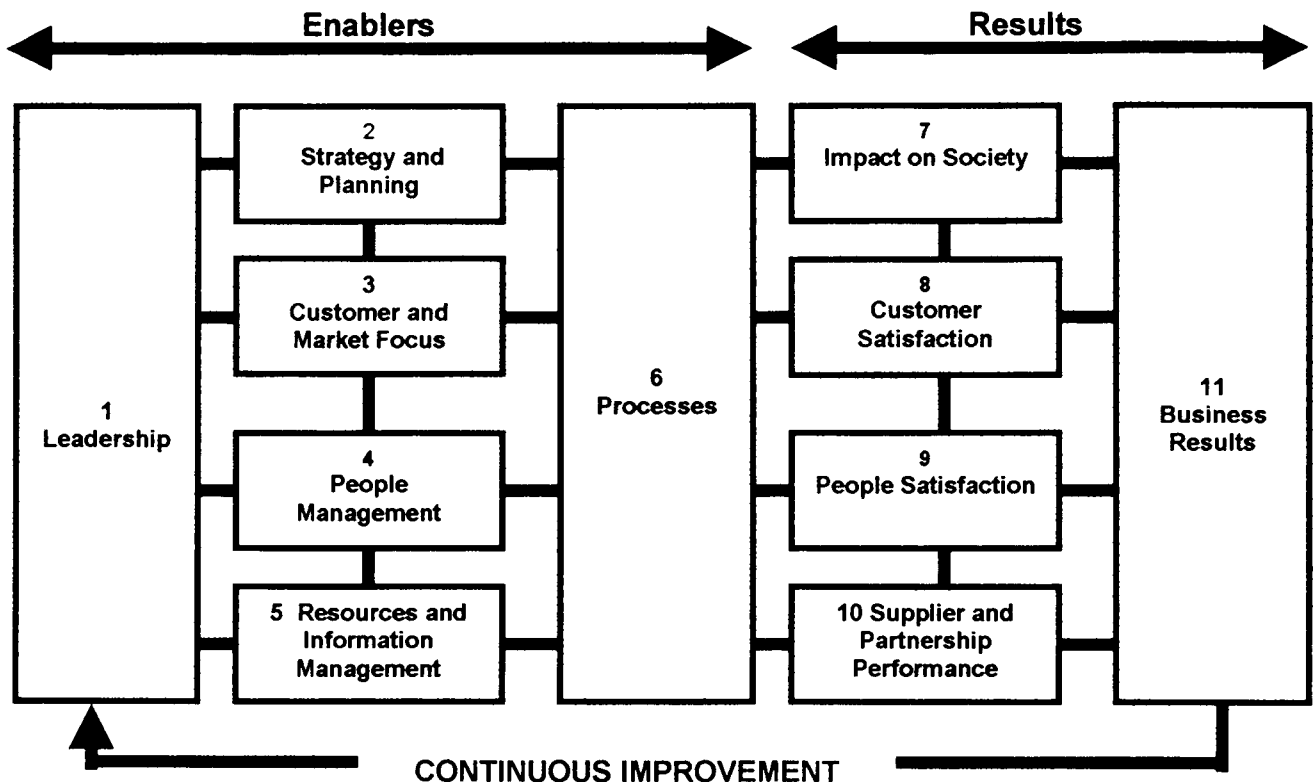
for logical prioritising and planning of corrective measures, as well as the allocation of resources, while it also promotes widespread buy-in into solutions. It furthermore prompts the institution to embark on continuous improvement without being prescriptive (SAEF 2000).

The fundamental concepts underpinning the SAEF framework are:

- Customer focus.
- Results orientation.
- Leadership and consistency of purpose.
- Continuous improvement and innovation.
- People development and involvement.
- Processes and management by facts.
- Supplier partnerships.
- Public (community) responsibility.

As in the case of the European, Australian and Baldrige Education Quality Awards, this model makes use of the terms "Enablers" and "Results" when defining its core criteria. The "Enablers" describe how "Results" are achieved (SAQA 2001).

As can be seen from Figure 5.3, the framework consists of 11 criteria. These 11 criteria must become entrenched in an institutional management system for sustained impact on the institution's results (SAEF 2000; Brunyee 2000).

**FIGURE 5.3: The South African Excellence Foundation's
Framework for Performance Excellence**

(SAEF 2000:6)

The 11 criteria provide guidelines on the elements of an institution's operations and are divided into "Enablers" (how things are done) and "Results" (what is being achieved because of the enablers). Each of these criteria, such as those of the European Quality Award and the Baldrige Education Criteria, has a number of criterion parts and areas which have to be addressed and considered (Brunyee 2000; SAEF 2000).

The "Enabler" grouping consists of six criteria, describing how the institution or organisation is run, how things are done and results achieved:

- *Leadership:* How the behaviour of the management team and all other leaders inspires, supports and promotes a culture of institutional excellence.
- *Policy and Strategy:* How the institution formulates, deploys, reviews and turns policy and strategy into plans and action.

-
- *Customer and Market Focus:* How the institution determines requirements and enhances expectations of customers and markets.
 - *People Management:* How the institution releases the full potential of its people.
 - *Resources and Information Management:* How the institution manages and uses information effectively and efficiently.
 - *Processes:* How the institution identifies, manages, reviews and improves its processes.

When self-assessment or assessment for the purposes of applying for the national award is undertaken, each of the "Enablers" criteria is given a score based on approach and deployment. The questions "How good is the approach?" and "How widely is it in use?" are asked (SAEF 2000).

The "Results" side of the framework consists of five criteria which are concerned with what the institution has achieved or is achieving as per targets set and how these results compare with others (benchmarking) (refer to Chapter two, paragraph 2.2.7):

- *Impact on Society:* What the institution is achieving in satisfying the needs and expectations of the local, national and international community as appropriate to the institution.
- *Customer Satisfaction:* What the institution is achieving in relation to the satisfaction of its external customers.
- *People Satisfaction:* What the institution is achieving in relation to the satisfaction of its people.
- *Supplier and Partnership Performance:* What the institution is achieving in relation to the management of supplier and partnering processes.
- *Institution Performance Results:* What the institution is achieving in relation to its planned operating objectives and in satisfying the needs and expectations of everyone with a financial interest or some other stake in the institution.

The excellence and scope of results must be addressed when the results criteria are assessed. Wherever possible, these results should be benchmarked (refer to paragraph 2.2.7) against performances of best in class

institutions, which in, turn leads to performance "stretching" (Brunyee 2000:181).

The South African Excellence Management Framework (Model) can be seen as a longer-term improvement plan that any institution or organisation could apply to effect "continuous improvement" (SAQA 2001:13). It is also clear that this is an industrial model and requires adaptation for the higher education sector. Although there are practices in business and industry that regard this as a problem indicative of the "negative" influence of business on higher education, some views highlight that there are business practices that can add value to operations in higher education (Brunyee 2000; Singh 1999; Melan 1998; *Daily Dispatch* 1999).

The Framework covers most elements of an institution's operations and assists in co-ordinating and linking the current improvement activities as part of a more systemic approach. This principle has been applied to ISO 9000 criteria and it clearly shows that all of the ISO initiatives can be accommodated within the Framework (Köpke 1998). A higher education institution can apply this systemic Framework to locate its *ad hoc* activities in preparation of its next audit or self-assessment exercise and for its continuous improvement activities (Brunyee 2000).

To address some of the terminology and conceptual differences in the SAEF framework, terminology from other industrial models that had been adapted for the education sector (such as the Baldrige Education Criteria and the ISO 9001 Guidelines for the Education and Training Industry) was used (refer to paragraphs 5.6, 5.8; paragraph 7.4 & Annexure 1).

Self-assessment is pivotal to the SAEF framework and successful internal QI, QM and quality assurance are largely dependent on self-assessment skills. Working through a fictitious case study that is then assessed by using the SAEF Framework, develops these skills. Additional skills and knowledge needed to apply this framework in higher education are reflective practice skills, skills to become a learning organisation, continuous improvement skills, customer focus skills, internal and external benchmarking skills (refer to paragraphs 2.2.3-2.2.7). This assumption is based on the similarities that the

concepts "action research", "reflective practice" and "continuous quality improvement (CQI)" have in their cyclical nature, which complement one another in the search for continuous improvement (Hatten, Knapp & Salonga 1997; Brunyee 2000).

Reg Mason, a founding member and key participant in the establishment of the SAEF, supplied the following definition for academic quality in the context of the SAEF QM Framework [Mason 1999 (telephone conversation)] (refer to paragraph 5.2):

Academic quality results from leadership which develops best-in-class policy and strategy, customer (student) and market (commerce and industry) focus, people (staff) management and efficient use of resources, information management with academic and operational processes with acceptable performance standards and measures having a positive impact on society (community), resulting in customer (student) and people (parents and community) satisfaction, supplier and partnership performance resulting in sound academic and operational results (outcomes).

5.8 THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR STANDARDISATION (ISO) IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

One of the more visible features of the TQM "quality wave" has been, particularly in Europe, has been the *certification* of the quality assurance mechanisms on the basis of the ISO 9000 Standards. Despite the fact that the ISO 9000 norms cover only a subset of the TQM principles, this form of certification is becoming the *de facto* basic quality standard in many industrial sectors of the more developed European countries. In the chemical industry in the Rotterdam Port area, for example, it has become almost impossible for any type of supplier to deliver products or services without being an ISO 9000 certified company. In the United Kingdom, an ISO 9000 certificate has already been awarded to tens of thousands of organisations. Most other European industrial sectors and regions are

catching up in this regard. As of late, over 100 000 organisations in the world had been certified, the large majority of these being European.

The ISO 9000 standard had originally been conceived for companies in the manufacturing industry, in particular subcontractors to large industrial concerns. However, since the early nineties in particular, application of the norms has quickly spread to other sectors of the economy. Indeed, notwithstanding terminology and interpretation problems, most quality experts agree that the requirements set forward in the standards can provide a suitable framework for the quality assurance system of any type of organisation, whether large or small, whether product- or service-orientated. Although this framework is not the most optimal one for all types of organisations and the value of an ISO 9000 certificate differs by sector and country, the developments over the last years have resulted, in Europe at least, in a broad recognition of the value of an ISO 9000 certificate and its function as a quality label (Van den Berghe 1996).

In this context, it will not come as a surprise that interest for the ISO 9000 quality standards also grew in the education and training world. The first groups to pay attention were providers of continuing education and training for the business world, as well as - to a lesser extent - vocationally-orientated schools. Both types of organisations are indeed closer to market needs and business developments than regular education institutions. Some general education schools and higher education institutions have also taken the ISO 9000 road; a few pioneers have already passed the certification stage. This development is still in its very early stages. It is only since the early nineties that the first education and training institutions in Europe have obtained an ISO 9000 certificate, some of them even for only part of their activities. The numbers are increasing, slowly but steadily, particularly for continuing education and training providers; about 100 of these had been certified by the end of 1996, mainly from the UK, Germany, the Netherlands and France (Van den Berghe 1996).

The pace of this development is not dissimilar to trends in other service sectors (and public sectors in general) which have not been as eager as manufacturing to jump on the ISO 9000 bandwagon. Additional hurdles for

education and training providers are their limited resources and/or their small size. Even when such important practical issues are left aside, for many practitioners the real added value of such a certification process remains doubtful. Information is lacking on the conditions under which ISO 9000 certification can be considered as a viable and, eventually, successful quality strategy for particular types of education or training institutions (Van den Berghe 1996).

Research has shown that certification on the basis of ISO 9000 standards can provide a valuable framework for the quality efforts of education and training institutions. Experience so far indicates its capability as a mechanism for improved customer service, high levels of quality assurance and a dynamic of CQIs - the three cornerstones of TQM (Van den Berghe 1996). ISO 9000 is not in contradiction with any sound educational standards or practice and can easily complement other quality approaches (in particular those focusing on input or output factors). Obtaining a certificate enhances the institution's quality image and underpins its quality claims in an increasingly competitive environment. It may allow an education or training provider to fulfil or exceed externally imposed quality criteria.

Obtaining an ISO 9000 certificate, however, requires considerable commitment and resources, in particular when the starting conditions are not optimal. Firstly, only a fraction of education and training providers currently seem in a position to engage in such an effort – if they would be convinced of its cost-effectiveness. Secondly, ISO 9000 is in itself not sufficient for achieving quality of the content of education and training programmes - in particular in situations where the customers are not in a position to specify or influence the content (including learning objectives, quality criteria, indicators and evaluation mechanisms). From this perspective, ISO 9000 is merely a tool for assuring quality of education and training provision, while the definition of "content" will have to be derived elsewhere.

An international ISO 9000-"like" standard, which would be specifically developed for education and training organisations, would seem to be an attractive option. No international movements in this direction are taking

place (Van den Berghe 1996). There are, however, some interesting developments going on in other corners of the quality world, e.g. an "education" adaptation of criteria for the European Quality Award; the internationalisation of higher education assessments, international accreditation schemes (also mainly for higher education). It is unclear whether any of such initiatives will gain sufficient momentum. In contrast with ISO 9000, they suffer from a narrow focus on particular types of education and training institutions and from low visibility externally. The new ISO 9001 of 2001 is structured better, uses a more generic terminology and is based more on TQM concepts. This sounds like a more attractive option for education and training organisations – likely to meet less resistance.

In conclusion, even the increasing number of ISO 9000 certificates is unlikely to put an end to the vivid debate about quality assurance and QM in education and training institutions. Eventually, it will be the market that will decide whether the cost of certification is worthwhile; whether its benefits will outweigh the drawbacks; and whether any other national or international quality scheme is more appropriate (Van den Berghe 1996).

5.9 CONCLUSION

It is clear that using any of the systemic approaches to self-assessment in a higher education institution requires time, energy and financial resources. Training examiners, assessing and describing an institution, evaluating the assessment documents and using the findings are all demanding exercises (Lundquist 1996; Fourie 2000; Owlia & Aspinwall 1997). Such self-assessments are in some respects similar to "quality audits" (Webb 1994). The assessment in its entirety should be "owned" by the institution itself, since ownership in general must be considered to be a prerequisite for the necessary self-critical attitude to be expected. There are also parallels between this kind of instrument and the self-reflection advocated by Schön (1983) and Barnett (1992), where in the former case the focus is on the competence of individuals and in the latter it is on an institution's self-reflection as a basis for improvements (Lundquist 1996).

It is important to mention at this stage of the study that the emphasis is on the criteria for self-assessment and not as much the use of the award criteria for competition for a national award. The use of awards criteria is neither simple nor a general solution to all the problems facing an institution of higher learning engaged in QIs. It could be a means to stimulate the discussion about QIs, but primarily it is a method for measuring the actual state of affairs regarding some aspects of an institution. These aspects could be considered as important for CQIs. Such measurements are needed in different phases in the life of the institution and could probably not be performed without considerable efforts. The SAEF combined with the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence, aligned with the HEQC's model for accreditation, has in this study been found to be useful and valuable in the quest for continuous improvement towards excellence.

One of the various benefits of using AL as a method to solve a problem or problems in an organisation is the fact that it has an "inherent ability to employ a systemic, holistic, and comprehensive approach". In using AL skills the AL team asked "layers of questions and [reflected] on possible responses". The AL team had to think "beyond symptoms to root causes" (Marquardt 1999). The cyclic manner of AL, AR, Deming's PDCA cycle and reflective practice skills allow for the close of the institutional feedback loops in the quest for continuous improvement.

Another important point that can be observed in the systemic approach to QM in higher education is the presence of a strong link between quality and market issues – higher education quality can be gained through attracting more capable students and hiring higher quality staff, as well as absorbing more industrial grants which are all market-related. This highlights the adoption of commercially based (industrial) approaches such as TQM in a public sector such as higher education (Owlia & Aspinwall 1997; Lundquist 1996).

Developing an institutional quality assurance system prior to external quality monitoring, rather than in response to it, is not only wise, but to make self-assessment part of the normal functioning of the institution is investing in the continuous improvement of the institution as a whole (Webbstock

1999b; Owlia & Aspinwall 1997; Kokin & Xiande 1998). "The effective establishment and implementation of a quality system require the simultaneous application of multiple quality assurance initiatives in systematic and systemic ways, rather than as unrelated and individual strategies" (Fourie 2000:52).

It is clear that the development of effective QM and assurance systems cannot take place in an institutional vacuum, but should be the culmination of existing organisational cultures, strategies, policies, structures and processes and particularly strategic planning processes. The higher education institution as an integrated whole should have a "supple" approach to QM and assurance to create powerful, sustainable continuous improvements in its performance across the institution (Barrett & Sexton 1997:44; Hansen & Jackson 1996; Peterson, Kovel-Jarboe & Schwartz 1997; Sallis 1993; Astin 1985; Bogue & Saunders 1992).

A graphic of a rolled-up scroll with the text 'Chapter 6' written on it in a bold, sans-serif font. The scroll has a small circle at the bottom left corner.

Chapter 6

METHODOLOGY IN THEORY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Action research (AR) is a research methodology that has grown in popularity in recent years. Evidence of this growth is witnessed by the proliferation of support networks such as the Classroom Action Research Network (CARN); the international Centre for Action Learning and Action Research (CALAR) in the Division of Commerce and Administration at the Griffith University in Brisbane, Australia; the Action Learning and Action Research Journal (ALAR); and the Action Learning and Action Research and Process Management Association (ALARPM) (Zuber-Skerritt 1996:5). The popularity of AR is due to the quest to narrow the gap between theory and practice and is situated in its capacity to empower participants. Although AR has application in a variety of professional fields, the focus in this thesis is on its application to higher education. Considerable development has occurred, not only in methodology, but also in the theoretical basis of AR. The diversity of application and implementation has led to contradictions, challenges and developments to its philosophical base. In order to consider these multifaceted dimensions of AR, this chapter on methodology in theory examines the theory of AR in four theoretical statements. The application of this theory to practice in this study forms the subject of chapter seven, entitled *Methodology in action: Quality assessment of the management of the instructional offering process*.

AR methodology is discussed according to four key theoretical statements in this chapter, namely:

- The origins of AR.
- The essential principles of AR.
- Procedures commonly associated with AR.
- Contradictions in AR.

6.2 THE ORIGINS OF ACTION RESEARCH

This section of the chapter depicts broad historical developments in AR, highlighting the emanation of fundamental understandings, beliefs and principles. Key themes of the thesis are consequently introduced, but more detailed discussion occurs in subsequent chapters.

AR contains elements of philosophy, sociology and social psychology. Its origins are commonly associated with the work of Kurt Lewin in the 1940s (Kemmis & McTaggart 1988; Carr & Kemmis 1986; Kemmis 1982). Lewin developed his ideas in a variety of contexts, such as housing, employment, youth and general community projects in which group decisions and commitment to improvement were central ideals. At this time original insights related to the importance of involvement in decision-making by those people most affected by the decisions (Kemmis & McTaggart 1988). Involvement was seen to benefit groups by their participation in evaluating improvements and subsequently actioning agreed strategies.

As far as Lewin (1946) was concerned, AR was typified by discussion of problems followed by group discussions on how to proceed. AR must therefore include the active participation by those who have to carry out the work in the investigation of problems that they identify and anticipate. After investigation of these problems, the group makes the decisions, monitors and keeps note(s) of the consequences (Kolb 1984).

Lewin (1946), therefore wished for a closer link between planning and action, theory and practice. Nevertheless, Lewin's research demonstrated that work could become meaningful and alienation could be reduced when people were

involved in participatory decision-making processes. He believed in studying occurrences by changing them in natural situations. Typical of the educational administration theories of the time such as bureaucratic theories, human relations and system approaches, Lewin's focus was primarily on the group or organisation itself, while minimal attention was paid to wider social pressures. Lewin and early action researchers did not recognise the political dimensions of AR.

Direct application and development of the theory of AR in education was not widely known until the 1970s with the published work of Stenhouse. Stenhouse's work in the Humanities Curriculum Project stimulated considerable interest in AR. A brief explanation of the project is pertinent here. The research team discovered that teachers expected the researchers to confine their attention to the development of curriculum materials and when the team endeavoured to provide evaluative feedback, teachers suspected them of manipulation of data for their own ends (Elliott 1988). Unequal power relations between teachers and the research team became evident. The research team had to resist teachers from becoming reliant on them for their self-understandings. Stenhouse's primary contribution related to the development of teachers' reflective capacities. Based on such experiences, Stenhouse concluded that successive curriculum change depended on the development of teachers' capacities for self-analysis and reflection (Elliott 1988).

In an endeavour to promote teacher self-reflection, the development of the concept of "teacher-as-researcher" arose, which soon became "teacher-as-action-researcher" under the influence of Elliott. Contributions to the understanding of AR and the role of outsider and insider relationships were, however, advanced. With regard to this, Elliott makes the following statement:

The attempts of the Humanities Project team to facilitate reflective practice in schools generated an important conceptual distinction between the 'research' role of the outsider in relation to the 'research' role of the insider-practitioner. Stenhouse contrasted the **first-order inquiry** of the teachers with the **second-order inquiry** of the central team. The teacher's inquiry was focused on the problems of developing pedagogical

strategies consistent with educational aims and principles. The team's inquiry was focused on the problems of facilitating teachers' reflective capacities.... Increasing reflexive awareness amongst the central team of the hidden forms of control they exercised over teachers' practical thinking – how to facilitate such thinking, without manipulating and distorting it for our own ends, became a major focus for reflection and discussion (Elliott 1988:32).

A distinction was made between the AR of outsiders and that of the insider-practitioner. This concept, along with that of reflection, became a major focus of the AR literature in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Elliott reflected on his experiences with Stenhouse's research and further developed the notion of the insider-practitioner in the Ford Teaching Project. Elliott (1985) and Adelman (1993) involved more than 40 teachers in 12 schools undertaking AR into problems of implementing inquiry and discovery in their classrooms: "The classroom action research was designed as a cooperative rather than an individual endeavour aimed at generating shared insights and practices as teachers tested each others' hypotheses in a range of contexts" (Elliott 1988:38).

Despite intentions of teacher initiation of assistance, the researchers had to be proactive in offering analytical support. The researchers had to negotiate access into classrooms of teachers who appeared ready to reflect on their teaching. As these teachers became more involved in collecting and discussing data about their own teaching, they developed a critical awareness, reflexivity and pedagogical theories grounded in practice (Elliott 1988). Reflective practice was therefore further explored, but the issues of establishing critical discourse and support for teachers were yet to be resolved (Hatten, Knapp & Salonga 1997; Hustler, Cassidy & Cuff 1986; McKernan 1991c; Pedler 1985).

At this time of increasing attention to teachers' own reflective processes, theorists derived deeper understanding from the work of Schon (1983, 1988, 1991) and Pedler (1985). Schon's books related to the notions of reflective practitioners and developing professionalism, highly relevant to AR thinking at the time. In practice, situations were shown to be uncertain, indeterminate and containing a conflict of values, purposes and goals (Schon 1983).

Despite former claims of positivist research, professionals could not rely on written theories to guide their actions. Instead, according to Schon (1988, 1991) and Pedler (1985), professionals had to experiment with their practice and develop a repertoire of expectations, skills and techniques. However, the problem arose that the more the professionals practised such strategies, the more automatic and tacit they became. Additional new learning is only possible when professionals reflected on their tacit knowing. To recognise the uniqueness of new situations while simultaneously applying proven strategies, required reflection-in-action (refer to paragraph 1.9.31), experimenting and hypothesis testing (Elliott 1991a, 1991b; Francis & Cook 1991; Kember & Kelly 1994). Schon (1983:151) makes the following statement: "Hypothesis testing is initiated by the perception of something troubling or promising, and it is terminated by the production of changes one finds on the whole satisfactory, or by the discovery of new features which give the situation new meaning and change the nature of the questions to be explored".

Schon recognised the dilemma of the professional with the urgency to act, often before all factors are considered. Reflection-on-action (refer to paragraph 1.9.32) is therefore the result of retrospective thought after the action. Distinctions between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action further stimulated its application to the developing theory of AR. The topic of reflection is discussed in greater depth in paragraph 2.2.5.

Concurrent with the developing notions of reflection were those of critical theory and its relationship to AR in Europe. Habermas (1972) was at the centre of the "Frankfurt School" movement and the origins of critical theory, which were to have a strong influence on AR. Although numerous writers were exploring related concerns (e.g. Mc Taggart 1991, 1994, 1996; Elliott 1988), the Deakin School was most directly associated with this critical theory movement. Carr, Kemmis and McTaggart questioned the limited value of school-based curriculum and teacher development without attention to wider social and political issues.

"We know that sustainable improvements in education cannot normally be achieved without teachers' commitment to the intellectual and scientific task of researching their own practice, as a part of the wider process of improving the curriculum, the school and the work of

education for communities and whole societies" (Kemmis & McTaggart 1988:2).

Kemmis believed that Stenhouse underestimated the significance and power of social movements and placed too much faith in the commitment of the social order to change itself. Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988) advocated the use of metatheories and metapractices; the latter being concerned with social practices that structure, constrain and constitute conditions for other practices. The very nature of the language (discourse), patterns of behaviour and organisations was questioned. Clinical research was demanded and the abstraction of the theory of AR came to the fore. Notions of emancipation, critical discourse and democratic processes were hotly debated (Poskitt 1994; Altrichter, Posch & Somekh 1993; Du Bois 1997; Guerrero 1995; Huizer 1997; Maguire 1987; Somekh 1988).

In contrast, academics in the United Kingdom advocated teacher support and promotion of the teacher as action researcher (Poskitt 1994; Teather & David 1979; Wallace 1998; Wickham 2000; Winter 1989). As intimated above, Lewin's vision was of an outside researcher working in close collaboration with participants. Elliott and Adelman developed this concept of teachers as co-researchers with outsiders in the Ford Teaching Project (Poskitt 1994). Further development occurred with the teachers in "The Teacher-Student Interaction and Quality of Learning Project" when Elliot and Ebbutt encouraged teachers to become teacher researchers with an outside facilitator, supported by an in-school co-ordinator (Poskitt 1994; Elliott 1988). The establishment of support networks, such as CARN, has also enhanced the intention to place the teacher, rather than the academic, at the forefront of AR methodological advancements. The incorporation of research projects into post-graduate programmes at the Cambridge Institute of Education and the University of Bath continued the growth of AR (Poskitt 1994; Winter 1996; Zuber-Skerritt 1991, 1997; Ramsden 1992; Perreira 1999).

This brief sketch of the major historical developments in AR has intimated a number of trends which will be explored in greater depth throughout this thesis. The tension between theory and practice, individual teacher development and collaborative networks, teacher autonomy and centralised curriculum control, academic and practitioner language, values and procedures, continues to underlie the understanding and implementation of

AR. Each of these concerns is addressed, with the attention now focused on the clarification of the term "AR" and its fundamental principles.

6.3 THE ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES OF ACTION RESEARCH

In this section several definitions of AR are examined with the intention of highlighting the fundamental understandings and principles of AR. The paradox of defining terminology while being responsive to contextual demands is explicated and the notion of contradictory principles within the study of AR is advanced.

Elliott (1985:1) offers a simple and succinct definition of AR as: "... the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it".

AR can therefore be considered relevant in any social setting. It is concerned with change (improvement), not merely monitoring, but actually executing change. Although Elliott's definition is tantalising in its simplicity, various terms require elaboration. Firstly, what is meant by study? Bogdan and Biklen (1982 cited in McKernan 1991b:4) state that AR: "Is the systematic collection of information that is designed to bring about social change".

Some rigour of "scientific" research is implied in this definition. AR encompasses more than intuition or spontaneous discussion. The word "systematic" implies that data collection occurs over a period of time; that it is planned; and has the ultimate purpose of social change. However, the systematic collection of information does not in itself ensure change. Processing of the information is necessary, but by whom and how? Exactly what data ought to be collected and which methodologies are most appropriate, are not explicated in this definition. Of paramount concern are questions which are neglected, namely: who collects this information and for what purposes?

Carr and Kemmis (1986 cited in McKernan 1991c:4) postulate a definition rooted in critical-emancipatory terms: "...action research is simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their

understanding of these practices and the situations in which the practices are carried out".

Carr and Kemmis' definition, while indicating elements of critical theory, also incorporates ownership of the enquiry, being that of the participants, that is those people who will be affected by any subsequent action. This belief is associated with Lewin's assertions in Section 6.2 above regarding the importance of involving workers in decisions. The definition implicates the prime, indeed the sole responsibility of enquiry by participants, that is insiders rather than outsiders. Not only do the participants collect the data, but they also analyse it to understand and justify their practices. Each participant must understand and justify his or her *own* practices, as well as the circumstances surrounding the practice. Process and product are deemed important, for the situations in which the practices occur are also included. The means and the ends must be linked in just and rational processes. Understanding *per se* is not the only purpose of AR, as improvement is infallibly intertwined, signifying that actioning of improved process and product is the essence.

The notion of collaborative teacher-researcher projects appears to be downgraded in this definition, for self-reflection is of prime concern. The rationality and justice of their *own* practices is emphasised by those involved in the social situation. An in-depth understanding of the culture is required and if long-term action is at the heart of AR, then only participants can be ultimately responsible. Consideration of what constitutes rationality and justice is significant, but this is more pertinent later in this chapter. Another issue is important here, namely the following issue: Is a social situation merely that, or is AR applicable to formal organisations and, in particular, schools and institutions of higher learning? Kember and Kelly (1994:2) maintains the following in this regard: "...there is a clear understanding that action research is research undertaken by those in the field: field workers, teachers, administrators or supervisors in order to change and improve their own practice. It is, moreover, usually thought of as a group process which enables co-operative work to influence both thought and action among group members".

The difficulty in defining AR is due partly to its diverse applications to a variety of educational problems and contexts. A tight definition would necessarily

restrict its application, while a general definition would be open to misinterpretation. Nevertheless, elements of rigour must be maintained, for otherwise it is unclear whether an approach is using the AR label falsely, or whether it is a genuine attempt to adapt AR to a specific context or problem. The tension between research and action, as well as between theory and practice is therefore evident; an issue which is addressed later in this chapter in paragraph 5.5 (Henry 1991; Kock 1997).

Resolving the issue of carefully defined, precise agreement on what constitutes AR without being unduly restricted, requires a different conception. A useful approach can be to define certain principles that should underlie AR and to describe the type of inquiry in which participants should be engaged. What principles of AR are agreed upon?

Abundant principles of AR are evident in AR literature. To provide structure to the following discussion, principles are organised into three broad headings, namely those related to organisational culture, mode of enquiry, and effects.

6.3.1 Principles related to organisational culture in action research

The most general feature of AR is its naturalistic setting. There is no attempt to control setting variables, but rather to study the situation *in situ*. As noted above, Schon (1983) argues that practitioners, and indeed professionals, were not able to rigidly apply abstract theories in their work. Professional skills required recognition of both the unique features of the situation and the factors of commonality. Some reflection-in-action was necessary to derive an appropriate solution to an emerging problem. Thus AR offered a realistic approach to studying the complexity of modern organisations in general and schools or academic units in higher education institutions in particular.

Kock (1997) notes the importance of AR being responsive to the context. He sees AR as an alternative to bridge the gap between academic research and organisational practice. As a consequence, AR operates in the tension between its two ideals of rigorous application of theory and continuing

openness to development of practice. The practitioners themselves generate relevant everyday practical problems, difficulties or situations of interest; not theoretical ideas imposed by outside researchers. Inevitably, some compromise between the theory of AR and its practical application occurs. To artificially impose AR on educators interferes with the natural setting and removes control of the process from the participants. When the participants own problems, commitment to the process and the consequences of intervention occur. Freedom to experiment is paramount (Carr & Kemmis 1986:162) if educators are to discover improved understandings and ways of operating. Motivation to experiment arises from the investigation of relevant problems that the educator wishes to improve in his or her own setting. Appropriate methodologies will be context-specific, not necessarily adherent to academic principles.

Freedom to experiment is only possible in environments promoting self-determination and equity. Where individuals are encouraged to examine their own practices and are recognised as researchers in their own right, the empowerment of participants to change their own circumstances occurs (Carr & Kemmis 1986:162). AR can be emancipatory when free participation occurs, giving increased autonomy through collective reflection.

Taking action in a social situation can be political, for frequently the *status quo* is challenged and relations of power altered (Mc Taggart 1996; Guerrero 1995; Hart & Bond 1995). Improving practice means taking a broad, historically sensitive, socially and politically aware perspective in AR to improve educational practice (Huizer 1997; Francis & Cook 1991).

According to Mc Taggart (1996), AR has the implication that it questions not only the way institutions operate, but also the context in which the institution's construction and reconstruction of practices take place.

Awareness of problems and contradictions arises through reflective practice. In paragraph 2.2.5 a reflective culture, is *inter alia*, explained as a questioning process, a way of appraising a statement and generating possible alternatives to counteract interpretations which are taken for granted. Reflexivity relates to the art of dialectics; the art of asking

questions and seeking the truth. The person who knows how to ask questions is able to persist in his/her questioning, which involves being able to preserve his/her orientation towards openness (Kottkamp 1990; Osterman 1990; Peters 1991). Internal contradictions can then become evident. This instability of the contradiction between unity and diversity leads to a process of change. Once participants realise the temporary and situational basis of knowledge, they are more likely to generate their own understandings. Every person's point of view is taken as a contribution to the resources of understanding (Peters 1991).

Carr and Kemmis (1986) advocate the establishment of critical communities, particularly with the principle of participation (that those people who will be affected by the research ought to be involved) but in certain circumstances existing communities actually inhibit rather than enhance the course of AR. The heart of AR is the self-reflective individual (Winter 1996). Indeed, Stenhouse (cited in McKernan 1991a:48) argued that the outstanding characteristic of the professional teacher (educator) moving towards emancipation is: "... the capacity for autonomous professional self-development through systematic self-study, through the study of the work of other teachers and through the testing of ideas by classroom research procedures".

Although ultimately the person needs a critical community to validate theories through practice, triangulation and crossperceptual studies, the individual may initially make greater progress working alone if the environment is not conducive to collaboration (McKernan 1991b). Naturally, working on the social situation would be an ultimate goal of such a situation, but the relevance of the person's problem, in a setting over which she has control, is the essence of AR. This is what is meant by negotiation and responsiveness to context, for some principles of AR may need to be temporarily suspended in order to fulfil other principles. However, Elliot (1991b:167) provides some cause for hope in a less than conducive environment: "My experience has always been that teachers tend to develop critiques of the macro-context of their practices during the processes of reflectively developing and testing their practical theories".

A self-critical stance enhances this process of reflection, deliberation and

integration of theory and practice. AR is intended to be more rigorous than informal contemplation and thus consideration of relevant modes of enquiry is important. Application of appropriate methodology is vital, not only to the validity and reliability of the research, but also to the development of a critical community and, ultimately, improved understanding and practice.

6.3.2 Principles related to the mode of enquiry in action research

AR employs a wide range of techniques, the details of which are the subject of the following section in this chapter. The point here is that AR is based on empirical evidence. Detailed written records of observational data, hunches, opinions, insights and other data (refer to the section on techniques below for details) confirm that AR is not pseudo-research, but a disciplined form of enquiry with a clear methodology rigorously applied.

By stating problems, formulating action hypotheses, planning data collection, analysing results and reformulating hypotheses, the action researcher exercises rigorous scientific principles of procedure. Theories are validated through practice, governed by the criteria of fairness, relevance and accuracy (McTaggart 1996; Pretty, Guijt, Scoones & Thompson 1995; Perry & Zuber-Skerritt 1994; McNiff 1988, 1993, 1995). Winter (1996:17) makes the following statement: "Validity is one of action research's fundamental problems: limited in data, lacking an external 'uninvolved' observer, its theorizing enmeshed in its practical interests, in what sense can action research claim to be objective or valid?"

The same writer also argues that action researchers need to question and test opinions, beliefs, assumptions and ideologies, so that eventually the understandings and practices are more securely based (more valid) than they were at the outset of the study. Only when procedures are systematically grounded in justifiable and coherent principles, is there reason for thinking that one's conclusions are more than the result of personalities, emotions or expediency (Winter 1996). Ebbutt and Elliott (1986) argue that disciplined inquiry means that arguments and evidence can be examined, that an argument is not dependent solely on its eloquence or surface plausibility, that sources of error are avoided when possible and

that conclusions discuss the margins for error, and that ideas are "speculative, free-wheeling and inventive" (Ebbutt & Elliott 1986:11).

According to Ebbutt and Elliott (1986:11) internal validity is present when an author "...demonstrates that the changes indicated by his or her analysis of a problem constitute an improvement. Such an account would therefore need to contain not only an analysis of the problem but an evaluation of the action undertaken. An account can only be judged to be externally valid if the insights it contains can be generalized beyond the situation(s) studied".

Other researchers such as McTaggart (1996), Altrichter, Posch and Somekh (1993), argue that the more detailed the research methodology, the more convincing and valid is the study. The fundamental question of the validity of any study is concerned with whether the findings presented seem to reflect the evidence which has been collected, the supporting and contrary arguments (McTaggart 1996; Holter, Schwartz-Barcittm 1993). In AR a more stringent test of validity is the judgement of theoretical insights in the contribution to the improvement of practical action (Altrichter, Posch & Somekh 1993). The use of a range of techniques, for instance detailed descriptions of situations, events, people and interactions, together with the use of direct quotes, interviews and questionnaires, enhances validity of the data, particularly when qualitative and quantitative data are juxtaposed.

Justification of research can be upheld by reasoned argument which takes into account ethical, cultural, social and pragmatic considerations. This will only be temporary, however, for the ultimate test of the research is the harmony between ideas and action. Theory itself is always open to question, for the outcome of one phase of practical development will be a need and opportunity for further theoretical work. Theory and practice continually transform each other, providing new insights and alternative ways of viewing former tacit knowledge: "Theory and practice do not therefore confront one another in mutual opposition: each is necessary to the other for continued vitality and development of both" (Winter 1996:25).

Triangulation ensures that the study is methodologically eclectic, innovative, yet seeking congruence and incongruence among at least three distinct viewpoints (such as researcher, educators and students). It also

encompasses examination of evidence from different angles (Bennett & Oliver 1988; Dick 1998; McFee 1992, 1993; Kock, McQueen & Scott 1998; McNiff 1988; McNiff, Lomax & Whitehead 1996). Collecting data from different perspectives, double-checking findings, as well as using multiple sources and modes of evidence, ensures that the verification process is built into the research methodology (Mills 2000). It is the process of triangulation that provides AR with its reliability and validity. Reliability is related to the congruence of data, the verification of theories among participants and the application to practice, rather than generalisability. Cross-perceptual studies - pursuing the views of different groups, such as educators (teachers/lecturers), learners (students), parents and researchers' points of view in an institution's community - allow comparison and stability indicators of the extent of opinions held (McNiff 1993; McKernan 1991a; Maguire 1987; Margerison 1995). Ultimately, AR is validated through practice.

6.3.3 Principles related to effects in action research

Action ultimately encompasses improvement of understanding, problem definition and practice. It is strategic in aiming to resolve practical problems in naturalistic social contexts. The key principle is whether or not the AR has transformed the theory and practice of the participants in their search for improvement of practice. A critical component in this process is the utilisation of appropriate procedures within a coherent model. The relative importance of the various principles cited above depends on the fundamental conception or model of AR envisaged by the researcher (myself). Using McKernan's (1991a) typology of three models, namely scientific, practical-deliberative and critical-emancipatory, the major models of AR will now be considered.

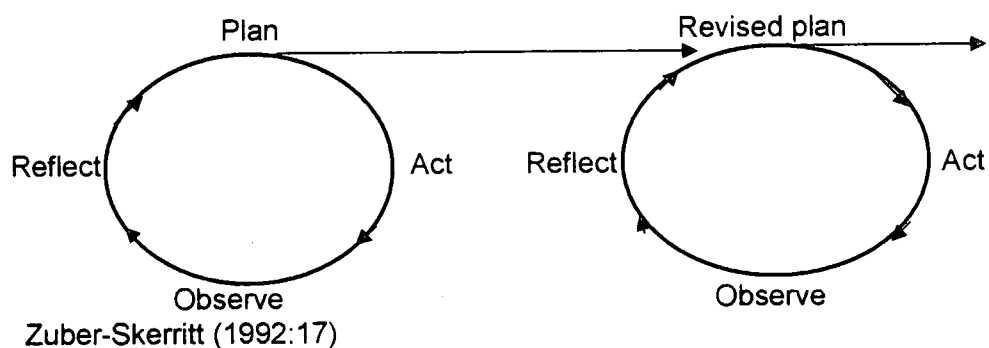
6.3.4 The scientific approach in action research

Lewin believed that AR required group participation through democratic processes based on careful planning, analysis, fact-finding and evaluation, closely related to rational scientific methodology (McKernan 1991a). He advocated field experiments to enable the individual to gain the situational practical knowledge on which to effect social improvement. Systematic

procedures were advocated in a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of planning, action and the evaluation of the result of the action.

The cyclic nature recognised the need for action plans to be flexible and responsive. Given the complexity of real social situations, it is never possible in practice to anticipate everything that needs to be done. Overlapping of action and reflection enables changes in plans to be implemented for action as people learn from their experiences. In practice, the process begins with a general idea that some kind of improvement or change is desirable. The general idea prompts a reconnaissance of the circumstances of the setting and fact-finding (Ramsden 1994; Revans 1995; Rogers 1969; Rothwell 1999; Stringer 1996). Having made a preliminary reconnaissance, the researcher (myself) then decides on a general plan of action. As the step is executed, new data, conditions and effects occur. On collecting data, analysis and evaluation occurs and a new plan of action is devised. This spiral is then continuous.

FIGURE 6.1: A spiral of cycles of action and research consisting of four major moments: *plan, act, observe and reflect*



Kemmis and McTaggart (1982:3) provide a clear and succinct explanation of Lewin's cycle as being four moments of AR. These are:

- To develop a *plan* of action to improve what is already happening.
- To *act* to implement the plan.
- To *observe* the effects of action in the context in which it occurs.
- To *reflect* on these effects as a basis for further planning, subsequent action, etc., through a succession of cycles.

Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) provide a cautionary note that the plan of action must be flexible enough to adapt to unforeseen effects and unexpected constraints. The plan should empower participants to act more appropriately and effectively as educators. The implementation of action plans involves material, social and political struggles towards improvement. The plan acts as a guide, but not a constraint. Observation documents the effects of critically informed action. It is planned, yet observation is also responsive to the unexpected. Observation provides a basis for critical self-reflection. Finally, reflection makes sense of the processes, problems, issues and constraints. Through discourse, group reflection leads to the reconstruction of the meaning of the social situation and provides a basis for the revised plan.

Constraints in reality often cause these "moments" of AR to occur in different sequences, as is highlighted in the practical-deliberative approach.

6.3.5 The practical-deliberative approach in action research

According to McKernan (1991a:20), the practical model of AR incorporates "human interpretation, interactive communication, deliberation, negotiation and detailed description". The goal is understanding practice and solving immediate problems. Consequently, the process needs to unfold naturally, rather than be restricted by demands of measurement and control. Elliott therefore has more loops off his spiral of AR, allowing for emerging events and findings to be immediately incorporated into the AR process, rather than at the end, which Stenhouse's conceptualisation stipulates.

Elliott (1985, 1988, 1991b) refined the pedagogy for this model in the Humanities Curriculum Project and with Adelman (1993) in the Ford Teaching Project. Reflective and deliberate action is an important component of AR. Elliott (1988) promulgated the theoretical dimension of teaching, arguing that the task for practitioners is to interpret everyday practice in terms of a developing self-reflective hypothesis. Central to Elliott's argument is the idea that: "the action researcher develops a personal interpretive understanding from working on practical problems and the theoretical understanding is constitutive of practical action and

discourse" (Elliott 1988:157).

Elliott (1985) believes that AR is a moral endeavour in that it seeks to realise values in practice. The complex nature of teaching and learning necessitates greater flexibility in the research process. Ebbutt and Elliott (1986) argues that a spiral model is restrictive and that a series of successive cycles, each incorporating the possibility of evaluative feedback within and between cycles of action, are more practical (McKernan 1991a). Elliott contends that the general idea should be allowed to shift and that reconnaissance should involve analysis as well as fact finding.

Elliott (1985) maintains that the first activity in AR is identifying and clarifying the "general idea". If this stage is thoroughly investigated, the "real" problem may be unearthed. To facilitate the process, the second phase concerns reconnaissance, that is describing and explaining the facts of the situation. In explanation, the action researcher moves from description to critical analysis - brainstorming and hypothesis-testing. In hypothesis formulation, three ingredients are deemed to be important, namely a description of certain contextual factors, a description of either the improvement desired or the situation which needs to be changed, and an explanation for the relationships cited in the hypothesis (Elliott 1985).

The fourth phase includes development of the action steps, that is, designing appropriate methodological techniques for conducting the research. A full list of such techniques is included in the following section of this chapter. Implementation is the next logical phase, which requires careful monitoring for anticipated and unanticipated consequences. The cycle of activities continues indefinitely.

6.3.6 The critical-emancipatory educational approach in action research

The "Deakin" model of Carr and Kemmis (1986), and McTaggart (1994), depicts a more dynamic process in which each of the four steps, namely planning, acting, observing and reflecting is seen as interactive processes. "In the process, the aim is to bring together through mutual attraction,

discourse and practice (in the one dimension) and construction and reconstruction (in the other), so that improvements in practice and in understanding can be made systematically, responsively and reflectively" (Kemmis & McTaggart 1988:6).

In creating a dynamic interaction among the various phases of the AR, Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) maintain that a deeper rationale arises, allowing for the grounding of a critical theory and thereby creating meaning for the participants. An essential component is the need for participants to communicate with others and engage in discourse. Reflection is aided and clarification of issues is made possible, as is the generation of moral support: "The 'stranger' is invaluable. The disjunction of relevancies can serve to make more explicit the action researcher's own practical concerns as well as the more taken-for-granted features of day-to-day practice" (Hustler, Cassidy & Cuff 1986:210).

This critical enquiry enables participants to develop interpretive meanings and to organise collective action to overcome constraints. Emphasis is placed not so much on technical skills as discursive, analytical and conceptual skills. Developing self-reflective groups and critical-emancipatory AR enables curriculum problems to be perceived as value-laded and moral concerns, rather than solely technical. The struggle is therefore concentrated on rational, just and democratic forms of education, rather than the everyday practical concerns of practitioners. Educators are not empowered merely by becoming more reflective and in constructing knowledge, but by acquiring influence in the development of educational policy (Elliott 1991a, 1991b; Somekh 1988).

The essential difference among the three models is that Lewin's cycle is one of a general, yet technically systematic process. The Elliott model is primarily concerned with the daily practicalities of improving the understanding and practice of educators, while the Deakin model is less concerned with specifics and more concerned with social issues of emancipation.

Again the danger in clarifying models and processes of AR lies in the reification of process. The common representation of the AR cycle is

theoretical and hence generalised and idealised. It does not appear to allow for the inevitably more complex nature of the cycle as it actually proceeds in practice in a particular instance. The different moments contain aspects of all the other moments within themselves (Henry 1991). The other complication is succinctly described by Hustler as cited in Poskitt (1994:66):

"Action research cannot be pre-planned or pre-structured in the way traditional experimental procedures demand. As the research develops, so do ideas develop which can lead to action of some sort, which leads to more information and analysis... The goal is to illuminate, and if possible, attempt to resolve issues as the research develops. Action research involves action, which feeds back into the situation and can lead to unforeseen directions, which are followed up because it seems to the teacher at that stage of the research that it is worth pursuing them".

Stringer (1996) answers the question: "Why rather action research than the conventional way?" by discussing concepts such as the following:

- **Decentralisation:** Rather than generalising truths, emphasis is on the local context.
- **Deregulation:** Moving away from restrictive conventional rules to "discovering" knowledge by interaction with the "object" inquired into.
- **Co-operativeness in execution:** Both the researcher and the researched are equal participants and share the "earnings" of privilege.

He furthermore addresses the needs of AR practitioners to have useful forms translated from the implications of theoretical justifications. The language is accessible to a wide variety of readers and procedures described are clear and accompany step-by-step instructions. Every claim has been ratified through a real-life situation. Stringer (1996) illustrates to the conservative academic that there are "many ways of cutting a cake". He gives academic soundness to AR proposals and discusses the role of the action researcher at length. He also reiterates the cyclic nature of AR (Stringer 1996).

AR is therefore an ongoing process of defining and exploring problems; implementing and monitoring action; modifying the general plan; and continuing the cycle. Flexibility and responsiveness to the context are vital, while agreed principles and procedures govern the conduct of study.

6.4 TECHNIQUES COMMONLY ASSOCIATED WITH ACTION RESEARCH

Because AR has the intention of improving understanding and practice, a wide range of research procedures are appropriate. Each of these techniques will now be briefly considered.

6.4.1 Observational notes

Observational notes are the core of AR in its naturalistic enquiry. As much time can be taken as is required to gain a representative sample of behaviour, both verbal and non-verbal (McKernan 1991c). Information needs to be gathered about the situation so that preliminary interpretations can be checked. Poskitt (1994) recommends that initial observations begin with general impressions and comprehensive description. These descriptions do not only provide a baseline for later comparison, but also act as a validity check on participants' interview and questionnaire statements, in addition providing valuable data for triangulation. Bogdan and Biklen as cited in Poskitt (1994) recommend writing such detailed observational notes that another person (a person from the moon), for example reading the notes would be able to recognise the location, personnel and atmosphere or culture.

Observations can include vivid descriptions, time or event sampling, verbatim comments or running commentaries (which endeavour to record all speech and reactions of the participants over a specific time span). Collecting observational notes is, however, time-consuming and can be an artificial imposition on a situation and reactivity of uncharacteristic behaviour of respondents must be acknowledged (McKernan 1991c). Trust and rapport between the observer and the observed are essential for access and freedom in observation. Validity and reliability are enhanced by

frequent observation, so that the effects of a "stranger" are nullified and more typical events recorded. Using a combination of planned and spontaneous observation and triangulating data reduces the subjectivity of observation. Other disadvantages of observation include difficulty in quantifying data, the small size of the population observed, as well as limited generalisability (McKernan 1991b).

6.4.2 Shadow studies

Shadow studies are an extension of observation. A person is observed over a lengthy period of time and a running commentary is made. This is a common technique of ethnographic studies, but can be appropriate in AR (Poskitt 1994).

6.4.3 Structured focus group or action learning/action research set

A structured focus group is a facilitated group discussion in which open-ended questions are asked in such a way to trigger discussion among a panel of participants. However, more effort is given to reducing the structure of the content so that the information is gained from the participants rather than being determined by the questions asked. At the same time, the process is more structured than is common to increase the quality of information and the time-economy of the procedure (Dick 1998, Lewis 1998). A skilled facilitator will obtain better information by asking better probe questions and by making more efficient use of time. Even in the hands of an inexperienced facilitator the process will, however, usually yield good quality information. The use of focus groups as a qualitative research tool requires thorough preparation.

An AR set is a set of colleagues who support and challenge one another to make progress on problems. An important issue to consider when doing AR is the size and composition of the AL or AR set. The minimum number for a viable project or learning group is probably three. If the group becomes much larger than five or six, it will tend to become difficult to manage and divert time and energy into maintaining the group. Large

learning groups make it very difficult for individual members to get sufficient time in meetings to share their reflections and views (Howard & McLeod 1997; Lewis 1998).

6.4.4 Questionnaires

Questionnaires require less time for participants to complete than most interviews or observational sessions. The anonymity usually accorded to questionnaires allows honest replies, without the fear of peer reprisal or attempts to please the interviewee. A variety of information can be quickly gained, namely factual, attitudinal, interpretational or opinions. Closed questions facilitate questionnaire analysis, while open-ended questions allow for unanticipated responses. Difficulties lie in the complexity, time and resource commitment in construction and analysis, as well as reluctance by some participants to write at length (Bell 1993, 1995).

6.4.5 Interviews

Interviews allow for a sustained interaction and the discernment of subtle nuances of unfamiliar perspectives (Poskitt 1994; Bell 1993). Less structured interviews give greater control to the interviewee and encourage exploration of topics of greatest interest to them, rather than the pre-set questions of the structured interview (Elliott 1991a). Respondents can be interviewed either individually or in groups. Younger students often respond more freely in the company of friends than alone with a strange interviewer or teacher with whom power and personality struggles may be present. Non-verbal communication can both enhance and detract from the interview.

6.4.6 Tape-recording

Tape-recording of lessons or particular events is a particularly useful strategy for educators conducting their own research, for studying details of conversations, for co-operative learning sessions, or for the analysis of educator questioning skills. Unfortunately tapes neither record non-verbal behaviour, nor do they allow easy analysis of several people speaking

simultaneously. Tape-recording is useful in interview situations, enabling the interviewer to concentrate on non-verbal communication, to focus on the interview and to discern worthwhile leads, rather than having to concern him- or herself about writing notes.

Regular tape-recording and analyses of episodes of discussions can be an effective tool in promoting reflective thought and practice (Elliott 1991b).

6.4.7 Video-recording

Video-recording allows both verbal and non-verbal information to be recorded. In fact, in Poskitt (1994) Walker argues that complex classroom processes require video-recording and that the visual media has been neglected in conducting and reporting research. On a practical level, taping can reduce the need for additional personnel, as educators can record their own classroom activity. Video-taping reduces analytical bias, since analysts have access to the same data, although the analysis itself is very time-consuming. Video cameras are, however, intrusive and open to participant reactivity abuse. Cameras have to be pointed and thus omit data outside the scope of the lens.

6.4.8 Still photographs and slides

Still photographs can be relatively unobtrusive and particularly useful for retrospective discussion among participants (Poskitt 1994). According to Poskitt (1994), some writers argue that - unlike the written word - photographs carry little with them in the form of high cultural baggage, social class connotations, or other pretensions. Photographs engage thought, extend the imagination and undermine the implicit authority of the written word. The discussion of photographs allows people to construct or reconstruct shared memories. The observer gains insights into the ways in which individuals create meaning in their lives. Photographs can be a medium for the development of reflective thought, since looking at photographs creates a sense of contradiction between image and appearance. A tension is created between the image and the picture, between what we expect to observe and what we see. Photographs do

create a static image, but one which can be related to and compared with other data, thereby creating a dialectic situation (Poskitt 1994).

6.4.9 Document analysis

Document analysis, such as minutes of meetings, letters, policy documents, reports and newsletters, allow comparison with other collected data. Documents can provide written evidence to support or contradict claims made in interviews or questionnaires.

6.4.10 Diaries

The keeping of detailed diary records anecdotes, impressions, intriguing comments, hunches, descriptive accounts, hypotheses, and explanations and can be a basis of retrospective reflection (Poskitt 1994). It is also a means of recording the process of research. Kember and Kelly (1994:12) state that diaries should:

"describe what is happening as accurately as possible (given the particular questions being investigated and the real-life circumstances of collecting the data) but also collecting and analyzing our own judgements, reactions and impressions about what is going on We record our progress and reflections about two parallel sets of learning: our learning about the practice we are studying (how our practices are developing) and our learnings about the process (the practice) of studying them (how our AR project is going). These techniques help confirm that AR is not pseudo-research but a disciplined form of enquiry with a clear methodology rigorously applied".

6.4.11 The reflection journal

Participants in an AL or AR set/group are usually encouraged to keep a personal reflection journal in which to document their experiences and thoughts and to develop their reflection skills. The use of a reflection journal greatly enhances the benefits of set meetings by helping

participants to capture their important experiences and insights arising between meetings, to clarify their learning priorities and to focus their report at set meetings on their own needs (Howard & McLeod 1997; Goolam 1997; McFee 1993).

6.4.12 Analytic memorandums

Analytic memorandums are similar to diaries in recording the systematic thinking about the evidence a person has collected. It is usual to cross-reference to sources of inspiration, such as literature read, observational notes, documents, interview or questionnaire data. Analytic memorandums frequently contain: "...new ways of conceptualizing the situation under investigation which have emerged, emerging hypotheses which may require further testing, citations of the kind of evidence needed to be collected in the future in order to 'ground' emergent concepts and hypotheses more fully, and statements about emerging problems and issues within one's field of action" (Elliot 1991a:3).

6.4.13 Critical questioning

Before, during and after an AR project, one should be asking critical questions about what one is doing. Some key questions encountered in many AL or AR situations when people were probing their own and others' projects are the following (Bennett & Oliver 1988):

- What is the real issue I am looking at?
- Who "owns" the issue?
- What is it I am trying to achieve through the AR project?
- Who cares about what I am trying to achieve or is bothered by the issue?
- Who can do anything about it?
- What am I going to do about it?
- How am I trying to do it?
- Which resources and skills do I need to do it?
- Can it be done?
- Who can block what I am trying to do?

- What commitment and support do I need to ensure that I am successful?
- How will the results be communicated?

6.4.14 Triangulation

Triangulation is a general method for bringing together different kinds of evidence into some relationship with one another so that they can be compared and contrasted. In comparing different accounts, the points where they differ, converge and diverge allow insights and new understandings to be developed (Elliott 1985; McFee 1992). Triangulation can be a means to test data saturation and hence the validity of the grounded theories. McKernan (1991a, 1991b) writes of various types of triangulation, namely conceptual and theoretical (seeing a project from different models or perspectives); informational (data collected in different settings); researcher investigator (using different inquirers); and methodological (collecting data by multiple research methods, such as participant observation with field notes, questionnaire, interview and document analysis).

6.4.15 Other methodological techniques

Although AR occurs in a naturalistic setting and thus lends itself to qualitative data collection, quantitative data can be used to complement, refute and support claims made. Comparing test scores (whether academic, social or affective) and other statistical data with qualitative data only serves to enhance triangulation, understandings gained and new practices accomplished (Mouton 2001).

In AR a variety of data is needed to ensure a broad data collection for the development of understanding and improvement in practice. Evidence of validity is shown in the rigour of data collection and the appropriateness of the data for the conclusions drawn. Data is juxtaposed to allow reflexivity; to highlight contradictions and tensions; and to facilitate the development of new knowledge. The particular combination of procedures employed depends primarily on the intention of the AR study. Different emphases,

such as a practical focus for the enhancement of school teaching practices and the advancement of theory, may necessitate different procedures. Consequently AR is responsive to local circumstances and needs, while varying across and within nations.

6.5 CONTRADICTIONS IN ACTION RESEARCH

Contradictions and tensions are intrinsic to AR, for the interaction of people in professions marked by uncertainty, inconsistency and rapid change amidst a diversity of values and beliefs, ensures a constant struggle of ideologies. Three key contradictions are discussed in this section, namely tensions between theory and practice, individuality and collaboration, as well as insider and outsider research.

Each of these contradictions contains subsidiary inconsistencies.

6.5.1 Tensions between theory and practice

AR fights a constant battle between the demands of theory and the demands of practice. The heart of the problem exists in the different educational pursuits of the two traditionally separate domains. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988:16) labels this as the "division of specialist labour": "Theorising and practising are separated in the larger social framework by the division of labour and differentiation of function in the institutional structures of contemporary schooling. There are people whose primary tasks are understood to be theorising (academic educational researchers) and others (teachers) whose primary tasks are practice".

People in education come to expect that the primary responsibilities of each are distinctive. Their purposes are different, as are the very research questions they pursue. Educators are primarily concerned with classroom management issues and practical solutions, while academics predominantly focus on larger educational and social issues (Kember & Kelly 1994).

The nature of the questions posed by educators differs among researchers. A brief comparison between a practical and a theoretical definition of AR will suffice to illustrate the point: "Action research is intended to support teachers, and groups of teachers, in coping with the challenges, problems of practice and carrying through innovations in a reflective way" (Altrichter, Posch & Somekh 1993:15).

Mc Taggart (1996:246) concurs with this by saying that: "authentic action research is occurring when school community members can: give a reasoned justification of their education work to others because they can show evidence they have gathered and can document the critical reflection they have done to create a developed, tested and critically-examined rationale for what they are doing. Having developed such a rationale, they may legitimately ask others (and those among them) to justify their practices in terms of their theories and the evidence of their critical self-reflection".

Teachers are more interested in personal, classroom-specific problems (McKernan 1991c; Hustler, Cassidy & Cuff 1986). Frequently it is the involvement and stimulation of an outside researcher that create the awareness in teachers that a problem even exists (McNiff 1995; Wallace 1998). Winter (1996) argues that it is the use of case studies that further encourages teachers to be short-sighted, for its emphasis on synthesis rather than analysis, means that the hidden curriculum, informal social structures and unintended consequences of action remain obscured to teachers.

Thus, the central purposes of research and the subsequent framing of questions ensure a dichotomy between those people with a prime interest in either theory or practice.

The second issue related to the tension between theory and practice concerns the competing demands of research rigour and flexibility and practicality. Kock, McQueen and Scott (1998) and Kock (1997) argue that the common portrayal of the AR cycle is theoretical, general and idealised. The language in which the cycle is often encapsulated contributes to its obscurity and mystification (Kock 1997). It consequently conceals the complexity of the cycle in practice. In reality, each of the stages is not discrete. As Ramsden (1994) argues, educational institutions are constantly changing in

unpredictable ways that destroy any neat experimental design. To present the AR cycle "as a refined and authoritative representation of a complex systematic and sophisticated process" (Ebbutt & Elliott 1986:69) causes educators to be bemused, daunted, critical or become despondent.

Notwithstanding such difficulties, AR must go beyond casual thought, as argued earlier in the definition section of this chapter. If AR is not a research method or paradigm, questions arise as to what it is, how dependable the data is, and what makes the outcome of AR knowledge. Such questions are inevitable as AR endeavours to straddle the two worlds of theory and practice. The debate causes writers like Elliott (1991a, 1991b), as well as Altrichter, Posch and Somekh (1993), to urge potential researchers to be responsive to the context and allow the context to dictate the methodology and process of AR.

There is also a conflict between the pursuit of truth and the maintenance of trust and support for both outside and inside researchers. Publishing an AR study requires detailed descriptions of the site, personnel, events and surrounding circumstances for reasons of validity, but ethical requirements necessitate ensuring the confidentiality and privacy of participants. Endeavours to state the situation as objectively as possible can violate rapport, as well as undermine the confidence and subjective interpretations of participants' emerging understandings.

The conservativeness of teachers is another problem in the debate between theory and practice (Hustler, Cassidy & Cuff 1986). Practitioners tend not to look beyond their own practice to better practice. Cultural self-effacing socialisation of teachers undermines the sharing of expertise. McTaggart (1996) cites a case study in the United States of two "master teachers" who devalued their own knowledge and experience and valued only positivist and quantitative research. Despite being identified as being highly skilled teachers, other teachers in their district were not forthcoming in questioning or seeking the "master teachers" knowledge. District teacher evaluation contributed to the fear of standing out and having to do something different. The district valued uniformity in curriculum, therefore teachers could not break free from their cultural milieu to undertake collaborative AR. There appeared to be an apparent moral commitment to keep ideas about teaching private.

Questions arise as to what constitutes theory. Abstract theory is denounced by teachers as being esoteric and lacking in practical value, while their own practically-derived theory is demoted and considered not generalisable.

In an attempt to answer this dilemma of creating accessible and relevant theory, Elliott (1991b) promotes the concept of an educational vision despite the constraints imposed by government's restructuring of schooling.

Such a proposition is a means of lifting teachers' sights above their present situation. Carr and Kemmis (1986) advocate the emancipatory role of AR while Elliott (1991b:10) provides a vehicle for such liberation:

If the interpretative frameworks 'theories' academics use to help teachers analyze data about their practices are embedded in value-assumptions about the educational ends they should serve, and if in the light of such analysis, carried out under conditions of free and open dialogue with teachers, the frameworks used are further modified and developed, then it follows that the values-assumptions underpinning them will be questioned and redefined. Educational AR, as a dialectical process of testing against practice and developing theory through practice, acknowledges no 'fixed visions of educational ends'.... Although it is important for the academic facilitator to represent a vision with educational ends, it must always be represented as a provisional one capable of being revised and developed through dialogue with teachers.... Educational action research is simply an educational discourse between academics, teachers and others which is grounded in the study of two practical domains: the first-order domain of the teacher and the second-order domain of the teacher-educator or facilitator. The dialectical relation between theory and practice can only be maintained if these two dimensions of practical discourse are sustained. In the context of government reforms... the task of educational action research is not so much to resist as to transform them by reinterpreting the democratic values which underpin them, albeit in distorted form.

The transformation of critical thinking, theory and practice is at the heart of AR. Rather than concentrating efforts on the distinctions and separateness of theory and practice, energy ought to be channelled into bringing the two together. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) argue that AR requires a notion of practical reasoning, that theory and practice are dialectically related. In order to accept this notion, the view that adequate educational theory needs to be generalisable across settings needs to be abandoned (Kemmis & McTaggart 1988; Lewis 1998). Thoughts become theory when they are: "... tested, justified and sustained through a **social** process of debate...when this debate is conducted in the light of shared values about truth and rationality it is itself a **social practice**.... Theoretical knowledge is mediated not only through the minds of individuals but also through public processes in which actions come to be understood as practices, as activities of a certain type, whose meaning and significance is shared among groups of people, perhaps whole communities" (Kemmis & McTaggart 1988:11-13).

The development of theory and practice is both an individual and a social concern. Critical reflection and construction of knowledge are initially individual, but its reification requires a critical community in which the art of dialectics and critical discourse occurs. Understandings are developed from the basis of shared meanings (social dimension) and individual reflection that fosters further exchange of alternative interpretations (Dick 1998). This interplay between individual and community perspectives both enhances and problematises AR.

6.5.2 Tensions between individuality and collaboration

The support needed in developing or testing new interpretations and practices necessitates group membership and indeed the formation of self-critical communities. However, the central belief for practitioners is the pursuit of a question, problem or curiosity that most interests them in their own practice (Dick 1998). The likelihood of all educators within a school or institution being highly interested in the same problem is remote. If a group is working together on an AR problem, commitment will be naturally variable. The nature of the working environment of educators or practitioners further compounds the difficulty.

Kock (1997) and Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) write about the concept of "privatism". This entails being alone in the classroom most of the day away from co-workers, as well as priority allocated to other individualistic tasks when more time is available. The preference for teachers is not for collective reflection, but rather a commitment to privacy.

Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) argue that the privacy of classroom practice actually allows primary AR, but it also diminishes the development of the collaborative, public, critical AR envisioned in more recent arguments.

Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) found that autonomy for teachers to practise what seemed best for students in their classrooms was better protected by anonymity than by open discussion. Teachers believed other teachers would barely be interested in their ideas, and since the district valued curriculum uniformity, divergence was kept quiet. "Apparently there was no discourse by which the ideas could be engaged, no forms of social relationships which might support development of such a discourse, and no expectation that such a discourse belonged in the practice of teachers" (Kemmis & McTaggart 1988:351).

Although AR tends to empower individuals in their battles to improve their articulation as well as the implementation of educational change (Hustler, Cassidy & Cuff 1986), practitioners need other professionals with whom they can debate issues and develop understandings. AR is an intellectually demanding mode of enquiry that prompts serious and often uncomfortable questions about classroom practice. The individual has to be willing to learn about his or her own classroom and have a desire to develop professionally.

Teachers need the *support* of colleagues, while also wishing to influence change. The hierarchical structure of most institutions negates the possibility of true democratic relationships, let alone free-ranging discussions. Political relationships are further complicated by recent calls for accountability, quality improvement, staff appraisal and superiors involved in monitoring staff in professional development and in career promotions. Staff seeking promotion with regard to innovative ideas is

hesitant to share these ideas in discussion with other colleagues. Thus, attempts at true interinstitutional collaboration are seldom realised (Hustler *et al.* 1986; Kock 1997).

Ultimately, only the individual can change his or her views, understandings and practices. No amount of dialogue will change another person's practice unless his or her own thought processes are changed. It is for this reason that support networks such as CARN, ALARP and other projects have formed where small groups of practitioners and educators met together beyond the boundaries of their institutions. Practitioners and educators from different institutions but of similar interests met regularly to discuss AR issues. Meeting with colleagues and like-minded people free from the cultural and historical boundaries of their own organisations enabled participants to discourse and develop dialectical relationships. Such groups allowed practitioners and educators to continue in their private worlds of their own institutions and classrooms, while simultaneously sharing insights, challenging one another's ideas, in addition to extending and improving their understandings. In recognising and trusting the interest of peers, educators shared their frustrations and dilemmas and in doing so examining their teaching critically in a non-threatening environment. For most practitioners and educators, development of the notion of critical communities will only occur in groups beyond those of their own institution. The formation of these communities frequently occurs through the instigation of an "outsider" (Poskitt 1994).

The phenomenon of outsider-researchers or support groups has been utilised particularly where skills or experience is not forthcoming in the institution. Van Manen as cited in Poskitt (1994) criticises this approach, however, as a result of its democratic assumption. Normal educator-learner relationships are either adult-child or at least expert (more experienced) to less experienced. Van Manen therefore argues that relationships of university-based action researchers are more appropriately based on "agogical" (learning from within; someone who can really deepen one's action-sensitive understanding) than on democratic principles. The relationship of the outsider and the insider raises further contradictions.

6.5.3 Contradictions of the insider and the outsider relationship

In striving towards a closer relationship between theory and practice, the two worlds of teaching and research and, subsequently, the insider and the outsider, have met. Owing to the historical distinctions between the roles of teachers and researchers, teachers have little experience in conducting systematic research in their classrooms. Educators have also long rejected research literature as irrelevant to practice, while having a greater concern with resolving immediate problems than with contributing to knowledge in general (Kyle & Hovda 1987 as cited in Poskitt 1994). With a growing interest of academics in the complexities of classroom life and educators' increasing interest in maintaining classroom and curriculum control in the light of governmental policy reform, considerable learning has occurred in the insider-outsider relationship.

Elliot (1988) in writing on the topic of "Educational research and outsider-insider relations" discusses the outsider-insider relationship in terms of critical theory, democratic evaluation and anthropology. AR is argued to have a unique role in empowering the insider to take command of his or her own understandings and actions. The outsider's role is to stimulate reflection and develop a process so that those who are insiders are eventually independent of the outsider's assistance.

In assisting the insider, the outsider is placed in complex predicaments. As discussed earlier, what constitutes knowledge and theory, namely the epistemological dimension, must be worked through. Educators tend to personalise their research, while researchers are frequently more concerned about wider social and educational theories (Poskitt 1994). Beliefs and assumptions about the theory-practice dimension and hence ethical dilemmas governing outsider-researcher's access to and use of information about the insiders' activities create challenges for both parties. Belief structures (the political dimension) mask concerns, as does the social order; what Elliot (1988) terms the "ontological dimension".

The first of these dimensions discussed by Elliott (1988) concerns the epistemological dimension, that is, the conceptualisation of knowledge and theory. Research has traditionally been of objective, measurable events, detached from subjective values. Issues of generalisability have governed the reliability and value of data. In contrast, insiders are deeply involved in the subject of their work and its particularity. The task in the outsider-insider relationship is to have outsiders become more preoccupied with situational details and complexities of social, political and educational realities, while insiders become more detached and develop a wider "educational vision". In becoming more cognisant of wider issues, educators come to understand the deeper cultural milieu in which their beliefs and practices are embedded. Once particular issues are seen in the broader context, educators can discern the commonalities and constraints in their practices. Thus they work towards emancipation. Outsiders not only work as "natural brokers" (Elliott 1988) and hence process interpretations and judgements of educators to facilitate their informed debate about education, but come to see how their own practices are rendered problematic.

Difficulties in establishing trusting relationships with insiders are seen as problematic by Elliott (1988), given the state of conflict among insiders themselves. Conflicting accounts from the same informants, in addition to differing accounts from various members of the organisation, render objective data-collecting an impossible task. Given then the ethical dilemmas of balancing the "public's right to know and the insiders' right to privacy" (Elliott 1988), the outsider-insider relationship is fraught with difficulties. In this regard Elliott (1998:162) adds: "There is no outsider standpoint from which one can impartially comprehend the meanings insiders attribute to their practices. All 'understandings of understandings' are necessarily biased by the researchers 'being in the world'. The neutral broker is as unreal as the critical theorist".

The solution to this dilemma lies in the awareness of each person's biases and in transforming this tacit knowledge to a level of dialectical discourse. The key role of the outsider is in the development of insiders' reflective capacities. In the process of interpreting people's ideas, opportunities need to be created to allow participants to reconstruct their traditional values and

beliefs, rather than have them undermined. This is seen, in ethnography, as the role of "holding up the cracked mirror", which is a means of facilitating participants' reflection (Poskitt 1994).

Relationships approximating equality between the insider and the outsider will develop tolerance of divergent views in debate. Individuality in decision-making, empowerment of insiders to generate their own critiques, and the stimulation of self- and group reflection ultimately empower educators to negotiate change for themselves in educational power relations (Elliott 1988).

The assumption does not recognise the contextual constraints under which educators operate. Social relationships in institutions are rarely fully free to allow open and honest discourse. Job security, promotional prospects, as well as historical patterns of relationships prevent free speech. Any role in an institution such as a school results in access to particular information and inaccessibility to other information. In contrast, an outsider can be privy to people's real thoughts and opinions during interviews and other encounters, particularly in situations where trust, rapport and confidentiality have been established. With the benefit of "objective" observations and access to a myriad of information crossing role boundaries, the outsider is then able to voice concerns or statements that people within the culture are prevented from expressing. Although this function can be at risk from hijacking, it is nevertheless a beneficial attribute of the role of the outsider.

The outsider is also a vital resource for research skills. Reliance on and indeed assumptions about the standard of research skills and understandings of educators, can be precarious (Poskitt 1994). The outsider can play an integral role in the professional development of teachers, albeit acknowledging the hierarchical dangers of imparting such knowledge (Poskitt 1994).

Through the outsider's posing of critical questions in formal and informal interviews, casual conversation and new interpretations of data, educators can be inspired to think beyond the daily realities and demands of teaching - a more difficult challenge for insiders to accomplish for their colleagues. Van Manen as cited in Poskitt (1994) argues that the mere involvement of the

practitioner in AR does not ensure that the research will be educationally or pedagogically animated. The outsider has an important role to play in encouraging adherence to the central philosophy of AR.

Finally, the outsider in bringing a less subjective view to the institution culture, can offer fresh insights and discern problems or issues to which insiders may otherwise have been oblivious. Asking fresh and new questions on matters which insiders have taken for granted, in addition to presenting information or feedback in different forms, raises contradictions as well as the possibilities for reflection, new insights and potential for change.

Thus, while the insider-outsider relationship is fraught with difficulties of imbalances of power, knowledge, access to information and possible goal incompatibility, the resources of time, skills, insights, and, indeed, "an extra pair of hands" ensure the continued involvement of the outsider for institution-based AR.

6.6 CONCLUSION

Literature on AR reflects the complexity and intricacy of research in naturalistic settings. These tensions and dilemmas have been recognised since its inception. AR had its origins in the work of Lewin (1946) and Stenhouse (1975), and researchers worldwide have further developed it. Although different emphasis is accorded to the balance of action and of research, the relationship between the two is the central international concern of AR. Valid AR occurs when improvements in both understanding and in practice are evident. The dilemmas and tensions which develop in the process of integrating action and research arise from issues of imbalances of power (such as the relationship between an outsider and an insider, as well as among insiders), inadequate reflection and contradictions amidst implicit and explicit understandings. Developing critical communities, reflective practice and the art of dialectics are seen to be fundamental to AR.

The challenge remains as to how these principles, procedures and theoretical understandings of AR are translated into practice, particularly in institutions of

higher learning in South Africa with limited exposure to or experience of AR. What cultural changes, practical constraints and political pressures are critical in developing not only an interest in AR, but also a commitment to the process and its improved practice?

AR as a methodology for management Ph.D. research is relatively rare (Perry & Zuber-Skerritt 1994). Moreover, although AR has the potential to overcome many deficiencies in social science research, its results are generally viewed as not generalisable (Heller 1986). However, AR as outlined in Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) and Zuber-Skerritt (1991), is no longer a marginal backwater sometimes depending on very carefully selected examiners, but becomes part of the ocean of Ph.D. research. AR is chosen as methodology because of its emphasis on improved practice, its outcomes of reflections which include propositional, practical and experiential (group and personal) knowledge. AR pursues both action and research outcomes and it is a cyclic process with critical reflection as a component in each cycle. AR as an approach which has proven to be practical (improving theory and practice), participative and collaborative (researcher is co-worker concerned with group problem-solving and improvement), emancipatory (where all are equal in the enquiry process), interpretive (where solutions are based on the views and experiences of participants in the enquiry), critical (where participants critically evaluate their progress in the change process and are changed by it) and action-oriented (where the results of the research must be applied) (Carr & Kemmis 1986; Kemmis & McTaggart 1982).

The means of implementing the process, that is, the methodology as employed in the present study, forms the substance of the next chapter, entitled "Methodology in Action: Quality assessment of the management of an instructional offering process".

**Chapter 7**

**METHODOLOGY IN ACTION:
QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF THE
MANAGEMENT OF AN INSTRUCTIONAL
OFFERING PROCESS****7.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the methodology as employed in the study forms the basis of the practical, critical, participative, collaborative and action-oriented research carried out in an IO (IO) process: Research Methodology (REM) in the B.Tech.: Office Management and Technology (B.Tech.: OMTECH), at the Border Technikon (see paragraph 1.7).

This thesis is a case study of the application of an adapted quality management framework to an IO process: REM to establish the effects on the quality of the management of the IO process and possible secondary effects on the learning outcomes of this process (Hansen & Jackson 1996:211; Lundquist 1996; cf. paragraphs 7.4.2 & 7.5.1).

7.1.1 Background and orientation to the action research (AR) cycles

The reason for this investigation and project was the low completion and pass rate of REM students in the B.Tech.: OMTECH during 1998 and 1999. The research into this problem which had been identified commenced at the end of 1999 and continued until June 2002.

In the Table 7.1 the number of students who registered for IO: REM in B.Tech.: OMTECH, the number who completed the final research report, as well as the number of students who passed IO: REM are indicated as per academic year (also refer to Graph 7.2 later in this chapter).

TABLE 7.1: Pass and completion rates of B.Tech.: OMTECH REM students for the period 1998 and 1999

YEAR	Nr. of students registered for REM	Nr. of students who completed final research report	% of students who completed final research reports	Number of students who passed IO: REM	% Pass rate of REM students per academic year
1998	7	4	57 %	1	14 %
1999	6	3	50 %	1	16.6 %

Although this is a very small number of students enrolled for IO: REM, it is still evident that fewer students completed their final research report in 1999. The percentage pass rate for 1998 and 1999 was very low and although the percentage increased from 1998 to 1999, it was not a significant increase. In addition, fewer students registered for the IO in 1999.

As head of the school in which this instructional programme is housed, I identified this as a practice which needed improvement. Apart from quality assurance matters, the FTE subsidies from government per student in the B.Tech. were also a drawing force for the research. B.Tech. programmes receive higher subsidies than diplomas or undergraduate programmes. The low pass rate and completion rate of these students had serious financial implications for the school and the faculty. It also had a negative impact on the research output, which, in turn, impacts on the socio-economic needs of the community.

I felt the need to improve practice as both a manager and an educator in a holistic, systemic framework (refer to paragraph 5.7). In order to contextualise the need for improved practice in the quality management of the institution (Border Technikon) a broader perspective is necessary.

7.1.2 Reconnaissance of the research problem

As a result of the termination of the activities of SERTEC on 31 August 2001, the responsibility of external academic accountability was placed with the CHE. The HEQC of the CHE is its operational arm and is responsible for addressing quality in higher education on behalf of the CHE. The HEQC requires from the higher education providers to "establish and sustain effective institutional quality assurance systems and processes that will yield reliable information for internal planning, and improvement and external audit" (CHE 2002a:iii).

Managing its own quality assurance process means that the Technikon can no longer postpone quality management, but has to prioritise it at the top of the list of strategic priorities. The technikons are now required to establish the criteria, systems and controls to ensure their own standards and maintenance of quality. These systems should be in place with immediate effect and must be reported on when the HEQC visits the Technikon later in 2002 (CHE 2002b; Genis 2002).

This quality management process also needs to filter through down to the delivery of teaching and learning at "rock-face" level, namely the management of an IO process. The SAEF self-assessment framework and management system were adapted for use in managing the quality of an IO process in the B.Tech. programme at Border Technikon. The self-assessment criteria of the SAEF framework were adapted for use in the management of the IO process by incorporating an adaptation of the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence 2001 (NIST 2001; paragraph 7.4.1).

The IO process: REM in the B.Tech. programme at Border Technikon was mapped to identify "gaps", as well as to clear sub-processes and activities in the management process (refer to paragraph 7.3.1). The core processes central to the functioning of an IO "unit", which relate directly to its customers (in this case the students) were identified (refer to Table 7.2). They are commonly the primary activities of the "value chain" as referred to in business terminology (Earl 1996:61).

I carried out a self-assessment on the management of an IO process in order to identify areas for improvement so that possible solutions to these problems could be captured in an action plan. These identified areas for improvement and action plan(s) to be addressed are represented in Table 7.3 later in this chapter. Some of the actions in the AR cycle were carried out by means of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action to capture the "reflection" part of the AL cycle as well. Some of the plans were revised and some new plans were devised continuous improvement (refer to paragraphs 7.2.3-7.2.5).

7.2 THE ACTION RESEARCH AND ACTION LEARNING CYCLES

Three main AR cycles with parallel AL cycles were completed in this research. The three cycles were *firstly* the mapping of the IO process: REM; *secondly*, the adaptation of the instrument used for the self-assessment of the IO process and the self-assessment itself; and, *thirdly*, the identification of areas for improvement, as well as the actions taken to address these.

Furthermore, I provide a description of the AR project in terms of the four phases of AR, namely:

- Reconnaissance (reflection on the initial situation)/reflection in the next cycle;
- planning/revised plan in the next cycle;
- action; and
- observation.

It is important to note that, in practice, the steps overlapped and it was not always clearly defined when one phase ended and the next phase commenced. What is also noteworthy, is the fact that staff members and students involved in the initial phases of the project with myself, were not the same staff and students involved as the project evolved. As the project progressed, "new" staff members became involved; some of the original staff members who were members of the AL team left the project and the student

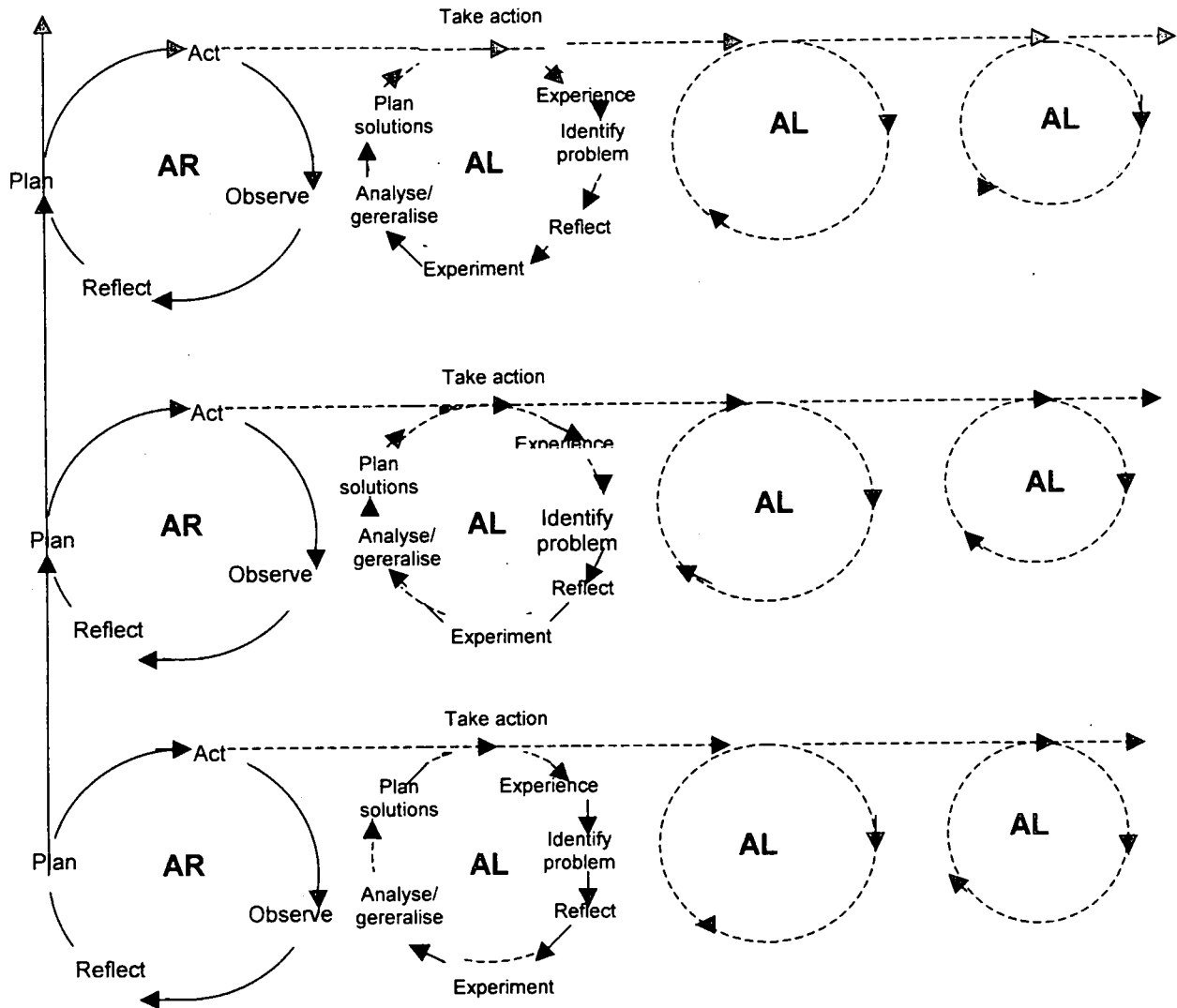
intake into the IO: REM changed from one year to the next during the period 1998 to 2001.

The AL team based its *modus operandi* on the cycles of AL as illustrated by Marquardt (1999). This AL cycle (illustrated parallel with the AR cycles in Figure 7.1) varies a little from the traditional cycle of AR (*plan, act, observe, reflect, revised plan, act, observe, reflect, etc.*) as seen in most of the literature on AR (Zuber-Skerritt 1997; Carr & Kemmis 1986; Elliott 1985; Elliott 1991).

The *action learning* cycles, as depicted in Figure 7.1, were repeated in an ongoing manner parallel with the *action research* cycles as the research project progressed and evolved through the different stages (Bennett & Oliver 1988; Winter 1989).

Figure 7.1 attempts to illustrate the AR cycles and how the AL cycles took place alongside or sometimes even within the loops of AR.

FIGURE 7.1: The action research cycles parallel with the action learning cycles



Adapted from Winter (1996), Marquardt (1999) and Bennett and Oliver (1988).

This overview of the research method used in the project illustrates the definition of AR by Carr and Kemmis (1986:165):

"It can be argued that three conditions are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for action research to be said to exist: firstly, a project takes as its subject-matter a social practice, regarding it as a form of strategic action susceptible of improvement; secondly, the project proceeds through a spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting, with each of these activities being systematically and self-critically implemented and

interrelated; thirdly, the project involves those responsible for the practice in each of the moments of the activity, widening participation in the project gradually to include others affected by the practice, and maintaining collaborative control of the process".

In the format that this cyclic AR report is presented, it is clear that I (the action researcher), as well as other members of the AL team recognised that a social practice (the IO process: REM) needed improvement in line with the first condition as mentioned in the definition of AR by Carr and Kemmis (1986). The second condition, as per the above definition, also applies as the steps of planning, acting, observing and reflecting indicate. The final condition must be seen in the light of what is mentioned in this definition earlier, namely that the participants varied from one year to the next and that others became involved for interest' sake and for reasons such as research in the field, etc.

In the three AR cycles, the AL team had to come to grips with the essential elements of AL, as discussed in the following paragraphs.

7.2.1 Identifying the problem

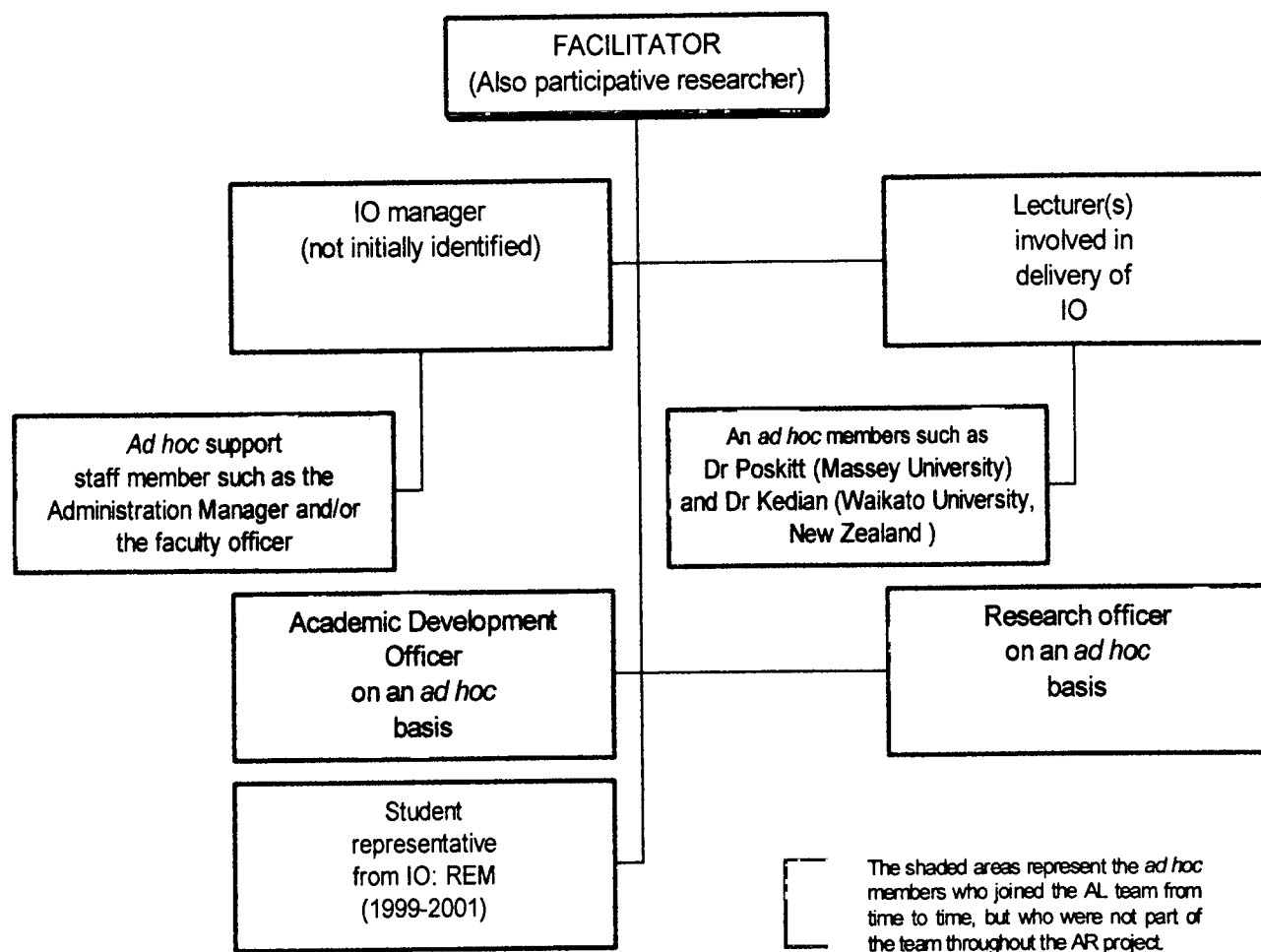
The problem changed with every AR cycle, for example, the problem was firstly to map the IO process. Secondly, the SAEF and the Baldrige Education Criteria had to be adapted into a suitable instrument to use in the self-assessment of the IO process and thirdly, subsequent to the self-assessment, areas were identified that needed improvement. Thus action plans were drawn up to address these. Thereafter the results stemming from the implementation of the action plans were assessed.

7.2.2 Who participated in the action learning (AL) team

In the initial stages of the project the AL team consisted of two other academics and myself. In the second AR cycle the composition of the team changed to a bigger group, which now included the administration manager [to advise on the administration process of students and mark allocation on the integrated tertiary software (ITS) system], the research officer (to advise on the structure of the course content and delivery mode of IO: REM), as well

as a lecturer involved in the delivery of the IO who assisted with supervision. Thus the group now consisted of six members. The composition of the focus group or the AL team is illustrated in Figure 7.2:

FIGURE 7.2: The composition of the AL team



The AL team consisted of a facilitator (myself), an IO manager (a person responsible for the delivery of the IO at the time), a student representative from the IO, other lecturers involved in the delivery of the IO and any *ad hoc* stakeholder that could add value to the process, e.g. the administrative manager and/or the faculty officer. The support staff member who added value to the AL team was the administrative manager, who provided us with information on the FTE outputs of IO: REM, as well as with the data of students who completed their research reports from 1999 to 2001 and those who passed the IO during the same period. The student representatives of

IO: REM in 1999, 2000 and 2001 assisted us in unstructured interviews with students registered for this IO, establishing the difficulties and challenges they faced in the completion or non-completion of the IO (refer to paragraph 1.2). The academic development officer supplied us with information which revealed the low proficiency in the search and academic writing skills of the students registered for IO: REM from 1999 to 2001. The lecturers involved in the delivery of IO: REM supplied information regarding the completion rates of assignments in the IO from 1999 to 2001. During my visit to New Zealand while I was at the Massey University, Palmerston North and the Waikato University, Hamilton, the two experts in AL and strategic thinking, Dr Jenny Poskitt and Dr Jeremy Kedian, were *ad hoc* members of the AL team (refer to paragraphs 7.5.1.1.1 & 7.5.1).

Upon *reflection*, the AL team felt that it might have been valuable to have had a member of the resource centre on the team for a period of time to assist us with information on search engines and other resources available to assist novice researchers. It was challenging to operate as a team when the composition of the team changed from one year to the next, but the fact that I as the facilitator, as well as the IO manager – later formally identified – constantly remained members of the team, contributed to some continuity.

7.2.3 The questioning and the reflection process

During the first AR cycle of the study it became clear that not all the participants or stakeholders were familiar with the AL principles and processes such as questioning and reflection. I realised that the AL Model as illustrated in Figure 7.5 (later in this chapter) had to be applied to, *inter alia*, ensure that the situations which occurred were suitable for AL, i.e. that a genuine IO process improvement need existed. Appropriate members for the AL- team had to be chosen. This implied that members had to:

- have knowledge and skills related to the IO process under investigation;
 - represent various interest groups or stakeholders;
 - have positive attitudes and open minds about the IO process and its possible areas for improvement, as well as possible solutions to these;
- and

- be willing to develop through exposure to the IO process, the assessment thereof or to the people who were participants of the AL team.

I had to brief these members by means of an information session - held in September 1999 - about the unit of analysis and provide information relevant to the investigation as well as the constraints established. This type of session had to be repeated every time a new member joined the team. The constraints included the aspect that members reported that they did not have knowledge and training in using the adapted SAEF criteria for self-assessment. This was, however, not necessarily detrimental to the project, as I could guide and interpret responses within the SAEF framework. The aim of the self-assessment exercise was to obtain a "snap-shot" idea of the management of the IO process and its strengths and areas for improvement.

In a one-day workshop at Border Technikon, I gave a briefing and practical exercises on the self-assessment process and skills such as reflective practice based on the principles by Schon (1983) and learning in action. The AL team members had to learn to ask "new" questions in the same situations all the time.

The AL team members had to "reflect-in-action" and "reflect-on-action", as well as evaluate results to establish what they had learned from the experience; how much change had occurred in the process as a result of what they did; as well as any positive or negative outcomes of the team's experiences (refer to paragraphs 1.8.31, 1.8.32 & 1.8.33). I used summaries of Criteria 3, 4 and 5 (refer to Extract 7.1) of the feedback report as basis for the case study and asked the staff to advise one another on possible actions to address the challenges captured in the report. Each team member had to act as the IO manager of this IO process and had to report back to the group as to how (s)he would solve each of the three criteria as reported on in the feedback report. This "case study" and the outcomes of the feedback sessions at the one-day workshop were then transferred back into the action plans of the "real" situation of the study. The lessons learned by the AL team served as basis for the next information session when a new member/members joined the team. One of the lessons learned, for example,

was that it would not be financially viable to offer the IO: REM on all four campuses of Border Technikon. Although this would definitely benefit the students, it would be an unnecessary duplication of human resources. It was decided to offer the IO on two campuses central to most of the students enrolled for the IO: REM. The learning and change that occurred because of this exercise were, for instance, that the members realised that one has to balance the important and necessary actions with affordability and practical feasibilities within the constraints of the institution.

7.2.4 The commitment to take action

Part of my role as facilitator was to encourage the AL team to roll out and operationalise action plans that we had agreed upon during our planning phase in the third AR cycle (refer to paragraph 7.5.1.1). I was not only a facilitator and a mentor for the AL team, but also an "action coach" on a continuous spiral. It was during this phase that my role as action coach was particularly pivotal in the operationalisation of the action plans (refer to Figure 7.3 & paragraph 7.2.4).

As already mentioned, AR was selected as the preferred research method for this study based on an in-depth literature study on AR and AL, as well as my own desire to improve practice as a manager (refer to Chapter six). During the AR and AL cycles I identified that, besides AR and AL, action coaching was also taking place. The fostering of self-awareness, the motivation to change and the guidance needed by the AL team to allow change to take place in such a way that it meets the needs of the IO process, were elements of action coaching. This "AHA-moment" was supported by the definition of action coaching as described by Dotlich and Cairo (1999:18):

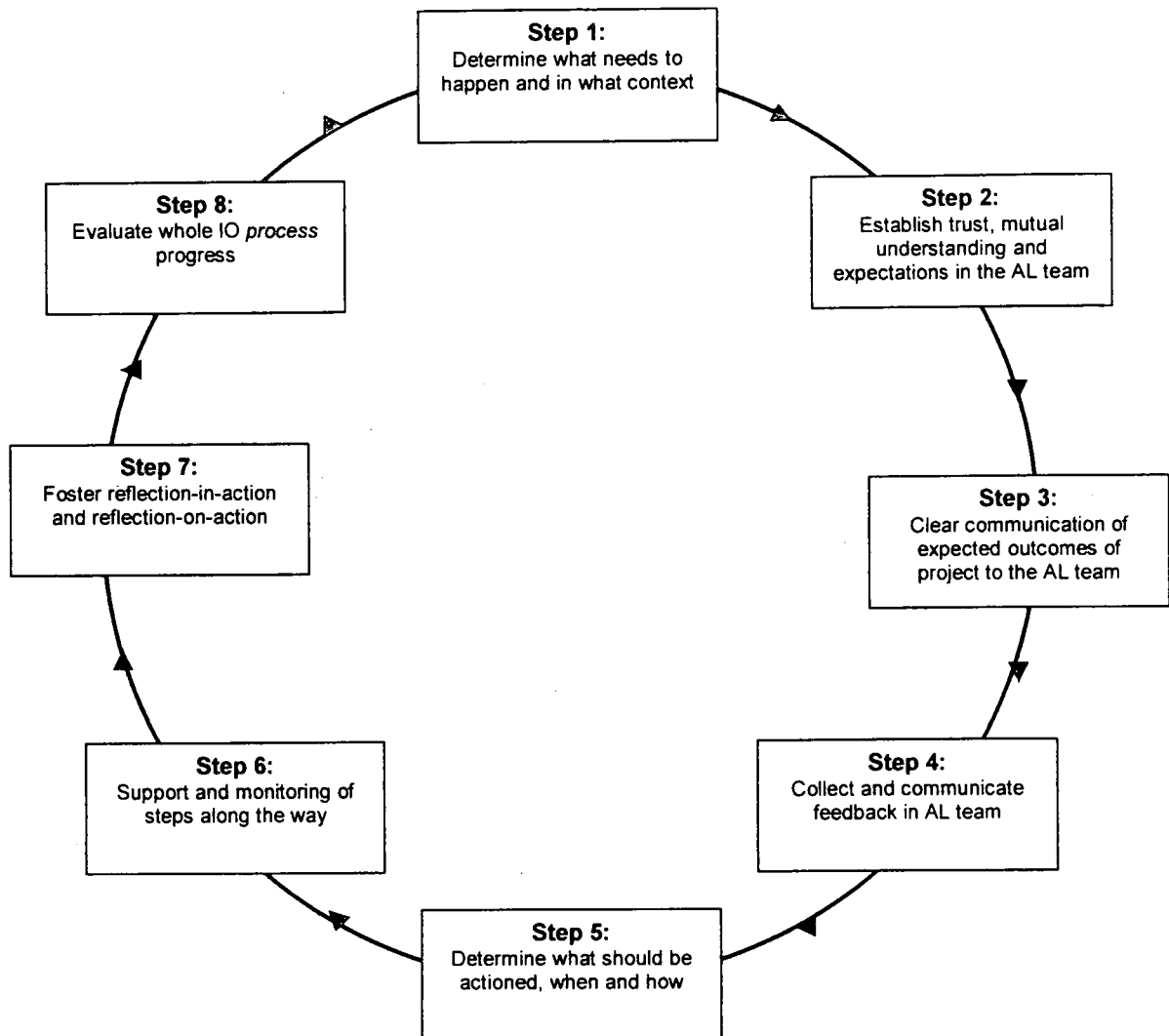
"Action Coaching is a process that fosters self-awareness and that results in the motivation to change, as well as the guidance needed if change is to take place in ways that meet organizational [IO process] needs".

I determined similarities between experiences in practice and information from the literature through relevant literature reviews such as the annotated

bibliography I authored (refer to Annexure 19). *Firstly*, the self-awareness of the members of the AL team was linked with the envisaged results of the IO process which the team wanted to achieve. Team members had, for example, to reflect on their roles in improving the management of the IO process and possibly the IO: REM outputs. *Secondly*, an action plan was put in place to address the identified areas for improvement according to priority (refer to Table 7.3). *Thirdly*, the level of achievement was set based on the identified needs of the IO-process. For example, the areas identified for improvement had to be prioritised to make them financially viable and manageable. *Fourthly*, the process became structured and had a common goal (Dotlich & Cairo 1999; Dotlich & Noel 1998; Du Bois 1997). The plans were worked out and operationalised into action. This common goal was to improve the management of the IO process: REM.

Every time a new or an *ad hoc* member, a professional expert or a stakeholder who could add value at any stage, joined the team, some or all of the steps in the action coaching cycle had to be repeated, facilitated by me. It was my role as facilitator to facilitate commitment from all the members in the team to take action(s) as mutually agreed upon by the team.

The cyclic nature of action coaching became clear in the practice of the AL team. Steps such as the determination of what needs to happen next; the establishment of trust and mutual expectations in the AL team; the translation of talk into action; reflection about actions; and the assessment of the IO process were apparent in the activities of the AL team. If, for example, we decided that the action plan to address the area of improvement (lack of supervisory skills among staff members responsible for B.Tech. students) was to organise and attend workshops to empower staff, then every member was responsible for the execution of some aspect of the plan. These steps are illustrated in Figure 7.3.

FIGURE 7.3: Steps of the action coaching cycle

Adapted from Dotlich and Cairo (1999:35).

I orientated every new member who joined the team and assisted the new member(s) to share in the team's determination of what needed to happen next (at which stage we were in the AR cycles) and in what context. The team, led by me, had to establish a mutual trust and understanding of what was expected of one another. Team members sharing their experiences to date and how they had handled challenges in the process accomplished this.

The expected outcomes of each part of the cycle of the project had to be communicated clearly to the team members by me. I collected and communicated the feedback of all the members of the team and then determined - in collaboration with the AL team - what should be actioned, when and how. This was mostly done by means of e-mail messages or cellphone communication. I supported and monitored the steps along the

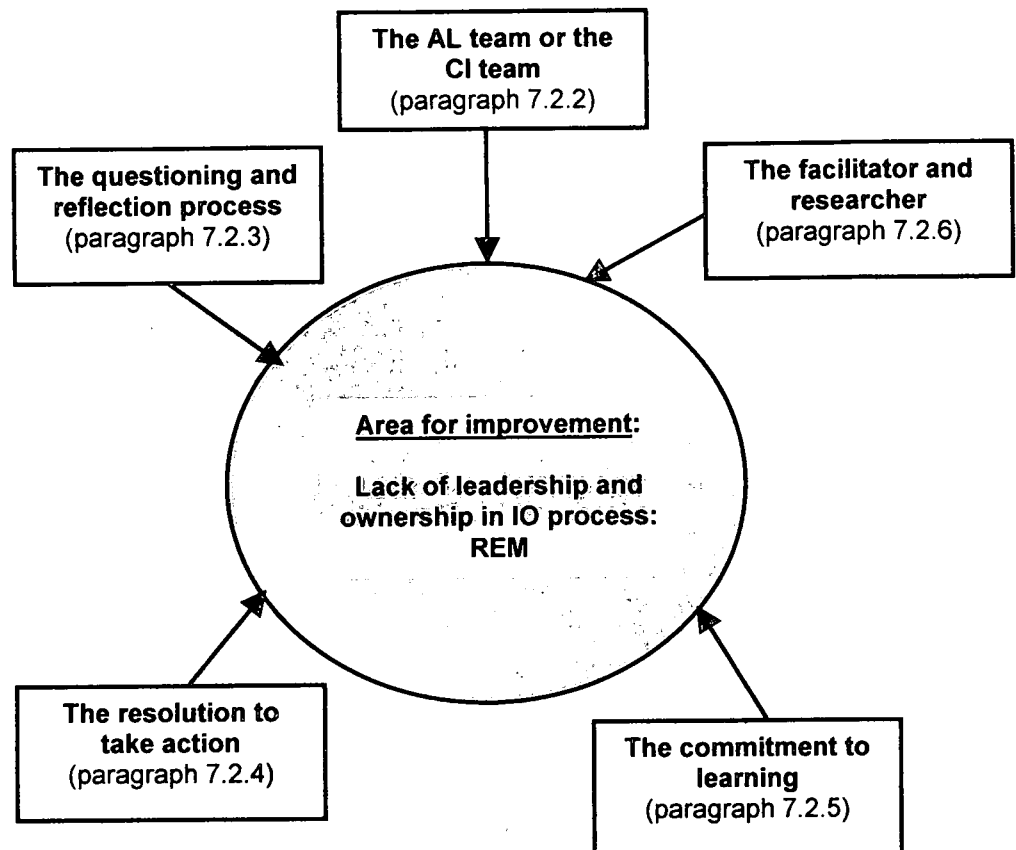
way and continuously fostered reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action by reminding team members to keep their journals and document their experiences in operationalising the action plans. When some of the team members felt that they could not continue because of other commitments or their workload, I had to motivate them and contextualise the importance of the project, as well as their role in the success of the outcomes. After periodically assessing progress, the cycle repeated itself, starting again with determining what needed to happen, establishing trust and mutual understanding among the team members, etc. (refer to Figure 7.3).

7.2.5 The commitment to learning

Each individual in the team also had the ultimate responsibility to participate and learn from one another (Du Bois 1997). This learning took place every time the AL team met and reflected, as well as by sharing information by means of e-mail. Skills and methods such as troubleshooting, benchmarking and creative problem-solving were discussed in the AL team and ideas were shared during team discussions, meetings and reflections. Emphasis was put on the fact that team members had to act within the "boundaries" of their constraints, meaning using - where possible - the resources available to them (refer to paragraph 7.5 of this chapter). I encouraged members to remind one another to learn from their own and other members' mistakes and not to repeat the same mistakes.

7.2.5.1 *The essential elements of action learning*

The essential elements of AL – as discussed in paragraphs 7.2.1 to 7.2.6 - were part of the AR and the AL cycles in addressing each area for improvement. This can also be referred to as "transformative learning" (Corder, Horsburgh & Melrose 1999). These elements are illustrated in Figure 7.4:

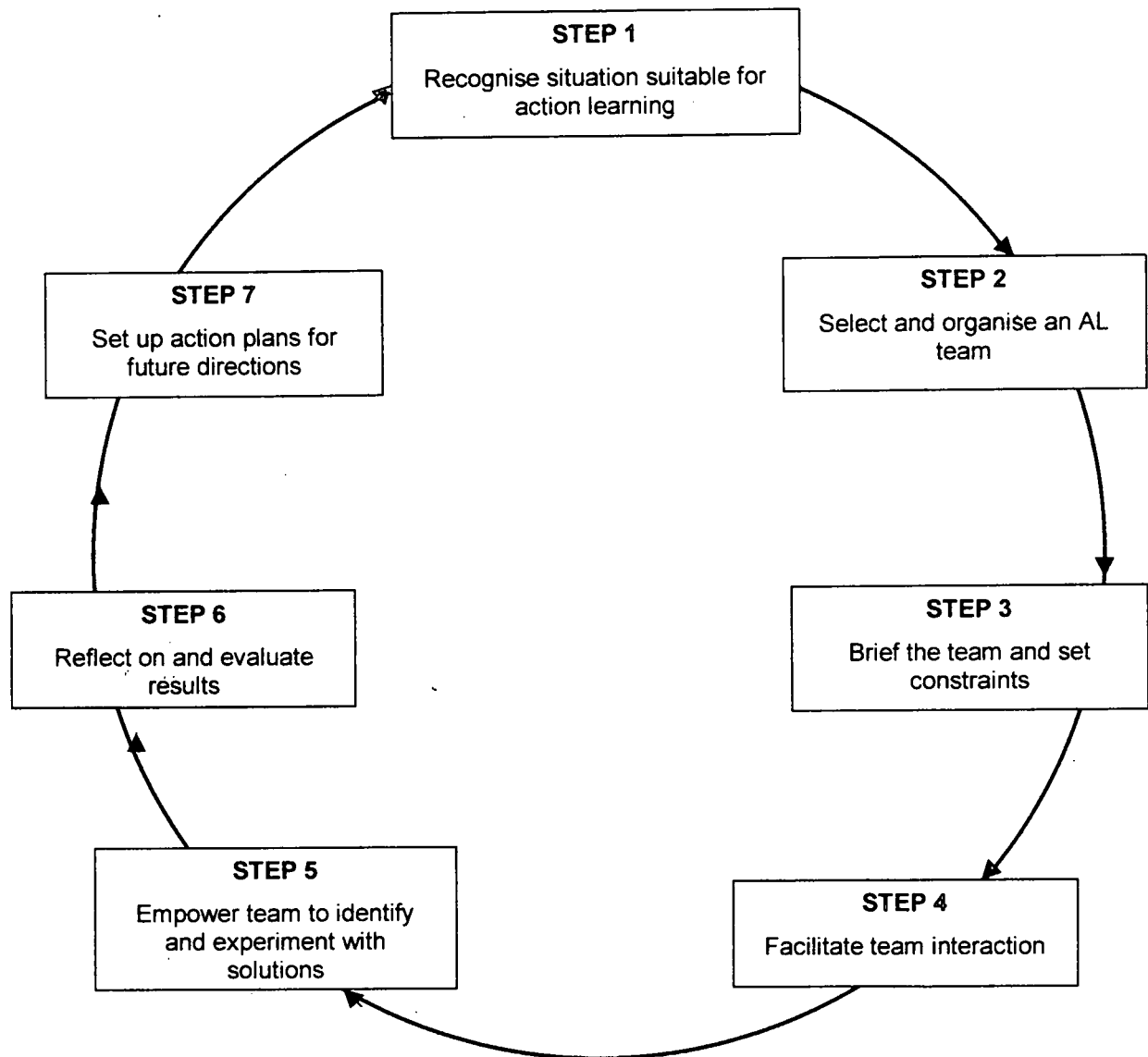
FIGURE 7.4: Essential elements of action learning

Adapted from Marquardt (1999:6).

In other words, in every cyclical process to address the different areas for improvement, these essential elements of AL were applied by the AL team and facilitated by me. Each time the circle in the centre of Figure 7.4 was therefore replaced with the next area for improvement, such as "Priority nr. 2: People management (lecturer empowerment)" and then Priority nr. 3, etc. (refer to Table 7.3). As part of the AL experience, the AL team was encouraged to keep journals and memorandums of their experiences and thoughts throughout the project. This was done for their own sakes.

7.2.5.2 *The action learning process*

The AL team was continuously encouraged to provide input into action plans as to what would happen next (Rothwell 1999; Du Bois 1997). The AL model which I used to engage in this process is illustrated in Figure 7.5:

FIGURE 7.5: An action learning model

Adapted from Rothwell (1999:13).

I involved programme co-ordinators, an academic development officer, quality specialists, Research Methodology students and, on an *ad hoc* basis, any stakeholder/interest group that could add value to the process. I became a collaborative member of the group through facilitating reflective discussions and workshops, identifying underlying problems and assumptions (refer to paragraph 7.2.2).

In Step one it was my responsibility to point out suitable situations for AL to the team. Later, during the third AR cycle, some of the team members

could recognise suitable AL situations without my assistance. For example, some of the members realised that students could not access the library after hours and this had an impact on their use of search materials and resources. This was a learning curve in itself. It was my responsibility to select and organise the AL team (Step two). As suggested in Step three, I briefed the team and made them aware of constraints – such as budgetary and physical resources – that we needed to take cognisance of. I had to repeat Step four continuously by facilitating team interaction throughout the AR cycles. In addition, it was my role to empower the team (by means of skills, workshops, etc.) to identify solutions and to have the confidence to experiment with them, as indicated in Step five. Reflection and evaluation on results after each AR and AL cycle were imperative to the progress of the study (Step six). As part of Step seven, action plans had to be set up to guide the future directions of the AL team, as described in paragraph 7.5.1.1.

7.2.6 My role as facilitator and researcher

I acted as facilitator and was responsible for the cohesive functioning of the team. This role sometimes changed to being both facilitator, as well as a participating team member. As an action researcher, I kept journals and memorandums for my own use throughout the three-year period of the study. It was mainly my responsibility to collect relevant data and to journal reflections, actions and revised plans. Because it was my research for my Ph.D., I did a good deal of self-reflection and looked at every opportunity, experience, work situation, workshop I facilitated and attended, as well as every relevant comment made. This was done through the glasses of my research. I continuously asked myself how a certain situation, decision, comment, meeting, etc. would impact on the IO process: REM at Border Technikon. I furthermore had to point out these significant relations to the study to my AL team members to facilitate learning and understanding. An example in this regard is the following which I highlighted in one of my journal entries:

November 2000:

- Supervisors of these students complained that they did not have the experience or skills to successfully supervise the B.Tech. students.
- I need to table at next Faculty Board and then Senate to make supervisory training and workshops compulsory for supervisors and prospective supervisors.

The team members were mentored by myself (by means of workshops and discussions held as referred to in paragraph 7.2.3, by giving advice via e-mails, as well as during phone calls) with a view to identifying and experimenting with possible solutions to areas identified for improvement in the IO process (refer to paragraph 7.5.1.1). The mentoring continued throughout the three cycles, but not for all the AL team members. Some of the members became more confident during the second cycle and required less coaching and mentoring.

7.3 ACTION RESEARCH CYCLE ONE

The first cycle included *planning* and mapping of the IO process: REM (*act*), reflection on the map (*reflect*), and revision of the map to a revised version (*revised plan*) of the IO process map (refer to paragraph 7.2 for a detailed discussion). The planning and mapping of the IO process: REM was done by myself. I then approached lecturing senior academics in the IO to comment on the map. Based on these comments, I revised the map to include sub-processes such as the legal framework in which the IO will be controlled; assessment of the local needs of the community; as well as participation in the overall Border Technikon strategic planning of programmes and programme mixes in its three-year rolling plans, etc.

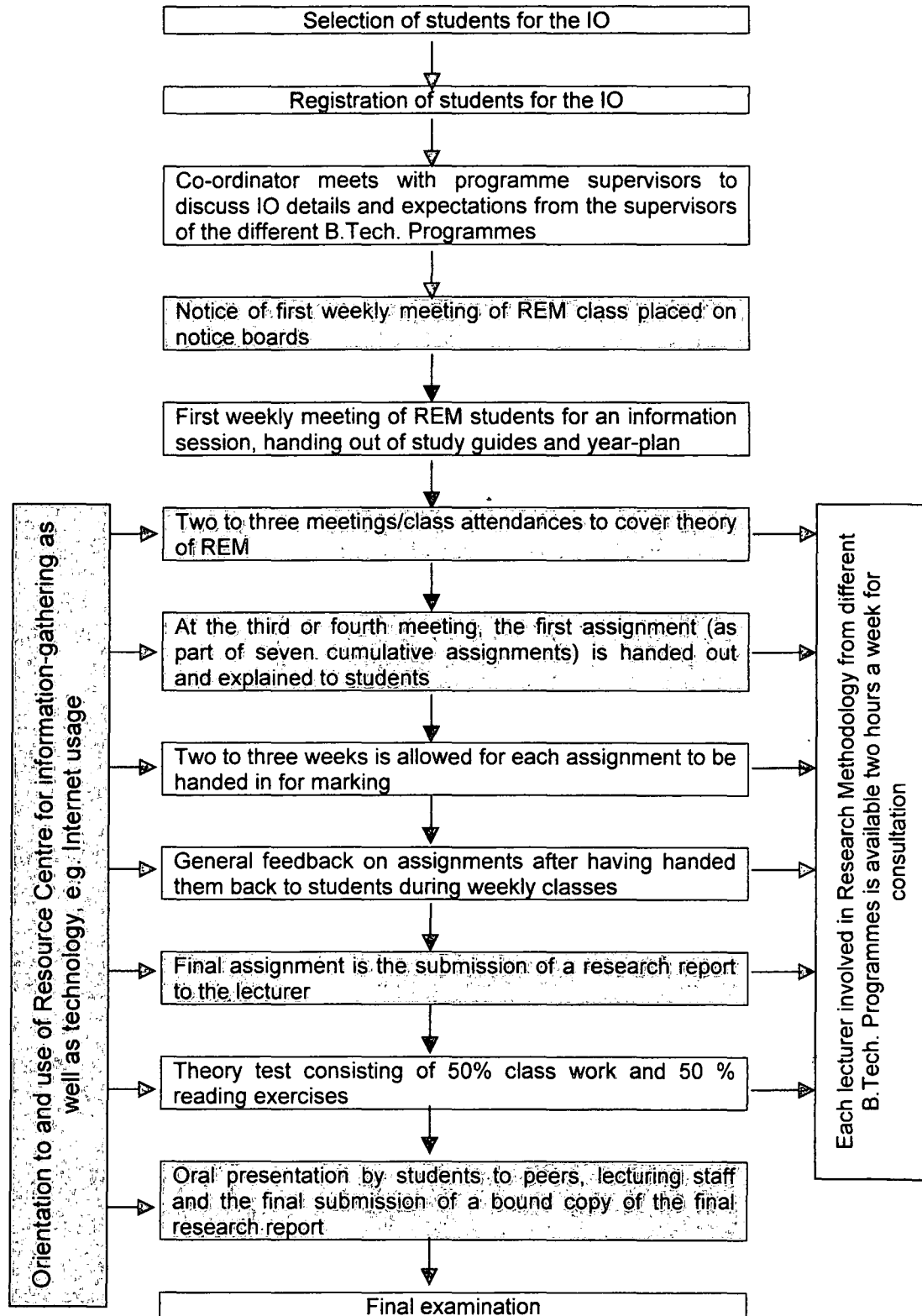
7.3.1 Mapping the instructional offering (IO) process: Research Methodology (REM)

Reviewing the IO required looking at the total process from a systemic point of view. Earl (1996) argues that "process" demonstrates the systems view of an institution (in this case the IO process). He further argues that the

"interdependent, interactive, boundary-crossing, subordinate goal conceptualization of process is essentially a systems model" (Earl 1996:64). The process, Research Methodology, needed to be mapped into its sub-processes. From a management perspective, the process included the academic component, in addition to all the other elements required for the delivery of this IO. This process is regarded as a fundamental organisational unit to be managed at Border Technikon. Therefore the terms "unit" and "process" will be used interchangeably throughout the thesis.

The quality of the management of each of the sub-processes of this IO had to be reviewed in order to assess the quality of the management of the IO: REM (Du Toit 2001). This "input-process-output" analysis leads units to discover that processes have sub-processes just as systems have subsystems (Earl 1996:64).

Subsequently the initial process map (also referred to as the "as-is" map), as illustrated in Figure 7.6, was updated and revised through the AL processes of reflection and revising or redesigning. This revising and reflecting on the process map for the IO process is an ongoing process. The process map can also be very different for other IOs in the same programme, academic department, faculty, institution and other institutions. The initial process map is illustrated in Figure 7.6:

FIGURE 7.6: An initial process map for research methodology

Du Toit (2001)

After reflecting on this process map, it became clear that it indicated mostly activities (also referred to as "workflow" in business process management terminology) and some sub-processes (those indicated in the shaded areas were more of a description of the workflow rather than processes) in the IO process rather than processes. It had to be revised into a more comprehensive map reflecting processes such as the position of the IO process in the three-year rolling plans, as well as compliance with South African Post-Secondary Education (SAPSE) 151 and the Eastern Cape Higher Education Association (ECHEA) requirements, for example. The "as-is" map captured mainly the delivery of the IO, while processes such as the design, strategy and customer (student) focus were not captured. In effect, this map only illustrated the workflow of the delivery of the IO: REM and not the holistic picture of the IO process from inception to completion.

A more advanced and "holistic" version of the process was mapped to include external imposed audit requirements such as, for example, the framework to assure the legality of offering the IO, etc. Using the weightings given to the various elements and criteria within the SAEF framework, a weighting was given to the various process elements. At the time that this map was constructed, SERTEC was still in operation and had to be taken into consideration. The revised version of the IO process map is illustrated in Table 7.2. The order of the steps can differ from IO to IO and from the management perspective of one IO manager to the next.

TABLE 7.2: An advanced process map of the IO: REM, including the weightings of SAEF and SERTEC

STEP	PROCESS	OWN SCORING	SERTEC	SAEF	
				CRITERIA NR.	WEIGHT
1	Managing the process of identifying, designing, and delivering an IO.		-	6 (Design and delivery)	
2	Consulting the legal framework to ensure the legality of offering the nationally controlled subject: [Act, 1984 (No. 76 of 1984) National Education Policy applicable to technikons].		-	1, 2, 6	
3	Consulting Certification Council for Technikon Education (SERTEC) Act, 1986 (No. 88 of 1986) as amended for legality of offering the instructional programme containing the IO (subject).		-	1, 2, 6	
4	Consulting the legal framework to ensure the legality of offering the nationally controlled programme. Consulting Report: 150. Requirements for National Instructional Programmes at Technikons.		-	2	
5	Allocating process ownership/A manager (leadership).		8	6, 1	
6	Identifying process domain team members.		8, 9, 10	6	
7	Assess local needs: Survey of needs.		21, 24	3	
8	Consult existing advisory bodies in similar fields.		21, 24	3	
9	Participation in overall Border Technikon strategic planning programmes.		2	2	
10	Strategic planning process in department (SWOT* analysis).		2, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 21	2, 3	
11	Confirm the need for the programme.		21, 24	2	
12	Inclusion of departmental projected growth and expansions in institutional three-year rolling plan process.		2, 21	2	
13	Analysis of three-year rolling plan and identification of the next programme.		-	2	
14	Scheduling of new programmes and subjects.		-	2, 6	
15	Drafting and review of policy for the introduction of new programmes.		-	6 Delivery	
16	Costing of new programmes and budgeting requirements.		-	5a	
17	Projecting Human Resources and other indirect costs for programme.		-	2, 4	
18	Ensure procedures in SAPSE 151 are adhered to.		1	6 Delivery	
19	Check for duplication of programmes in region with ECHEA.			2	
20	Confirm future job opportunities for graduates.		21	3	
21	Check available resources for offering the subject (IO).		12, 13, 14, 4, 5	5b	
22	Check available technology for offering the subject (IO).		13	5	
23	Check available Resource Centre back-up.		4	5b	
24	Complete Forms A, B and C of SERTEC documentation for offering a new programme.		1	2, 6	
25	Consulting and familiarising with the background to statutory provisions, broad educational objectives.		15, 16	6 Design	
26	Preparation of learner guides [outcomes-based education (OBE) compliant].		15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20	6 Delivery	
27	Allocation of subject (IO).		8	6 Delivery	
28	Preparation, planning timetables.		-	6 Delivery	
29	Confirm purpose, overall outcomes, course components and scheduling and forms of assessment for subject (IO).		15, 16, 17, 18	6 Design	

*SWOT – Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

(Du Toit 2001)

In the process of reflecting on the initial process map of the IO: REM, it was felt that, from a quality management point of view, one had to enrich the existing "system" that we had (SERTEC) and combine it with a holistic, systemic framework such as the management model of the SAEF. This was an effort to balance the external accountability of SERTEC (at the time) with the systemic internal continuous improvement of the management framework of SAEF (Nedwek 1997; Lundquist 1996).

Conclusions that could be drawn regarding this "balancing act" referred to in the previous paragraph, were the following:

- As part of the strategic management process, these diagnostic tools [the adapted SAEF self-assessment instrument (refer to paragraph 7.4.3 for a description of how and with whom this was done)], or the combination thereof, highlighted areas where there were strengths and areas for improvement (as referred to in paragraph 7.5.1.1 and Annexure 1). Strategic decisions were taken to reallocate resources and to create a balance in directing the effective and efficient utilisation of the sources to align this basic service offered with a continuous improvement and balanced process of delivery. For example, less human resources were used in team teaching the IO: REM coursework across the disciplines instead of each discipline having its own lecturer for the IO. Another example is that, instead of offering the same lectures at three different campus sites, it was decided to offer them only at the Potsdam main campus and at the East London campus in College Street.
- This balance is often referred to as using a "dashboard" technique where there are gauges and dials on a typical motorcar or aeroplane dashboard on which one can read all the different settings and try to create some kind of even keel or straight flying approach (Peterson, Kovel-Jarboe & Schwartz 1997; Rowley 1996; SAEF 2000). This entails weighting and checking ratios and concurrent impacts on adjusting one factor that could either improve or negatively impact on another factor. In other words, from a holistic perspective the IO manager could monitor the whole

process and determine what impact changes in sub-processes would have on the process as a whole.

- The value of using this basic unit of service (IO process) is that all those involved in this service domain can then strategically and collectively address the areas for improvement. The findings of the application of this combined framework to an IO process (basic unit of service) is then transferred to the AL team or the CI team. This interdisciplinary multifunctional team then identified, selected and allocated methods and resources to address these areas requiring improvement (refer to paragraph 7.5.1.1).
- This integration of the quality improvement process with the strategic management alignment and, finally, into the operational management has proved to be effective in *incrementally* improving the quality of service delivery. For example, by improving the strategic plans for the IO process: REM and managing the process (IO manager) incremental improvements such as the availability of research resources in the resource centre and supervisors acquiring supervisory skills through workshops (Annexure 14; 16.1–16.3 & 17) contributed to a better quality of "service delivery" to the IO: REM students.

However, the SAEF management framework had to be adapted to be used on a smaller "entity" or "unit" such as the IO process.

7.3.2 Action learning (AL) cycle within the first action research (AR) cycle

Within the first AR cycle essential elements of AL such as the questioning and reflection on the initial process map, my resolution to take action to revise the map, as well as my commitment to learn from this experience, came to the fore. These essential elements of AL are illustrated in Figure 7.4. I realised that it was essential to map the IO process: REM in as detailed a way as possible to enable the AL team and me to assess the management of this process and its sub-processes.

The first AR and AL cycles prepared the foundation for the self-assessment that took place in cycle two.

7.4 ACTION RESEARCH CYCLE TWO

In the second cycle of the AR I carried out the self-assessment after I had adapted the SAEF and the Baldrige Education Criteria into an instrument relevant to the IO process (refer to Annexure 1). The *reflection* and *revised plan* for the adapted instrument was done in consultation with Reg Mason (a founding member of SAEF), Jeremy Kedian (a manager of a business unit with experience in educational management) [Mason 1999 (personal interview); Kedian 1999 (interview), 2000 (interview)]. I did the self-assessment of the IO process based on my three years' experience as an award's assessor for SAEF. The outcomes of the assessment were *reflected* upon by the AL team and myself and we prioritised the areas identified for improvement (refer to paragraph 7.5.1).

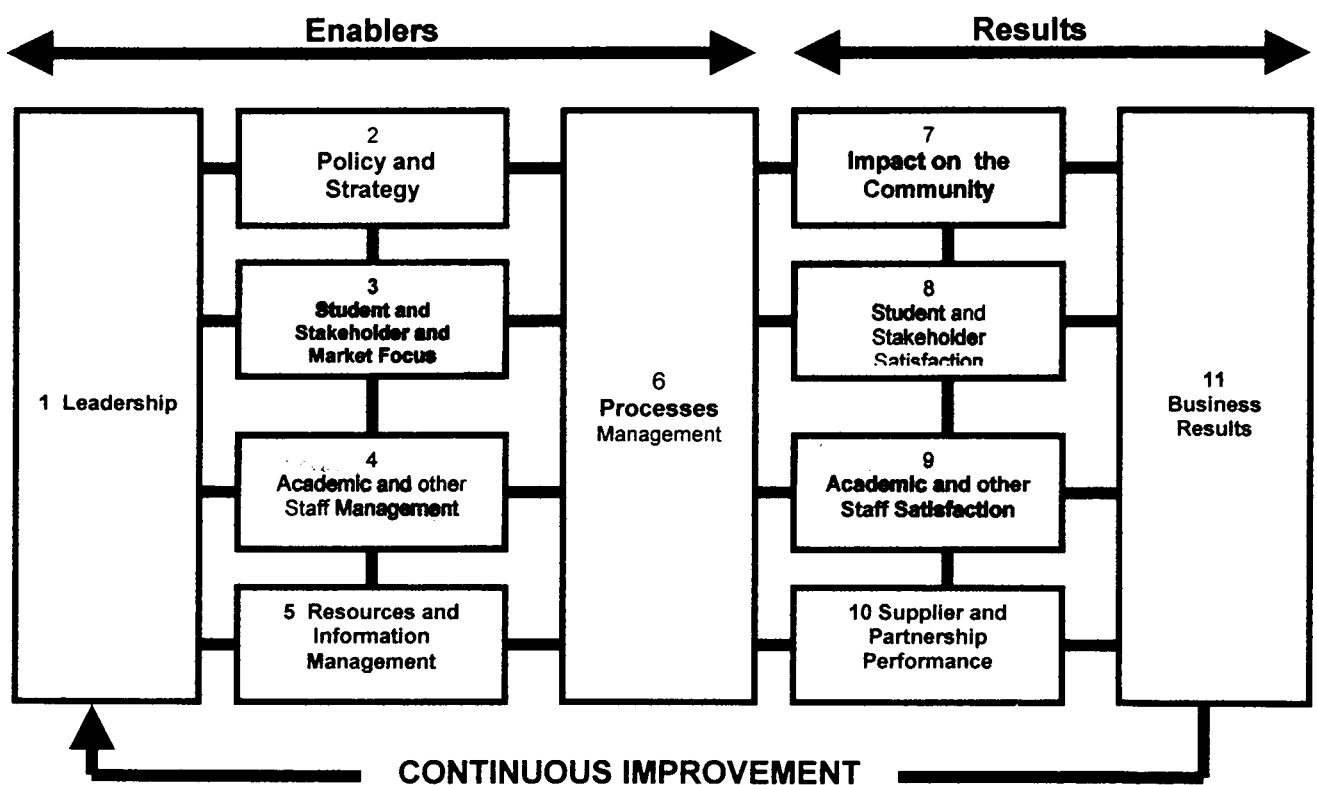
7.4.1 Adapting the SAEF Level 3 and the Baldrige Education Criteria to self-assess an instructional offering (IO) process

Both the SAEF model (Level 3) and the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence 2001 (refer to paragraphs 5.6 & 5.7) are non-prescriptive tools to assess or self-assess an organisation's or unit's progress towards excellence or its organisational *maturity* level: "Focus is on results, not procedures, tools or organisational structure. Organisations [or units in this case] are encouraged to develop and demonstrate creative, adaptive and flexible approaches for meeting basic requirements. Non-prescriptive requirements foster incremental and major ("breakthrough") improvements, as well as basic change" (NIST 2001:1).

To end up with a set of criteria to apply to an IO to assess the quality of the management thereof, the SAEF Level 3 criteria for businesses, as well as the Baldrige National Quality Programme 2001 Education Criteria for Performance Excellence were studied in depth by me. An adaptation of the SAEF framework, as well as using additional information from the Baldrige Education Criteria, resulted in a set of criteria to apply to an IO process (in

this case Research Methodology) to assess or self-assess the management of quality and the performance excellence maturity of the IO process. The scoring element was left out of the self-assessment tool, as the tool was used primarily to establish areas for improvement and strengths and not as an application for the national awards (Lundquist 1996). These criteria are supplied in the self-assessment instrument in Annexure 1. The adapted framework is illustrated in Figure 7.7:

FIGURE 7.7: An adapted version of the South African Excellence Foundation's Framework for Performance Excellence



SAEF (2000:6)

The differences regarding criteria names from the original SAEF Framework are captured in criteria 3, 4, 7 and 9 as illustrated in Figure 7.7.

In a telephone discussion with one of the founding members of the SAEF, Mr Reg Mason, reflection on the use of the Level 3 criteria of the SA Excellence Awards resulted in the decision to use Level 3 because of the small size of the unit of measurement (the IO process) [Mason 2001 (discussion)].

The SAEF distinguishes between three different levels of application for the awards process and Mr Mason and I agreed that Level 3 was the most applicable for the following reason:

Level 1 is more applicable to businesses such as Honeywell South Africa which have demonstrated that they are a role model in their field and that they have achieved the highest level of performance excellence. This was not applicable for the purpose why I wanted to assess the IO process. The idea was not to enter for an award, but to use the framework to assess the management of the IO process in order to identify areas for improvement.

Level 2 is an Excellence Prize used for applicants at an intermediate level of demonstrating through their commitment and practice of excellence and quality principles, significant deployment in building sound, systematic and prevention based processes and management practices. This level was also not suitable to use in the assessment of the management of the IO process. The reason is that at this level - aimed at organisations or units such as Daimler Chrysler Parts Division in Pinetown – it is assumed that the unit or the organisation has rolled out the SAEF framework and is well on its way to performance excellence. The IO process does not qualify at this level, as it has not rolled out the SAEF framework and is only at the beginning of the road to performance excellence.

Level 3, however, is the Excellence Certificate and "applicants" at this level demonstrate a serious commitment to the use of excellence and quality principles. The focus is more on the "enabling criteria" of the model with a further emphasis on the "approach elements" of the enabler criteria. Mr Mason and I argued and reflected that this level is the most applicable to the IO process (SAEF 2000). The reason for this conclusion was that although Border Technikon had adopted the SAEF management framework, it had not been rolled out at all levels and the IO process was only at the beginning on the road to explore means to incrementally improve towards performance excellence.

A comprehensive discussion of the SAEF model and the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence is provided in paragraphs 5.7 and 5.6.

As mentioned earlier, in adapting the criteria of the SAEF Level 3 and the Baldrige Education Criteria, the aim was not to use the criteria for an application for an award as such, but rather as a self-assessment tool or instrument. Therefore the limitation of 15 pages for an application in the Level 3 of the SAEF criteria document does not apply in the adapted version of the criteria for an IO "unit" and no scoring took place (Lundquist 1996). Although scoring is indicated in the self-assessment feedback report, it was not considered in determining the order of priority of the areas that had been identified for improvement actions (refer to Table 7.3).

In anticipating the changes and new developments in quality assurance (QA) in higher education, Border Technikon has, over a period of three years, introduced the self-assessment framework and management system of SAEF. The Border Technikon Council approved the introduction of the SAEF system in the latter part of 1998 (Brunyee 2000). This process of "institutionalising" the SAEF principles in Border Technikon demonstrated that the framework was not new to the Technikon. However, it has not yet been applied to the fundamental unit (the IO) in the Technikon. In other words, the use of the SAEF principles has not yet filtered down to the "roots" of the organisation.

7.4.2 Self-assessment and the management of the self-assessment process

In the past the self-assessment of an IO process did not take place systematically and effectively at Border Technikon. What did take place, was the self-assessment of an instructional programme in preparation for SERTEC site visits.

As referred to earlier, I carried out a self-assessment of the management of an IO process of REM in November 1999 so that areas for improvement could be identified and possible solutions to these problems could be captured in an action plan. I felt confident about doing this assessment, because of my training and experience as an assessor and senior assessor in the application of the SAEF framework in industry since 1998. The findings of

the self-assessment of the IO process: REM were shared with the AL team. A summary of the findings from the feedback report (Annexure 20) is provided in the Extract 7.1:

EXTRACT 7.1: Extract from the IO Process Feedback Report 2000

SELF-ASSESSMENT FEEDBACK REPORT

1 LEADERSHIP (20%)

Summary:

Although the IO process: REM is managed on an *ad hoc* basis there is little other evidence indicating how the leader(s) is(are) visibly demonstrating commitment to a culture of performance excellence in this process. There is some support for the lecturer(s) of the IO, but from the evidence provided, it appears that only the lecturer or academic with the most impact on management can get some support concerning resources and training. The low score is a result of the lack of good evidence of many appropriate, sound and preventative approaches which are reviewed in order to improve and are thoroughly integrated into all areas of the process. The deployment in some cases appears to be good, but the depth and span achieved is not always clear from the evidence.

2 POLICY AND STRATEGY (30%)

Summary:

The IO process has no systematic and consultative method of strategy and policy development and progress reviews in line with the vision of the programme and the faculty. There is little evidence that results and progress made are measured against performance indicators. It is not clear if relevant facts are taken into consideration when policy and strategy are developed. The processes followed in the formulation of policy and strategy, communication and feedback loops are not clear.

3 CUSTOMER (STUDENT AND STAKEHOLDER) AND MARKET FOCUS (32,5%)

Summary:

Some meetings regarding the IO includes student stakeholders. There is little evidence of stakeholder involvement, except for the student questionnaire that is completed annually to assess lecturer performance. As some of these actions are only planned, it is difficult to positively assess the deployment thereof, their effectiveness and what review actions are in place. It is also not clear how complaints are currently handled.

4 ACADEMICS AND OTHER STAFF MANAGEMENT (20%)

Summary:

Academic and other staff are involved in the IO process through their involvement in meetings but there is no evidence of other involvement. In addition, the Faculty decides on an *ad hoc* basis who will be responsible for the IO each year. There is little evidence of innovative ways of encouraging and recognising academic and other staff's efforts and for caring for them.

5 RESOURCES AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT (45%)

Summary:

Some knowledge resources are available in the resource centre of Border Technikon, but no visible effort has been made to improve physical and other resources needed for the IO: REM. There is also no evidence indicating how expenditure is monitored and to ensure that expenditure is according to plan.

6 PROCESSES (20%)**Summary:**

There is no evidence of processes in place to establish the level of complying with programme and student needs. There is also no evidence of processes in place to establish what results are achieved in relation to the activities carried out in the enablers, nor how benchmarking is done.

7 IMPACT ON SOCIETY/COMMUNITY (10%)**Summary:**

There is little evidence to indicate performance improvement and achievement relative to IO, programme and any external target set.

8 STUDENT AND STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS AND SATISFACTION (15%)**Summary:**

There is very little evidence indicating the satisfaction of the students and other stakeholders with respect to the design and delivery activities in the IO process. No evidence of targets set to achieve student and stakeholder satisfaction is available.

9 ACADEMIC AND OTHER STAFF SATISFACTION (20%)**Summary:**

There is little evidence that indicates that the academic and/or other staff are satisfied. There is no trend of satisfaction levels of the academic and other staff to determine whether there was an improvement or not, nor were there comparisons of results with neither external, nor own targets. There is no indication of what is done to improve the results for the academic and other staff's satisfaction levels of recognition and training and development received, although much is done to train and improve the academic staff, as explained under Criterion 4

10 SUPPLIER AND PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE (05%)**Summary:**

There are no visible links between this criterion and Criterion 7. The evidence shows that some consultation with other technicians on this IO has taken place. However, it is not clear what the results, added value or improvements are as a result of these.

11 IO: REM RESULTS (15%)**Summary:**

Some results were displayed and the relevance of the results was understood. Few results relative to targets and trends were recorded. Although the ITS indicated the results, the priorities of service delivery were not clearly determined. There is no evidence of targets set for results, nor how these were met. There is no visible, accessible evidence of the impact of these results on the financial results of the IO: REM.

For the detailed feedback report on the self-assessment of the IO process, refer to Annexure 20.

7.4.3 Action learning cycle within the action research Cycle two

It is at this point in time that I became more than the facilitator of the AL team – I also became an action coach (refer to paragraph 7.2.4; Figure 7.3). I had to explain to the AL team how I had adapted the SAEF criteria and incorporated some of the Baldrige Education Criteria to be applicable to the IO process. In the journal entry below, the adaptation process that I followed, is described.

January 2000:

- *After telephonic discussion with Reg Mason, Prof. Brunyee and Peter Miles, I decided to use the Level 3 SAEF Criteria for Performance Excellence and the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence and create an adapted Level 3 criteria, using terminology that would be more related to education and understandable in an IO environment.*
- *I used the format of the SAEF Level 3 Criteria and adjusted the terminology according to the Baldrige Education Criteria. I decided to keep the 11 criteria of the SAEF framework. These criteria were all present in the Baldrige Education Criteria, but just under different criterion parts.*
- *I gave the completed format of the adapted instrument to Reg and Peter (he was a former principal and had higher education knowledge) to determine if the terminology was understandable and usable in the IO process. Reg did not feel comfortable to comment, because of his industrial and business background.*
- *Both Peter and Prof. Brunyee agreed that I would have to mentor and explain to the AL team what the meaning of some of the questions were in terms of what it was that one wanted to measure.*
- *We agreed that the instrument could be used, that I could do the self-assessment and then discuss the findings with the AL team to assist me in prioritising the areas for improvement, as well as to draw up action plans to address these areas.*

The outcomes of the self-assessment exercise were that areas for improvement in the IO process were identified and in the next cycle these areas were prioritised with matching action plans for these (refer to Table 7.3).

7.5 ACTION RESEARCH CYCLE THREE

The AL team and I then drew up an action plan (*action*) to address the prioritised areas for improvement as discussed in paragraph 7.5.1. This became Cycle three of the AR and it was particularly in this cycle that AL became pivotal in the actions of the AL team and myself (refer to paragraphs 7.2.4-7.2.6 & Figure 7.5). The action plans to address the areas that had been identified for improvement and which had been prioritised were then put into action as described in paragraphs 7.5.1.1.1 to 7.5.1.1.5.

The areas for improvement identified in the self-assessment done by myself had to be prioritised, as it was not possible to address all the areas for improvement in one project because of institutional constraints such as financial resources, human resources and time constraints. The parameters for

the prioritisation was set by the notion to use available resources creatively and innovatively (refer to paragraph 7.2.5). This motivation was supported by Dr P.B. Ferguson (a staff developer at the Waikato Polytechnic since 1985). Her appreciation for the energy and commitment of teaching staff across the institution led her to investigate how the developing research culture of the polytechnic could build on teachers' strengths. She is a strong believer in using *existing* strengths and motivations in conducting and managing of research (Ferguson 1999; Ferguson 2000).

7.5.1 Problem identification and gap analysis in the management of the instructional offering (IO) process: Research Methodology (REM)

The self-assessment results gave a snapshot or "gut-feel" of the management of the IO process: REM at the specific point in time, namely in November 1999. The outcomes of the self-assessment of the IO process were discussed with the AL team. The team was encouraged to add, agree and/or disagree with my findings by means of consensus. Identified areas for improvement were listed and prioritised by the team and listed as the following:

- It was not clear whether the management of the IO: REM was the responsibility of an identified individual or unit and if it took place effectively. This was identified in Criterion 1 (Leadership) in the adapted SAEF framework (refer to Annexure 1, pages 349-352).
- In the apparent absence of a person or unit to manage the IO process, there was a lack of policy, strategy and action plans (*planning*) for the IO. This was identified in Criterion 2 (Policy and Strategy) in the adapted SAEF framework (refer to Annexure 1, page 353-354).
- It was not clear if academics and other staff involved with the IO process, were managed, motivated and enabled to contribute to the performance of the IO. For example, most of the lecturers responsible for the supervision of students had little or no supervisory experience, they had large lecture loads and were not keen to supervise because of time constraints and lack of experience. This was identified in Criterion 4

(Academic and other Staff Management), as well as in criterion 9 (Academic and other Staff Satisfaction) in the adapted SAEF framework (refer to Annexure 1, pages 357-359, 371).

- It was not clear how the design and delivery processes of the IO are identified, managed and learning-focused. For example, were the IO content and assessment suitable for the IO: REM? This was identified in Criterion 6 (Processes Management) in the adapted SAEF framework (refer to Annexure 1, pages 364-367).
- There was no evidence that the IO process was focused on the students (customers) and their expectations. Students felt that they were not empowered to deal with the challenges of the IO, because of reasons such as lack of well-developed reading, writing and search skills and time management skills (refer to paragraph 7.7.1.3 for examples of responses from students). This was identified in Criterion 4 (Student and Stakeholder and Market Focus), as well as in Criterion 8 (Student and Stakeholder Relationships and Satisfaction) in the adapted SAEF framework (refer to Annexure 1, pages 356-357, 369-370).
- It was not clear how material and other resources such as lecture rooms, financial resources and information resources were managed. It was, for example, felt that the physical environment in which the delivery of the IO takes place is not ideal. This was identified in Criterion 5 (Resources and Information Management) in the adapted SAEF framework (refer to Annexure 1).

Actions to be taken to address the prioritised areas for improvement were discussed and brainstormed by the team. Actions to address these identified areas for improvement were then captured and, in collaboration with the AL team, prioritised into an action plan (refer to paragraph 7.5.1.1, Table 7.3).

Actions were carried out by means of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action during the second and third AR and AL cycles. Some of the plans were revised more than others (for example the scientific writing course that I had to design after I had attended a similar course in Stellenbosch, had to be

postponed so that supervisory workshops for lecturers and potential as well as existing supervisors could be attended and arranged first) and some new or improved plans were made to improve the IO process *incrementally* and *continuously* throughout the project (refer to Table 7.3, priority nr. 3).

Findings and results were discussed by the AL team (refer to paragraph 7.5.1.1). In Extract 7.1 a summary of the findings from the self-assessment feedback report (Annexure 20) is provided. Advice, comments and input were invited from founding members of the SAEF, educators and practitioners at other organisations (such as the University of Pretoria and Massey University in New Zealand), as well as technikons nationally and internationally (such as Peninsula Technikon in the Western Cape and Northland Polytechnic in New Zealand) (refer to paragraph 7.5.1.1.4).

Dr Poskitt of Massey University, Palmerston North in New Zealand, kindly agreed that I could spend time with her to observe how she implemented AL as a methodology in her classroom. I observed that the cyclical nature of AL and the group/team involvement required from the students and the lecturer had valuable impacts on the confidence of students. Students could address questions to peers and the group as a whole discussed possible answers by reflecting with the lecturer and the group. The fact that students were actively involved and engaged with the learning material as well as with the content contributed to self-directed learning supported by the guidance - and sometimes participation - of the lecturer and the students. The learning that took place was student-centred supported by the lecturer's input. This, to me, appeared to be effective and I was certain that our students in the IO: REM could certainly benefit from an AL approach and technique in the lecture rooms.

PHOTO 7.1



Dr J.M. Poskitt (on the left) and I (on the right) during the research and benchmarking visit to Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

Dr Poskitt reflected with me on the areas identified for improvement and provided valuable comments and recommendations which will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

7.5.1.1 Prioritised areas for improvement and action plans to address them

The problem identification did not only apply to the mapping of the process, as well as the assessment of the process using the adapted SAEF criteria, but also to the challenges in using skills such as AL, action coaching and reflective practice. The next section presents the identified areas for improvement and the AL team's action plans to address these in a cyclic manner in order to become reflective practitioners and to facilitate learning in action in the process.

The AL team prioritised the following areas for improvement and suggested plans of action to address these as listed in Table 7.3:

TABLE 7.3: Prioritised areas for improvement and action plans to address them

PRIORITY NR.	AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT	ACTION(S) SUGGESTED
1	Leadership (Identifying an IO manager)	Faculty had to assign the responsibility of managing the IO process: REM to an individual in a unit or a school.
2	People management (lecturer empowerment)	To organise workshops for lecturers on research supervisory skills, mentoring, reflective practice, change management and AL.
3	Customer (student) focus	To prioritise the needs expressed by students in a questionnaire (see Annexure 2). To have writing course designed to assist students with academic writing skills. To assist students with time management by supplying guidelines on the utilisation of time for the research report-writing (Refer to Annexure 5). A postgraduate procedure manual had to be written to guide students with regard to procedures (refer to Annexure 3). Attention had to be given to the academic administration processes such as the registration of students, printing and posting of progress reports and other academic-related communication to students, as this could also have an impact on the quality management of the IO process (Bogue & Saunders 1992).
4	Process (design and delivery of IO)	Reflection on the lesson work plans and framework and student learner guides must take place in a structured manner co-ordinated by the IO manager (Refer to Annexure 4). Reflection on the mode of delivery and assessment methods had to take place.
5	Management of resources (physical environment and library)	The lecture room at the East London Campus had to be improved or changed for another venue with less noise and with effective equipment. More books, journals and periodicals had to be purchased for the resource centre for students' use. The purchasing of Research Toolbox was suggested as another resource to assist students and staff doing research. Access on the intranet to make use of electronic training programmes in report- and academic writing had to be negotiated with the information technology services.

Table 7.3 provides an overview of the actions that were planned to address each area for improvement in order of priority. In the next five paragraphs the action taken and the cyclic processes in which the AL team participated to achieve the planned actions will be discussed in more detail.

In the following paragraphs more details are given with regard to some of the steps in the various cycles. It is important to mention that, although the steps are reported on in this order, there were smaller cycles within the bigger cycles that took place parallel with some of steps in these bigger cycles. The events did not happen chronologically either. For the sake of order, it is listed in order of priority.

7.5.1.1.1 *First area for improvement: Leadership (identifying an IO manager)*

During reconnaissance of the situation and results of the IO: REM a concern was raised by me, as well as by some academic staff that postgraduate students were not developing the necessary search and research skills to complete their research projects and coursework successfully. Research projects and assignments based on the coursework were seldom completed in the required time assigned for them. In many instances, the assignments and projects were not handed in at all. This became evident in the progress reports and results available on the ITS system according to which every assignment, test and report mark of each student is captured during the year [refer to Tables 7.1 & 7.4 with specific reference to year 1 (1998) and year 2 (1999)].

During the period January to November 2000, lecturers involved in lecturing to REM students felt concerned about the increased responsibility and workload added to their lecture loads. In *reflection* the AL team - after discussions with lecturers - felt that there was no formal co-ordination of research methodology activities in the faculty. This raised the question "Who is managing the IO process of Research Methodology?" for the first time. Is it the co-ordinator or lecturer(s) involved in the offering of the subject? After a reflective discussion with

lecturers, the research officer at that specific period and other members of the AL team, it was decided that I would investigate the application of an adapted version of the SAEF framework as an instrument to measure the quality of the IO process. The results of the "snap-shot" picture of the process could then guide the group to identify areas for improvement, not only in the management of the design and delivery of the IO, but also in other sub-processes such as the registration of students, time tables, etc. of the IO process as a whole. The AL team decided that I should develop an adapted SAEF self-assessment instrument applicable to an IO process and do this initial assessment because of my training as an awards assessor and senior awards assessor for SAEF, as well as because of my industrial experience in assessing companies in industry for SAEF (refer to Annexures 15.1-15.4). In paragraph 7.4.3, I explained how I went about it by referring to one of my journal entries.

In the period from January to November 1999 a meeting was held with the research officer and other academic staff interested in IO: REM. It was decided that a team teaching approach would be explored by identifying lecturer(s) in each academic department who could devote time to some component of the course content of REM (refer to Annexure 9). These lecturers would have to avail themselves to attend all the lectures of all the coursework components so that all the lecturers could acquire a common, clear and holistic understanding of the aims and course content in the team teaching attempt.

During informal interviews and discussions with academic staff from other departments, I discovered that staff felt insecure and not equipped to lecture or supervise postgraduate students. They also felt that they could not afford the time with their heavy lecture loads to also attend other lectures at the times when they themselves were not involved in lecturing. Lecturing staff offered these as some of the reasons why they did not participate in the team teaching or supervision endeavours.

As a *revised plan* the AL team felt that the AL and team teaching approach to the coursework should continue, but that a more formal

structure should be put in place to co-ordinate the IO process for the whole faculty. Up to this stage, the research officer and a senior lecturer in the School of Secretarial Studies (of which I am the head) shared this function. The school offers B.Tech.: Office Management and Technology.

Up to June 2000 the research officer had done a substantial part of the co-ordination and organisation of Research Methodology. In *reflection-on-action* the AL team felt that this was not justified, as the responsibility of the research officer was primarily to encourage a culture of research among academic staff members to further their studies towards postgraduate degrees and research administration. In July 2000 the research officer resigned and left the technikon. The senior lecturer in the School of Secretarial Studies was now asked not only to act as research officer, but also to co-ordinate the activities concerning the delivery and supervision of Research Methodology in the Faculty of Human Sciences.

As part of putting the *revised plan into action*, the acting research officer did a detailed plan of the organisation and co-ordination of Research Methodology, including regular meetings and information sharing sessions with supervisors (refer to Annexures 4.2, 5 & 6.1-6.5).

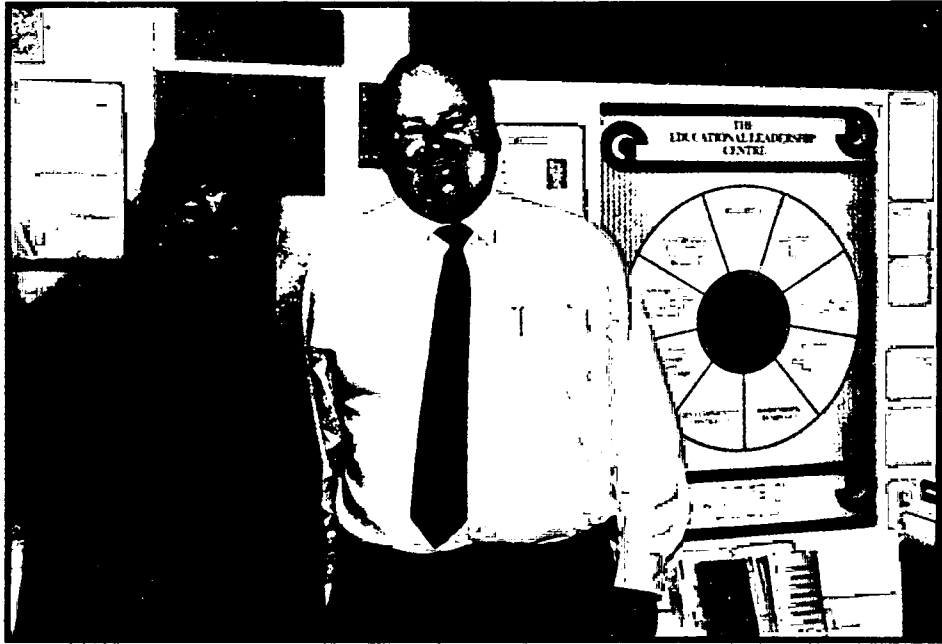
The *plan* involved the continuation of the team teaching approach, as well as the use of AL in the classroom. These meetings and information sessions to build capacity among supervisors and potential supervisors were scheduled to take place monthly.

Regular meetings for supervisors to co-ordinate the activities of the IO, as well as of the team responsible for teaching the Research Methodology students, took place. These meetings were not only informative, but also served as a platform for learning more about supervision and support in the general challenges concerning the delivery and supervision of the IO and the students registered for it (refer to Annexures 6.1-6.5).

At a Senate meeting in May 2001, it was agreed that it was compulsory for all staff involved with postgraduate supervision to attend workshops on supervision and research-related topics to empower them for the task (see extract from Minutes in Annexure 7). This was seen as a positive step by management to buy into the continuous improvement of the management of the IO process: REM. I emphasised at the meeting that serious attention needed to be given to the quality of the management of this IO process, as its neglect could have a negative impact on state funding. As mentioned in paragraph 1.1, B.Tech. programmes are financially attractive to technikons because of the high subsidy they generate per FTE students recruited. If one could improve the process by improving the management of the process, this could result in improved outputs, which, in turn, would result in increased subsidy from the state. Improved outputs could also assist in addressing the socio-economic needs of the community at large. However, to be able to control this process, one needs a leader or a manager to purposefully manage this process with a goal - such as a higher generation of subsidy - in mind. This requires leadership in a micro-educational management situation such as the process management of an IO. For this type of leadership I benchmarked in New Zealand at a Centre with educational leadership as its core function.

Thereafter I visited Dr Jeremy Kedian at his Educational Leadership Centre at the Waikato University, Hamilton, in New Zealand to investigate and observe the concept of "leadership in education" in the form of an IO manager. Although the Centre and the University were not familiar with the concept of an IO manager, the idea appealed to them. Dr Kedian and I discussed and reflected on the management of an IO process in terms of process-thinking and process management (refer to Annexure 18).

PHOTO 7.2



Dr. J. Kedian (on the right) and I (on the left) in the Centre for Educational Leadership at Waikato University in Hamilton, New Zealand.

In terms of educational leadership, Dr Kedian agreed that the same principles could be applied to the management of an IO process. Other outcomes emerged from this visit, as well as from some of the unstructured interviews with Dr Kedian and his staff in this Unit. These included how Action Thinking, AL and AR can assist in the management of a learning, changing organisation in higher education. Action Thinking (which could result in strategic thinking) becomes a technique in the everyday running of an organisation and has as its result continuous improvement and learning in the institution. Staff can be empowered to do continuous self-assessment and improvement through AL and reflective thinking techniques.

Dr Kedian visited South Africa and the United Kingdom (UK) in 2000. In response to my invitation, he also fitted in a day's visit to Border Technikon. One of his primary purposes was to consolidate the links between his Educational Leadership Centre and those of the Universities of Natal, Reading, Lincoln, Humberside, as well as the University of Sheffield in the UK. His visit to Border Technikon included

sharing concepts such as: Strategic Thinking, Futurous Thinking, Action Thinking and AL with the management team of Border Technikon. At Border Technikon, I shared the reflections and discussions of these visits with the AL team.

The AL team - now also becoming a CI team because of actions to improve the practice in managing the IO process - agreed that not only REM lecturers, but also the supervisors allocated to the B.Tech. students had to have compulsory training in supervisory skills.

The organisation of supervisory workshops for staff was put into *action*. The research officer presented two in-house workshops on proposal writing and search engines. In collaboration with other technikons research was underway into a manual for Research Methodology offered at technikons (refer to Annexure 13.1). The research officer of Border Technikon attended and participated in these collaborative meetings on national level.

With the assistance of the research officer, I organised three workshops at the technikon with experts from Stellenbosch University (Prof. J. Mouton and Prof. C. Kapp) and Vaal Triangle Technikon (Prof. E. Hoffmann) to facilitate workshops on supervision and how to manage your own research project(s) (refer to Annexures 16.1-16.3).

As mentioned earlier, I attended a writing course on scientific writing at the Stellenbosch writing school with the intention of having a customised writing course designed for the B.Tech. students to assist them not only in writing their proposals, but also in completing their projects (refer to Annexure 17).

As far as the management of the IO process was concerned, an IO manager (the programme co-ordinator for B.Tech.: Office Management and Technology) was identified to look after the management of the IO process as a whole. This meant that from the point where the school obtained permission to offer the IO up to where the student graduate, sub-processes were closely monitored, managed,

regularly assessed and continuously improved by the IO manager. This process included, *inter alia*, the selection and registration of students; the administrative and library support available to students; the quality of delivery of the IO; the quality of teaching and learning; the quality of assessment; etc. This is where the assessment tool to identify strengths and areas for improvement (the adapted SAEF framework) became a basis for strategic and operational planning of the management of the IO process for the future.

It was now possible to draw up a checklist, based on the outcomes of this project, of the responsibilities of the IO manager in the management of the IO process. In consultation with the AL team, I compiled the following checklist that could be cyclically reviewed and improved:

- Make sure there is a policy, a strategy and a strategic plan in place for the IO, e.g., the mission and objectives of the IO and how to achieve them.
- Determine customer (student) needs and expectations by means of consultation through student representatives or a questionnaire.
- Ensure that academic and other staff involved are motivated, cared for and developed/empowered to achieve the overall objectives of the IO by having regular meetings and information sessions with them.
- Ensure that financial, information and other resources are properly managed, for example to budget adequately for books, materials and aids necessary for the successful delivery of the IO.
- Ensure that the design and delivery processes of the IO are identified, managed and learning-focused, for example that OBE principles are applied in the learner guide and in the content of the course work.
- Make sure that key processes that support the daily demands of the IO and its academic staff are managed, for example, the administrative staff responsible for the input of students' assessment outcomes, as well as the academic secretary responsible for student enquiries related to the IO.

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- Find a suitable, reliable method to measure the impact of the IO in the community it serves, for example that the research projects are relevant to the particular community's needs in the surrounding areas of Border Technikon.
 - Determine student and other stakeholders' satisfaction (needs of internal and external customers), for example meetings, working groups and questionnaires with students and staff of the IO.
 - Determine the satisfaction, performance and effectiveness of the academic and other staff involved in the IO process, for example by means of meetings, workshops, questionnaires, surveys, etc.
 - Monitor and interpret IO results closely, for example determine a trend over a period of three years, but also identify students with low marks, so that remedial action can be taken.

The *action* plans based on the prioritised areas be addressed should include those areas that could have the greatest impact on improving the performance processes of this IO. Another one of the areas for improvement was how people were managed and how satisfied they were.

7.5.1.1.2 *Second area for improvement: People management and people satisfaction (lecturer empowerment)*

A questionnaire (Annexure 2) was given to the AL team members to measure perceptions about the value of this AL experience that they had participated in.

General comments from some of the questions in the questionnaire (Annexure 2) varied. Examples in this regard are the following:

- "I didn't know that what I was questioning on a daily basis could be part of action learning."
- "I didn't think that it would work, but having to force myself to think of possible solutions and just to start thinking in processes instead of *ad hoc* tasks and activities, gave it a whole new meaning."

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- "The whole idea of asking new or fresh questions and not being ashamed to admit your degree of ignorance was an AHA-moment for me!"
 - "I just hope that one can motivate all individuals in the technikon to start using action learning as an every-day life tool."
 - "It is still a bit hazy for me ... this whole process mapping of an IO... it makes it very complicated."
 - "What really impressed me, is that you can make a difference even by only using the resources available to you more innovatively and creatively..."
 - "I really need to learn more about process-mapping, process ownership and how to manage a single process..."
 - "Do we really need to know all about strategic, operational and process management, just in order to deal with our instructional offerings?"

Students from a variety of B.Tech. instructional programmes attended the IO: REM and their supervisors were from the departments where these B.Tech. programmes were "housed". This meant that supervision of these students was the responsibility of lecturers in the academic departments where the students in question were enrolled; something which posed another problem. Not many staff members were qualified at M-level to supervise these students. Few staff members had ever supervised a student before. Towards the end of 1999 another meeting was called with the then newly appointed research officer - holding a Ph.D. - and again at least one staff member from every academic department that offered B.Tech. programmes was called upon to attend. New ideas and action plans for 2000 were discussed and it was suggested that a follow-up meeting should be held early in 2000 to confirm the activities (including team-teaching and supervision) in the new year (refer to Annexure 9).

In *reflecting* on the difficulties experienced by academic staff members concerning supervision and postgraduate coursework based on verbal feedback from staff, it was decided to draw up an action plan to further address these issues.

I implemented AL in the coursework lectures and attended the other lectures presented by the research officer as well as by one other academic staff member, all the while making observations.

Academic staff from the different academic departments were once again invited to attend lectures in coursework and observe the AL techniques implemented in the classroom. The attendance of the lecturers and the response to this invitation were poor.

Another *action* that was taken was that of mentoring staff by co-supervision with more experienced staff. This proved to be helpful and both the mentor as well as the staff member being mentored benefited from this experience. However, upon *reflection*, the AL team felt that this had very little impact, because only two staff members held Ph.D.s at that point in time. These two staff members could not mentor 14 potential and existing supervisors from the different instructional programmes in the Faculty of Human Sciences, over and above their lecturing and administrative duties.

The AL team *observed* at both the two workshops held for staff involved with postgraduate supervision that the majority of the staff who attended these workshops were not aware of the complexities and responsibilities that supervision entails. Most of the staff appreciated the opportunity to improve their skills and knowledge. Some staff members withdrew from the process and felt that it was too involved and too big a responsibility for them. Others realised that they would need much more training and experience before they could supervise on their own.

7.5.1.1.3 *Third area for improvement: Customer (student) focus*

Students who participated in the AL team or the CI team also completed the questionnaire on the perceptions of the value of the AL team (refer to Annexure 2).

Some of the areas to address reported by students were:

"Lack of writing and speed reading skills in English as second - sometimes third - language speakers..."; "Great need for a structure or timetable on how to use our time for the project..."; "It is confusing to have different lecturers for the same subject - we don't know who to ask for help..."; "We can't work all alone, we must get support from older students or lecturers - it is too difficult to cope...".

As a result of lecturers and students having a "brainstorming" session, recommendations were made to have a writing course designed to assist students not only with English proficiency in writing, but also more scientific writing needed to complete their proposals, as well as their projects successfully. Having attended a scientific writing course in Stellenbosch (as mentioned earlier), I was tasked to develop a "custom-made" writing course for B.Tech. students doing REM (refer to paragraph 7.5.1.1.2 & Annexure 17). This course emphasised the important aspects of academic writing and the role of the reader when one is writing for a specific "audience". Simple steps and guidelines were provided as part of the course to assist students at every level (covering assignment-writing, report-writing, up to Ph.D. level) with their academic or scientific writing styles. This is one of the strategies to assist third language-speaking students in their reading and writing skills of the English language.

Students in the B.Tech.: Office Management and Technology (the former Commercial Administration) were given clear guidelines and timetables on how to manage their time and activities in order to cope with the demands of the IO: REM (See Annexure 5).

Action taken with regard to the B.Tech.: Office Management and Technology students involved regular meetings and follow-up one-on-one sessions between the supervisor and the students. The aims of these meetings were to afford the students an opportunity to ask questions; to clarify any uncertainties; to encourage and monitor progress; and to promote a culture of consulting and reporting. This

proved to be very helpful to the students, as close monitoring of their progress allowed for corrective actions and improved work. During these meetings students were encouraged to meet deadlines and hand their assignments in on time. The idea was to empower students to be able to stay on track with their research project (refer to Annexures 8.2-8.4).

The IO manager (programme co-ordinator), as referred to earlier, held a work session with all the REM students to establish the status of their progress with assignments and their projects, as well as to assist students with challenges and difficulties that they were experiencing. This work session included all the supervisors as well as potential supervisors in an observer capacity. Supervisors and students could use the opportunity to learn from one another and to share problems and solutions in a relaxed atmosphere.

It is important to note that "all the research methodology students" referred to up and till now, included students from various B.Tech. programmes in the technikon. However, the particular group of students that were closely monitored for the purposes of this study, were the B.Tech.: Office Management and Technology students in the School of Secretarial Studies in the Faculty of Human Sciences at Border Technikon. These students attended the REM course work lectures with students from other disciplines, in addition to instructional programmes doing REM. Although I mapped the IO process: REM and applied the adapted framework to the process to assess the status of the management of this process, the effects of the actions for improvement (of the management of the IO process) were closely monitored among this particular group of students.

Two staff members in the School of Secretarial Studies also formed part of the 2000 intake of B.Tech.: Office Management and Technology and registered for the IO: REM. This situation was optimised by including the two staff members in the AL team to reflect on actions, plans and improvements in their capacity as both staff members and students.

**7.5.1.1.4 *Fourth area for improvement: Process management
(design and delivery of the instructional offering)***

During 1999 it was only one academic staff member and I who alternated in the "team-teaching-approach" to offer coursework to students in Research Methodology. I attended the lectures by the other academic staff member with the students to observe student behaviour, attendance, their understanding of content, frequently asked questions, as well as how the lectures were presented. These lectures were presented late in the afternoons and evenings because the majority of the students registered were working and attended classes after work. I observed that students had difficulty staying awake during these lectures and attendance decreased towards the end of the year. In informal interviews and discussions with students – asking them how they were experiencing the IO: REM and what was good or bad about the offering - it was said that students found the lectures difficult to understand and that they had difficulty staying awake after a day's work. Only six out of a class of 35 IO: REM students handed in assignments and of the six students who handed in assignments, only four finished their research project by the end of the academic year.

As mentioned earlier (see paragraph 7.4.2), the assessment of the management of the IO process: REM was done by me. An adaptation of the SAEF Management Framework (Level 3) and of the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence done by me, was used as instrument for this self-assessment to establish a "snap-shot" of the quality of the management of the IO process as it was in June 1999.

After consultation with the group, the CEO of IDZ (East London) and a founding member of SAEF, I decided that no scoring or site visit issues would be done during that assessment, because it was not an application for a national award as such (referred to earlier in paragraph 7.4.2). Although scoring was reflected in the self-assessment feedback report, it was not the single factor that determined the order of priority of the areas for improvement. The AL

team reflected on the outcomes of this assessment and inputs were invited from any member that could add value to the process (see Annexure 1). The areas for improvement were identified and it was decided by the AL team to prioritise these and to draw up an action plan to address the first five areas to improve. The five areas for improvement which were identified and elected by the AL team as priorities are depicted in Table 7.3.

With regard to the design and delivery of the IO as part of the IO process, another senior academic staff member and I shared the workload of developing the coursework content. At this stage, no other academic staff members from other departments indicated their willingness to assist. The lesson work plan and the framework as devised and revised for 2001 are attached as Annexures 4.1-4.3.

The team teaching approach according to which different lecturers took different topics in the syllabus which they were familiar and comfortable with, was started in 2000 and somewhat revised in 2001. Better-planned and improved timeframes for each lesson topic were scheduled based on the experiences of 2000 (refer to Annexures 4.1-4.3).

Another improvement to the process was the purchasing of the software package, Research Toolbox. The programme co-ordinator (IO manager) for B.Tech.: OMTECH and I studied the *User Manual Version 3.1* to establish how it could be used as an aid to enhance the efficiency of the novice researcher. The purpose of this software package with its supporting manual is to assist the supervisor, the novice researcher, the experienced researcher as well as the researcher Who would like to write papers for publication and research reports. It covers topics such as how to plan and write your research report, how to publish your research work, writing papers for conferences and preparing the presentations (Mathews & Taylor 1998).

A senior academic, another researcher at the Technikon, the IO manager and I decided to incorporate parts of the manual in the coursework of REM. The AL team agreed that the software package would require computer literacy skills and could be incorporated in collaboration with the computer literacy (level two) syllabus in a module for future IO: REM classes.

I drew an initial and - at a later stage - an advanced process map of the IO process: REM to be able to identify other areas that might affect the student performance in the IO process (refer to Figure 7.2 & Table 7.2). The AL team realised that the process map for REM should include more sub-processes. It needed to be revised and improved to accommodate factors such as customer service to the student in the form of resources and technology support, assistance with enrolment and registration, supervisor-student relationships and many more. The initial process map for the research methodology process designed by me was given to three other academic staff members at Border Technikon to comment on so that the advanced process map could be drawn. Attention had to be given to the academic administration processes such as the registration of students, the printing and posting of progress reports and other academic-related communication to students, as this could also have an impact on the quality management of the IO process (Bogue & Saunders 1992). I was responsible for the improved or advanced process map for the REM process in collaboration with the AL team.

I used the information (*act*) gathered during the AL and the AR cycles up to this point in time as a basis for a research paper. This paper was delivered at both a national and an international conference in Zululand, South Africa, and at the Northland Polytechnic in New Zealand (a similar institution to Border Technikon in terms of student numbers, research experience and students from disadvantaged backgrounds) respectively (Du Toit 2000, 2001). This paper was delivered to disseminate information to a national and an international audience for their input and comments. The feedback of this exercise is provided in paragraph 7.9 of this chapter.

After *reflection* with the research officer and one other academic staff member involved in the team teaching approach, I decided to use more active learning styles such as AL, role-play and group work in the lecturing of the course work. This would then assist in keeping students alert because of their active participation and involvement. Although I attempted to incorporate group work into the majority of the coursework of Research Methodology, the lectures attended by me or other academic staff revealed that AL did not really take place in all the lectures. Academic staff felt that much time was needed to structure lectures creatively so that AL could become a teaching methodology. In the lectures where AL was applied, students were actively involved. They were alert and participated well. The groups were small so as to ensure participation by all students. Report-backs from these groups were well prepared and supported by other students in the class. Students were excited and seemed to enjoy the participation and "competitive" nature of the report-back sessions.

I researched the use of AL in the classroom (*observe and reflect*) by means of an extensive literature review as well as by attending lectures at Massey University in New Zealand (refer to Chapter 6; Annexure 19 & Photo 7.1). As mentioned earlier in paragraph 7.5.1, I visited Massey University in Palmerston North, New Zealand, and the Northland Polytechnic in Whangarei, New Zealand, to observe and investigate how international peers use AL in the classroom and lectures. After returning from New Zealand, I disseminated information on "AL and AR in the classroom" in a workshop situation to the AL team and other staff members at Border Technikon. This was particularly aimed at staff who would be required to team teach and supervise in research methodology.

Informal interviews and observation in the classroom (*act, observe, reflect*) revealed that students could recall more theory content and could apply more of the theory practically, through AL and group work as a methodology of teaching. Students commented that they

remembered better and enjoyed the AL classes more. However, not all the components of the coursework were presented in this manner.

In November 2000, the majority of students still could not hand in assignments on time or complete their research projects (refer to Table 7.4 & Graph 7.1).

Between January and November 2000 the research officer, academic staff members and I drew up an action *plan* to address the training needs of the academic staff with regard to course work and supervision of research methodology (refer to Annexures 4.2 & 5). A plan of action was also worked out for the implementation of AL techniques, participative or active learning and group work to be incorporated in the coursework lectures (refer to Annexure 4.2). The plan included the application of theory in a practical mini-assignment during the same lecture period (refer to Annexure 4.3).

7.5.1.1.5 *Fifth area for improvement: Resources management (physical environment and library)*

The IO has to be offered on two different campuses to increase access to full-time and part-time working students in Mdantsane and the greater Buffalo City municipal area. Two campuses – the main campus in Potsdam and a satellite campus in College Street, East London - are approximately 27 kilometres from each other. The campus in East London is very noisy and the venues and equipment are not well maintained and in place. This situation regarding the noise and equipment was reported to the Estate Manager with suggested requirements for improvements. These problems were also reported in School Board and Faculty Board meetings for *action*. The outcome was that portable overhead projectors would be purchased – budgeted for in the 2003 budget - for the venues in order to alleviate problems with regard to disappearing and broken equipment. The noise factor – caused by traffic and street vendors – could only be addressed effectively in the long term. Strategic plans to change venues facing the streets and make them soundproof are underway,

but will only become operational in 2004. The short-term solution was to move to a central venue in the building. The lectures in this venue particularly, are offered to mostly part-time students in the late afternoons and evenings.

More books, journals and periodicals related to research and research methodology were purchased (*act*) for the resource centre (library) for students' use (refer to Annexure 14). As explained earlier in paragraph 7.7.1.4, the purchasing of Research Toolbox was suggested as another resource to assist students and staff doing research. The software package was subsequently purchased and relevant information from the manual incorporated into the learner guides and postgraduate procedure manual. Plans to incorporate the use of the software package as part of the Computer Literacy IO are underway for 2004.

Another *action* that was taken to address this area for improvement, was to negotiate for web-based training on the intranet to the benefit of, *inter alia*, REM teachers and learners. Access on the intranet to make use of electronic training programmes in report- and academic writing was negotiated with the information technology services for academic staff and students interested in research. This is now available on the intranet (refer to Annexure 13.2).

Another *action* which was taken to improve not only this area for improvement, but which also impacts on the "Policy and Strategy" (Criterion 2) of the SAEF framework, is the updated version of the *Research Manual* available on the intranet and which is accessible to students and staff who are interested in research (refer to Annexure 13.1).

In the next paragraphs reflective observations and comments on the project as a whole follow.

7.6 REFLECTIVE OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTS

It soon became very clear to me and the AL team that the initial problem of a low pass rate in Research Methodology was much more complicated and involved than anticipated. Furthermore, it had already transpired in the initial stages of the project that trust and openness were required from dedicated staff for constructive self-reflection, reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (refer to paragraph 7.2.3 & Chapter one, paragraphs 1.8.31 and 1.8.32).

As the project evolved and the cycles of AL and AR spiralled into action, some members of the AL team (two lecturers involved in the supervision of the students) felt that attempts to improve practice while *in action* jeopardised their objectivity (refer to paragraph 2.2.5). For example, staff would assist students "deliberately" and end up almost doing some of the assignments for the students in an attempt to "improve practice". The fact that some of the AL team members were also lecturing in the course work at certain times of the project, also made it difficult to distance themselves in order to reflect objectively.

The AL team had to come to grips with the essential elements of AL (as referred to in paragraphs 7.2.1 to 7.2.6 and as illustrated in Figure 7.8). Although team members were encouraged to keep journals of their actions, reflections and observations, these were not "religiously" kept to be used as sources of information or reference. I kept journals for the entire period that the project lasted and could detect a clear thread of growth in terms of strategic thinking, reflective practice, as well as continuous improvement throughout the project. The level of thinking elevated annually and, eventually, a helicopter view of the management of the IO process was possible.

General comments from the international as well as the national audiences at the presentation of the improved process map was that this process was not static and that it would definitely vary from one institution to the next (Ferguson 2000; Genis 2001; Mapili 2000; Mason 2001; Miles 2001; Poskitt 1999). This proved to be true where Border Technikon was concerned during this study.

It was clear after the self-assessment and identification of areas for improvement that some of the sub-processes (such as delivery and design of

course work and research assignments) of the IO process needed to be either improved, redesigned or re-engineered to continuously improve the quality of the process as a whole (Ferguson 2000; Genis 2001; Köpke 2000; Mapili 2000; Mason 2001; Miles 2001; Poskitt 1999; Van den Heever 2000).

It was agreed by the AL team that the transformational scope of Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) was only partially applicable to the IO process: REM. The process was one of continuous improvement rather than BPR because the changes were incremental; the focus was on current practice; the frequency of change was continuous; the scope of the project was narrow and within a function of the institution; the participation in the process was bottom-up and not top-down; the risk and rewards were low to moderate; the role of information technology was not a key enabler, but rather incidental; and the aids were ideas and suggestions more than methods and tools (Earl 1996:59).

The whole process of mapping the *process* of managing the IO: REM was complex in itself in that it had to be done in a cyclical manner and improved during a second cycle of AL (see Figure 7.6 and Table 7.2 earlier in the chapter).

It was not only systems thinking (as referred to in the conclusion of Chapter five) that had to take place in the AL- team, but also process thinking to review the variables in the IO process in order to improve its efficiency and effectiveness. The AL team had to constantly rethink and reflect on the way in which the sub-processes and their activities were organised in the whole IO process (Schon 1983). This proved to be challenging for team members and required tremendous and continuous effort and mentoring from me, being facilitator as well as mentor. This responsibility became very challenging at times during the project. The reason for this was probably that I had a passion for this project because of my Ph.D. research and other team members did not necessarily share this passion.

As referred to earlier in paragraph 7.6, it was the opinion of some of the AL team members that attempts to improve practice while in action, jeopardised the objectivity of some members of the AL team (refer to paragraph 2.2.5).

In delivering the paper mentioned earlier in paragraph 7.5.1.1.4, valuable comments were made by lecturers, managers and administrators at the Northland Polytechnic and Massey University. These were addressed in the activities of the AL team. A list of the comments and how they were addressed, follows.

- *The concept of process mapping is not familiar to academics at all levels.* The AL team agreed with this statement and organised a workshop for on process mapping and process management lecturers and current and potential supervisors in November 2000.
- *The mapping of the IO process seems too complex and difficult to incorporate into the everyday activities of lecturing, examination papers, etc., if you are not at a managerial level.* The AL team agreed with this comment and felt that the mapping of a process such as the IO process should be done by academic managers and leaders such as heads of schools and programme co-ordinators. It should also be benchmarked against other best practices in similar institutions such as Pretoria Technikon and Peninsula Technikon.
- *It was the perception of some of the delegates that not all academics are necessarily managers.* The AL team did not agree with this perception and felt that each academic was a manager at his/her own level of operation in the institution.
- *Much education and information must be given to academics on process management, process ownership and process-mapping before they can embark on process-thinking.* The AL team agreed with this statement and felt that the institution, its academics and academic support staff needed to have a culture of learning to embark on skills acquisition such as process management, process ownership and process-mapping. This type of training should also be included in the institutional skills plan.
- *Staff should only be given the tools and information that they need at their level of operation to execute their part in the sub-processes and activities. Thus they should not be bombarded with the whole picture at the same time.* The AL team found this to be true, as lecturers commented that they were overloaded with the "normal" academic activities and did not need more added to their workloads (refer to paragraph 7.7.1.2 for comments on

this from the questionnaire) (Ferguson 2000; Genis 2001; Kedian 2000; Köpke 2000; Lam & Zhao 1998; Makoni 2000; Mapili 2000; Mason 2001; Miles 2001; Poskitt 1999; Van den Heever 2000).

These comments were very valuable and resulted in new questions being asked in the same situations by the AL team e.g.: "Is it really necessary for every lecturer to know how to map processes or should it be done by senior academic managers?". The AL team, upon reflection, argued that it was perhaps not necessary for every single lecturer to be able to map processes, but it is important for them to understand why processes should be mapped, as well as being aware of the benefits resulting from it. Although every lecturer should be a manager at his/her level, it was felt that it was not necessary for lecturers to make an in-depth study of process-mapping, but rather of how to manage the process at his/her level to the benefit of all involved in the process.

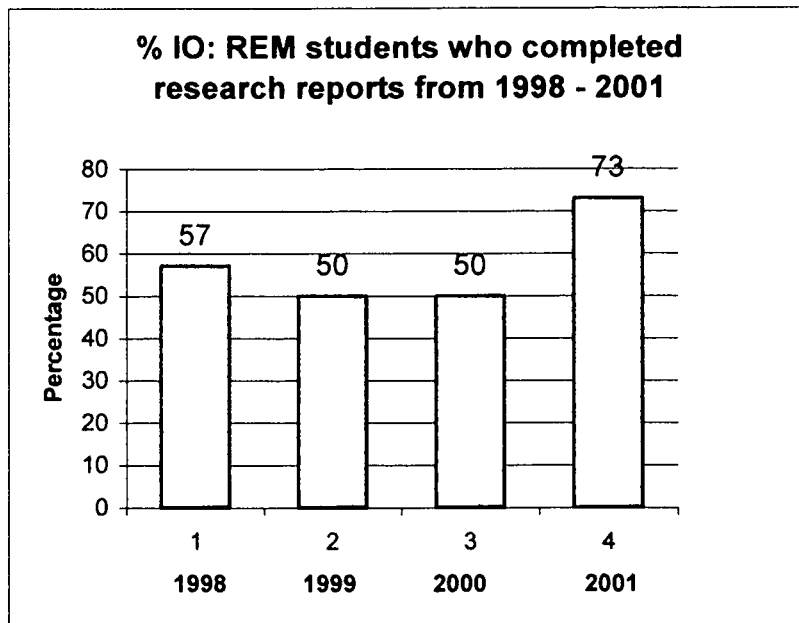
Although this project was not a "quick fix" to improve the pass rate and the number of students completing their research reports, Table 7.4 illustrates a change in output.

TABLE 7.4: Completion and pass rates of Research Methodology students for the period 1998 to 2001

Year	Number of students registered for IO: REM	Number of students who completed final research report	% of students who completed final research reports	Number of students who passed IO: REM	% pass rate of IO: REM students per year
1998	7	4	57 %	1	14 %
1999	6	3	50 %	1	16.6 %
2000	10	5	50 %	4	40 %
2001	26	19	73 %	17	65 %

Although this is a very small sample and the "trend" is only visible over two years, there is an indication that more students finished their research reports in 2000 and 2001 than during the period from 1998 to 1999. There is also a significant improvement in the pass rate of students during the period 2000 to 2001 compared to the period 1998 to 1999, as can be seen in Graphs 7.1 and 7.2:

GRAPH 7.1: % of IO: REM students who completed the research report during the period 1998 - 2001

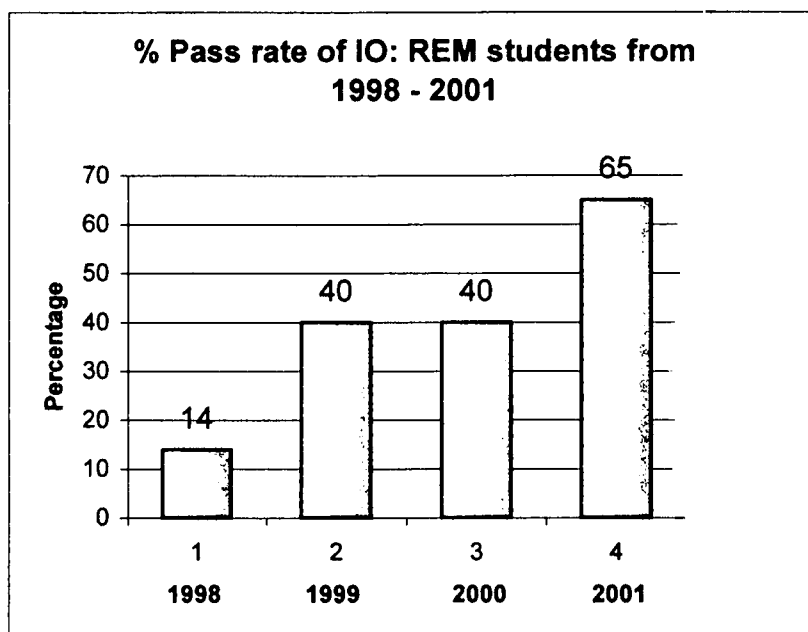


In year three (2000) the same percentage of students completed their research reports. However, more students were enrolled in the year 2000 than during the previous year, resulting in more students completing the research report in 2000 (five out of 10 students) than in 1999 (three out of six students). A significant larger percentage of students finished their research reports in 2001 (19 out of 26 students) than those in 2000 (five out of 10 students). Upon reflection in the AL team, it was felt that lecturers were more comfortable with supervision, although a number of lecturers felt that they needed more experience and mentoring.

Although every new group of IO: REM students differed from the previous group in terms of gender, number of students and level of knowledge, skills as well as attitudes, lecturers felt that students were empowered and informed as to where and how to ask for assistance throughout their academic year. The IO process was consciously managed, which, in turn, empowered lecturers and supervisors to be confident in their guidance and assistance to students. The communication between lecturers, lecturers and students, as well as lecturers and administrative/support staff improved and this indirectly led to students feeling generally more "looked after". Lecturers reported that they now knew exactly where to go and what to do, for example,

when a student experienced problems with his/her progress report. Lecturers felt empowered to assist students in every aspect (academic, administrative and support) of the IO process. Students, in turn, felt that they were well informed about every aspect of the IO process, as well as about where and how they could seek assistance with their assignments and/or projects.

GRAPH 7.2: % Pass rate of IO: REM students from 1998 to 2001



As illustrated in the graph, a significant percentage of students passed the IO: REM in 2000 and in 2001 compared to the previous years.

This does not, however, imply that the visible improvement in the completion rate of research reports and in the pass rate is necessarily due to the improved management of the IO process: REM.

One can, however, safely assume that improvement in the management of the IO process: REM did take place. The reason for this assumption is based on the positive feedback received after the AL team, facilitated by me, had reflected on the actions taken to address the areas for improvement identified in the self-assessment. Action plans were executed as envisaged after the self-assessment exercise in 2000 and most of the areas for improvement were addressed as identified.

Process ownership and IO management of the IO: REM were identified. Regular communication, empowerment of the process owners and structured management of the IO process and its activities contributed to the design and delivery process (refer to Annexures 4.1-4.4, 5, 7, 8.2-8.4 & 9-11). A research policy document was developed and published on the intranet for REM students, academic staff and supervisors to access (website: <http://bortech.ac.za>). These actions addressed areas for improvement in Criterion 1 (Leadership), Criterion 2 (Policy and Strategy), Criterion 5 (Resources and Information Management), Criterion 6 (Processes) and, possibly, Criterion 11 (Results). More students completed their research projects in 2001 and more students passed IO: REM in 2001. Although this is not a trend, it could be an indication of improvement and even a projection for future improvement.

Lecturers and supervisors were empowered through supervisory, research design and methodology workshops, structured lesson plans and schedules and monthly meetings, to address Criterion 4 (People Management), as well as Criterion 9 (People Satisfaction) of the 11 criteria in the SAEF Framework. Minutes of these meetings and information sharing sessions, as well as the work schemes are available (see Annexures 4.1-4.3, 5, 6.1-6.5, 8.1, 10 & 11).

Student empowerment took place by means of, *inter alia*, structured timetables for students to assist them with their time management in doing their assignments (see Annexures 3 & 9), research and the writing up of their projects. Workshops on proposal writing and research projects were arranged for students and staff. A procedure manual for postgraduate students was developed, as well as an updated learner guide (refer to Annexure 3). A team teaching approach in the delivery of course work was adopted (refer to Annexure 9). Regular meetings between supervisors and students were scheduled and detailed feedback reports issued to students on their assignments (refer to Annexures 8.3 & 8.4). These actions addressed areas for improvement identified in Criterion 3 (Customer and Market Focus), Criterion 6 (Processes Management) and Criterion 8 (Customer Satisfaction) of the SAEF Framework.

The lecture room at the East London Campus had to be improved or changed for another venue with less noise and with effective equipment. More books, journals and periodicals related to REM were purchased for the resource centre for students' use. The purchasing of Research Toolbox was another resource to assist students and staff doing research. Access on the intranet to make use of electronic training programmes in report and academic writing were successfully negotiated with the information technology services.

It was possible to draw up a checklist (refer to paragraph 7., based on the outcomes of this project, of the responsibilities of the IO manager in the management of the IO process. Another valuable base document that informs the checklist is the self-assessment feedback report, which captures the strengths and areas for improvement, as well as summaries of the performance of the IO process against the 11 criteria of the adapted framework (refer to Annexure 20 and paragraph 7.4.2).

7.7 CONCLUSION

The two definitions of "quality" in the management of an IO process which seem to be the most appropriate in this case study, are "fitness for purpose" and "transformation". In order to measure the quality of the management of the IO: REM it was necessary to map the process and to assess whether the requirements and expectations of the customers (students) had been met. Challenges of measuring quality in terms of transformation were difficult in practice, but not impossible. Transformation in terms of the organisational culture, and more specifically, in the IO process was not clearly measurable. However, upon reflection by the AL team after a period of three years, it was possible to observe a learning culture sensitive to reflective practice, TQM, CI and the needs of its customer – the student members of the AL team and I (refer to Chapter two, paragraph 2.2).

The AL team concluded that it was possible to manage an IO process and improve the quality of managing this process by using the self-assessment results as a basis. The team agreed that it was not necessarily all lecturers' responsibility to map processes. However, each process owner and/or IO manager can improve the management of the IO process by using the

"checklist" developed from the adapted SAEF self-assessment instrument or framework. In *reflection* the AL team agreed that it would be possible to apply this instrument or framework to other IOs along with the checklist to guide the responsibilities of the IO manager(s) for those IOs. However, I still feel that the IO manager needs to manage the IO process very closely to ensure that the customer is looked after throughout the process. Systems thinking cannot really be avoided if one is serious about the implementation of sound business principles and concepts applicable to the academic environment.

Process quality management (PQM) is a technique from which we can learn when it comes to "getting the whole team on board" and to ensure that every role-player knows what the common goals are and what the expected output for the IO process is (Oosthuizen *et al.* 1998:79). PQM is imperative in managing the IO process. I feel strongly that the IO manager can no longer just be a "pure" academic without the skills, values and knowledge of management principles, in particular where process management principles are concerned.

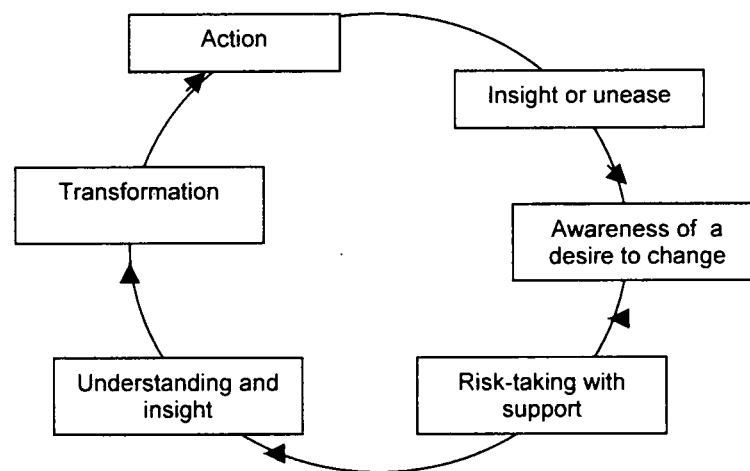
It is also true that if one can draw the attention of top management to the financial benefit that process management has for the institution, it is subsequently not too difficult to point out other advantages such as the enhancement of scholarship, which, in turn, contributes to science by addressing a variety of research needs posed by the socio-economic needs and demands of the community that the technikon serves. Following on the local socio-economic demands, realities and needs, the improvement of quality in research outputs can lead to competitiveness within the international research and science community.

I conclude that the quality of the management of an IO process will eventually impact on the FTEs generated by the IO, thereby affecting the financial results of the institution. It is my opinion - based on the experiences in this AR and AL project from 1999 to 2001 and to date - that, in order for quality to "survive" in the management of an IO process, it is necessary to have a culture of learning, continuous improvement, reflective practice and customer focus embedded in a philosophy of TQM. It is also my opinion that the people in the institution or organisation must be willing to continuously learn, reflect and improve on

practice in every process of the organisation. Furthermore they must be willing to benchmark in order to determine improved practices. State subsidy is not necessarily going to increase in the years to come, which means that institutions of higher learning will have to seriously consider operating according to sound business principles if they are enthusiastic about surviving in a forever changing higher education landscape. I feel there is no better place to start than with the fundamental core business of the technikon, namely the IO process.

On a personal level, I have gained valuable skills such as personal mastery and dialogue (listening and communication skills) in addition to experience as an action researcher and an action learner. My personal development was also cyclical as illustrated in Figure 7.8 where a first stage was that I would experience insight or unease and then develop a desire to change. I was subsequently prepared to take a risk with the support of the AL team and other support mechanisms such as literature and experienced academics. Then understanding and, along with it, insight came - sometimes accompanied by an "AHA-moment" or two. This then resulted in transformation and action.

FIGURE 7.8: My inner learning cycle



Adapted from Marquardt (1999:133).

Individuals in the group were placed in unfamiliar settings, faced with a problem. For example, they had to think like managers instead of lecturers. The problem at one stage in an AR cycle was that students' results were not published timeously and students did not know if they had succeeded or failed in an

assignment that impacted on their final research report output. The AL team members now had to think as managers how to solve the problem instead of thinking like academic lecturers. In this new setting, they asked fresh questions and had to move out of their comfort zones to look at things through a different lens. As fresh questions were asked within the group, group members began to unfreeze and reshape their underlying assumptions, thereby transforming how they saw and responded to situations. As their assumptions were questioned, these assumptions were sometimes either confirmed, modified or rejected. This led to the creation of new mental attitudes and "models" – an aspect which is important for learning to take place.

In the final chapter that follows, the conclusions, recommendations and suggested guidelines for the quality management of an IO process are provided and reflected on. Additionally, the key benefits to Border Technikon, the AL team and me will be supplied.



Chapter 8

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR THE QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF AN INSTRUCTIONAL OFFERING PROCESS IN TECHNIKONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In the higher education sector, just like in the rest of the world, things are forever changing faster and faster. It is expected not only to adapt faster, but also to learn faster and better in order to survive the changes. Staff and institutions are forced to find new and innovative ways to cope with problems. In this study it has become evident that AL as a method to solve problems and improve practice can become a key element for survival in an ever-changing environment of managing teaching and learning processes of quality.

In the following paragraphs I will discuss the main findings that have been gleaned from this study by drawing together the results from the previous chapters.

8.2 CONCLUSIONS FROM THE LITERATURE

I undertook an extensive literature review on TQM in higher education, process management, a learning organisation, reflective practice, and the higher education statutory landscape. This literature review was preceded by a comprehensive annotated bibliography (refer to Annexure 19) that formed

the basis for this study. I compiled this annotated bibliography in 1998 and 1999 on concepts such as "action research"; "action learning"; "participative action research"; "reflective practice"; case studies of "action learning" and "action research", as well as "traditional research".

With this comprehensive theoretical base as terms of reference, I investigated the challenges for change in the organisational cultures of higher education institutions, the role of quality assurance – with self-assessment at the core thereof - in the changing higher education landscape, as well as the systems approach to quality management in these institutions.

8.2.1 Conclusions from Chapter two

My reasoning in this chapter was mainly to determine what the terms of reference should be when institutions of higher learning are serious in their endeavours to assure quality and manage it effectively. If an institution is serious about the quality of its "service delivery" to its internal and external "customers", it must be willing to change as a whole.

I investigated the concept of "organisational change" by referring to a variety of cultural changes that must take place. The culture of an organisation should change to an organisation with a culture typified by a willingness to learn with a philosophical change to TQM. Embedded in the philosophy of TQM is the culture with a desire to continuously improve; to be able to reflect-in-action and reflect-on-action; to be serious about a culture of customer focus; to effectively manage every process in the organisation; and to benchmark internally and externally against "best practices". The benefits of benchmarking as well as the importance of process management in the whole organisation were highlighted, but - more specifically - in the design and delivery process of the higher education institution.

8.2.2 Conclusions from Chapter three

In the process of managing quality at higher education institutions, it is imperative to make strategic decisions informed by policies and perspectives regarding quality assurance in South African higher education.

Processes and decisions have to be guided by the institution's notion of quality and quality assurance, as well as the factors that influence quality assurance in higher education. In Chapter three I discussed the notions of quality, factors influencing quality assurance, as well as international trends in quality assurance in higher education in countries such as the United Kingdom, Belgium, New Zealand and the Netherlands.

In the South African context I studied the role that SERTEC played in technikons and the QPU in universities. A history of policies pivotal in the establishment of quality assurance in the South African higher education was studied and the essence of each policy was captured in the context of quality assurance. These policies and practices included the NEPI Report (NEPI 1992); the NCHE (1996); the Green Paper on Higher Education (RSA DoE 1996); the White Paper 3 (RSA DoE 1997a); the Higher Education Act (RSA 1997); the CHE; the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) and the NQF; the National Plan for Higher Education (RSA DoE 2001) and the New Academic Policy (RSA DoE 2002); and the HEQC.

It was evident from the literature that a sound knowledge of the policies and perspectives impacting on and guiding quality assurance in the South African higher education sector empowers institutions to make informed strategic decisions which have an impact on their quality management processes.

8.2.3 Conclusions from Chapter four

This chapter points out the importance of self-assessment practices at higher education institutions as being pivotal to the national requirements set by the HEQC on quality assurance systems. Self-assessment is not only considered to be a crucial quality assurance mechanism in higher education, but should be at the centre of an institutional review process designed to establish the potential of higher education institutions for accreditation by an external body such as the HEQC.

Self-assessment is defined, the importance thereof stressed, and its cyclical nature illustrated. The chapter then reveals the different approaches to and

techniques of self-assessment - such as the *pro forma* approach, the workshop approach, a questionnaire approach, and the matrix chart approach. This is done in terms of their advantages and disadvantages.

Self-assessment at institutional level, at instructional programme level and at IO level is further discussed and the linkages between self-assessment, the institutional/unit planning process and action plans in improved quality assurance processes are pointed out.

This chapter concludes with the thought that the "threat" associated with self-assessment should be removed if CQI is to be honest, meaningful, achievable and without resistance in the higher education setting.

8.2.4 Conclusions from Chapter five

Efforts to adopt the TQM philosophy at higher education institutions are increasing and more and more institutions adopt this approach to attract and retain students (Willes & Taylor 1999; Klaus 1996; Owlia & Aspinwall 1997). This chapter emphasises the importance of the fact that institutions have to agree on a definition of quality in line with their mission and values and then to use an aligned quality management approach to manage their quality activities.

TQM cannot survive without the support of a holistic, humanistic management system or framework that decentralises the institution and empowers the staff. Many businesses failed to implement TQM because they failed to support the philosophy of TQM with a systemic, holistic management framework that promotes performance excellence and continuous improvement (Tan 1997). Higher education institutions can learn from the experiences of businesses by investigating the possibilities of using one or a combination of holistic frameworks such as the EFQM, the Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence, the SAEF Framework or the ISO principles in the higher education context. These frameworks are discussed in depth in this chapter, highlighting the advantages of these management approaches.

The chapter contextualises the importance of developing effective quality management and assurance systems in higher education institutions, taking cognisance of existing organisational cultures, strategies, policies, structures and processes.

8.2.5 Conclusions from Chapter six

In this chapter AR as methodology is discussed, anchored by a comprehensive theoretical base. The origins of AR are described and six essential principles discussed, namely principles related to organisational culture in AR; the mode of enquiry in AR; the effects in AR; the scientific approach in AR; the practical-deliberative approach in AR; and the critical-emancipatory educational approach in AR.

Techniques commonly associated with AR – for example observational notes, shadow studies, structured focus groups or AL teams, reflection journals, critical questioning and many more – are discussed further in this chapter. The contradictions in AR are reflected upon in terms of the tensions between theory and practice; the tensions between individuality and collaboration; as well as the contradictions in terms of the insider and outsider relationship.

The chapter concludes with the challenge as to how the principles fundamental to AR are translated into practice, particularly in higher education institutions in South Africa with limited exposure to or experience of AR. AR was chosen as methodology because of its emphasis on improved practice and its outcomes of critical reflections – including propositional, practical and experiential knowledge.

8.3 CONCLUSIONS FROM THE METHODOLOGY IN ACTION

One of the biggest issues of debate among members of the AL team has been the criteria for agreeing on what is good practice. Is there one best practice for managing instructional offerings? Can a set of best management practices be identified to fit all situations? Or should one apply the *fitness for purpose* criteria? It was unrealistic for me and the AL team to suggest that

the activities and processes followed in this case study must apply nationally or even universally. Instead, the concept of *fitness for purpose* was adopted according to which one is free to reject good practice statements that do not match the circumstances of the IO process: REM.

8.3.1 Conclusions from Chapter seven

In this chapter the AR methodology and the AL technique - as employed in the study - form the basis of the assessment of the quality of the management of the IO process: REM in the B.Tech.: OMTECH in the School of Secretarial Studies and Education, the Faculty of Human Sciences at Border Technikon.

The chapter describes the case study in terms of what the problem is; the participants in the AL team; the questioning and reflection process that took place; the commitments to take action; the commitments to learning in action; and my role as facilitator and participant researcher in the AR project. The first two AR cycles are described in terms of how the IO process: REM was mapped; how the SAEF Level 3 and the Baldrige Education Criteria were adapted to use as a self-assessment instrument; how the self-assessment and the management of the self-assessment process took place; and the AL cycles which took place within and parallel to the AR cycles. The third AR cycle is a detailed report regarding problem identification and gap analysis in the management of the IO process; how the areas for improvement that had been identified were prioritised; and the detailed action plans to address these.

Some reflective observations and comments revealed that they could add value to the IO management process, if management fundamentals and business principles were applied not only to satisfy the customer, but also to even exceed the customer expectations. This is a performance excellence as well as a continuous improvement approach which is a winning recipe in business organisations and could very well be applicable to higher education institutions. Applying sound business principles to add value to an academic process and academic management should not only result in improved outputs, but also in improved academic citizenship, impacting on

the organisational culture as a whole and, ultimately, on the financial survival of the institution.

8.4 PERSONAL BENEFITS DERIVED FROM THE ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

My involvement in this AR project resulted in my personal development regarding my understanding of change management and the pertinent role it plays in the preparation of a team (such as the AL team in this project), as well as organisational processes (such as the IO process in this study) and of the bigger institution. I realised that it is vital to achieve change by, *inter alia*, facilitating the AL team members to commit to the process management "idea" central to this study, rather than just to "comply" with the process. I acquired a more open, differentiated and integrated perspective concerning the importance of having a change strategy that eventually evolves into the organisational strategy or, in this case, the IO process strategy.

In this AR project I practically experienced that the leadership or top management of the process – and ultimately in the institution – sets the tone for quality management. I realised the importance of "buy-in" from every person and stakeholder who are part of the IO process. Only when the AL team and the stakeholders who were involved or affected by the IO process, understood what the process entailed and why the process map ("is-map") had to be designed, did they engage in the process and were their perspectives changed from neutral and/or negative to positive. I developed an ability to reflect on different concepts and understandings and differentiated between these so that I could reframe my understanding of myself in the process, as well as in relation to the institution as a whole. I also developed personal strengths through AL.

8.4.1 Personal strengths developed through action learning

In addition to the teamwork skills and leadership competencies which I experienced through the use of AL, I developed a number of personal characteristics and attributes. These "strengths" increased my own

experience and personal growth, resulting in the holistic improvement of my professional practice as an educator, in addition to my contribution as an academic manager and a researcher at Border Technikon. Marquardt (1999) also refers to these skills as "personal attributes".

- I learned "critical reflection" by continually reflecting on what was happening in the process, both implicitly and explicitly, as well as on the words, actions and thoughts of the AL team and the "ad hoc" members such as Dr Poskitt and Dr Kedian whom I visited (refer to paragraphs 7.5.1.1.1, 7.5.1.14 & 7.7). I had the opportunity to practise reformulating questions and perspectives, as well as to examine taken-for-granted assumptions that might have prevented me from acting in new and more effective ways. I developed, what Brookfield (1988) terms a "healthy skepticism", which I feel is necessary for transformative learning. This "transformative learning" empowered me to see processes and situations in a new or different light – I was namely able to assess actions and ideas in the context of my new reality and I could transform past theoretical knowledge into present practice.
- I improved my skills to "inquire" and "ask questions differently". For example, when someone in the AL team said something that I disagreed with, I tried to frame my disagreement as a question rather than immediately dismiss what others had to say, based on my personal biases.
- I improved my personal vision by asking questions such as: What am I trying to accomplish? Why is it important to me? What will happen if ...? This experience made me examine my own values, goals and personal vision and it made me think of how these fit into the values, goals and vision of the institution.
- I developed "empathy" with team members and other stakeholders and I wanted them to succeed with the project and to learn from it. Empathy was very important among members in the AL team to establish trust and willingness to learn.
- I became an active listener, not only listening to what was verbally said, but also listening to what was conveyed "non-verbally" by means of body language.
- I had to learn to be frank at times and to have the courage to confront

members individually with direct, tough questions such as: "Why didn't you do that?" or "How would you handle that the next time round?"

- I continually had to advise and help peers and team members and my feedback had to be clear and concise, specific, prioritised, descriptive (without being prescriptive), and focused on the behaviour or action rather than the person.
- In helping the AL team to solve problems and learn while they were doing it, I developed as a facilitator. I also improved as a presenter through the papers I delivered on the progress of the project and the workshops I held to share information with colleagues.
- I improved the quality and productivity of the meeting process of the AL team and transferred these skills to my professional practice as an academic manager. I made a point of including a simple "assessment of this meeting" as the last point on the agenda of almost every meeting that I chaired or facilitated during this study. I would ask a set of simple questions such as: What worked well/did not work well in this meeting today? What was the level of participation in decisions and discussions? What preparation could we have done to improve this meeting? What must we remind ourselves to do differently/better/not at all next time we meet?
- The final and perhaps most important skill that I acquired, is self-awareness. Throughout the project I became aware of the "why" behind people's – and my own - words and actions and I developed a capacity to self-diagnose and self-develop on an ongoing basis. I learned to appreciate experiences and not to see challenges as negative, but as potential learning curves.

8.5 BENEFITS DERIVED FROM THE ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT THE ACTION LEARNING-TEAM

The underlying values of AL were evident in this project. Every AL team member's opinions were valued and democratically reflected upon. The validity of every AL team member and *ad hoc* participants' experience and knowledge were respected by the other members. Members were encouraged to learn from one another and, in so doing, hierarchical

differences were reduced. AL team members were continuously encouraged to challenge the *status quo* by learning to change themselves, as well as by contributing to changes in the IO process. Through their experiences with problem-solving and creative thinking in the AL/CI team, the group recognised that they had learned from their experiences and could improve their collective creativity.

As the project unfolded, it became evident that the team was able to integrate work with learning – thus through continuously reflecting on their activities, they became part of the learning organisation (Marquardt 1999:79). Although I argued in paragraph 2.2.3 that a learning organisation consists of individuals who learn, it is also true that learning can occur at other levels than the individual one. The AL team experienced the power of group problem-solving, brainstorming and creative thinking and was continuously "learning" and sometimes even having fun as an added spin-off.

Another benefit which the AL team experienced through the cycles of this study, was that - instead of seeing the "negative" side or obstacles in the way of progress towards operationalising the action plans - we started asking another question instead, namely: "What have I done today to improve the teaching and learning of my students (customers) *given the resources that I have?*". We realised that there was a good deal that we could do that could contribute to CQI in process output, process management and even financial results, by simply improving some sub-processes such as the manner in which we provide feedback to students on, for example, their assignments.

Very few of the actions in the action plans required additional financial, physical or human resources and could be addressed simply by asking new questions or applying new skills. I would like to agree with Frazier (1997) when he argues that CQI can happen by having AL/CI teams such as this team in a pilot project or process in the institution.

In conclusion, the benefits of an AL team or a CI team instrumental in implementing TQM successfully in an institution are because of its flexibility, its commitment, its synergistic response to changes and challenges, its ability to enhance work, and its focus.

8.6 INSTITUTIONAL BENEFITS DERIVED FROM THE ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

This AR project has added value to the IO process and has benefits for the institution as a whole for the following reasons:

- This thesis is a holistic representation of my work as a manager in an academic unit in a disadvantaged institution in higher education.
- This work contributes to present understanding of the use of a systemic assessment framework that can be used to improve the professional practice of the stakeholders in the management of an IO process. In a competitive environment in higher education, academics are forced to demonstrate the quality of what they are doing and managing and considering the effectiveness thereof (Hay & Herselman 2001:131). While this industrial framework is used successfully in business by modifying the instrument, nature, function and form to suit the academic environment, it can still make a valuable contribution, not only to quality improvement in the management of an IO, but also to staff morale and job satisfaction (Ivy 2001:197).
- This work is intended as a contribution to the debate on quality management in the context of higher education and specifically in the management of a fundamental process in educational design and delivery, namely the IO process. The technikons are in the advantageous position of having run instructional programmes for a number of years, whilst universities now have to embark on programme development exercises instead of the historically discipline-orientated approach to be NQF-aligned.
- This work is also intended to act as a "change agent" leading to continuous improved practice of the core process at Border Technikon, namely that of the IO process.

- This thesis also triggered the integration of debates, reflective practice, self-reflective practice, self-directed learning, AL, action coaching, actions, the researcher's knowledge and the knowledge of others into the professional practice at Border Technikon.
- I believe that with the continuous improvement in the management of the IO process in instructional programmes, the output of these programmes can be positively impacted upon. If managed effectively, areas for improvement in the IO process can be identified early in the process – as well as addressed or corrected - so that the quality of the output or results of the IO can be improved.
- The overall benefit of this research project was an initiative to embrace the innovative, holistic approach to service excellence in order to improve the quality of education as documented in the Border Technikon's "Value Statement" and "Aims" (Border Technikon 2002:iii,1).

8.7 RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF ACTION LEARNING IN A LEARNING ORGANISATION

In this study it transpired that AL is a valuable mechanism for cultural change. Although it has come to the fore in a "case study" scenario, the skills acquired and experiences "appreciated" by members of the AL team, could be transferred to the institution as a whole and even to other institutions. The following aspects regarding AL came to the fore:

- AL is a useful mechanism to develop team members faster and better.
- The customer is put first.
- For organisations to learn and change, people must learn and change (Dotlich & Noel 1998).
- AL entails reating an opportunity and an environment for people to learn in action.
- It releases fresh thinking and independent action.
- AL entails reconceptualising the "business" of learning – thinking about the learning process in new innovative ways.

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- It is about learning to lead in the middle of change, complexity and conflict.

Can an organisation really learn? For organisational learning to be initiated and maximised, the following must take place:

- *Systems-thinking* that provides the conceptual framework that one uses to make full patterns clearer and to see how to change them effectively.
- *Personal mastery* that indicates a high level of proficiency in a subject or skills area and which requires a commitment to lifelong learning in order to develop expertise and proficiency in whatever one does in the institution.
- *Dialogue* denotes a high level of listening and communication between people – deep listening to one another and a suspension of one's own views. For example, a pattern of defensiveness was ingrained in some of the members of the AL team's operations. I could not ignore this, as it would have undermined learning in the group. It was recognised, creatively brought into the open and it eventually actually accelerated learning. Dialogue is the critical medium for co-ordinating learning and action in the workplace. AL promotes "a depth and intensity of dialogue that is uncommon in the normal life experience" (Dilworth 1998).

The study set out to illustrate that, in addition to AL as an element of "survival", a holistic and systemic framework to manage these processes – in particular the IO process: REM – can also contribute to continuous improvement in a changing environment. If one wants quality in the product, one must have quality in the process. The adapted SAEF criteria form a comprehensive diagnostic management tool for self-assessment that can address both hard and soft governance issues (internal customers - staff, external customers - students, partners, leadership, people and community issues).

The challenge to higher education institutions is one of not only thinking strategically, but also entails to be "strategically innovative" (Markides 2002). Instead of competing to be better than other higher education institutions, one can be different. One should rather focus on the most potentially profitable lines of the core business – learning and teaching – and divest other

institutions. Furthermore one should also rather focus on identifying new or "unexploited" customer needs and exceeding these needs (Markides 2002:123). The institution's competitive edge might very well be to find new innovative ways of design and delivery (refer to Criterion six in the adapted SAEF Framework Annexure 1:19) to meet a specific customer need in the education "market".

The adapted South African Excellence Foundation's Conceptual Management Framework assesses management activities in three ways:

- The existence of a clearly defined and agreed upon strategy.
- How well that strategy has been applied.
- How the agreed mapped process is assessed and continuously improved.

Fortunately, it is not too difficult to apply this three-pronged approach to an environment in which fitness for purpose is adopted. However, further work will be required if one would like to experience the full benefit of the self-assessment exercise. It is also evident that this self-assessment process has to have the backing of the management who should use it as a basis for strategic and operational planning in all its processes.

8.8 RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR THE QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES IN TECHNIKONS

PQM is a technique that was developed by IBM in Europe to help project managers get "the whole team on board, to ensure that everyone knows where the enterprise is heading, and agrees on what it will take to succeed" (Oosthuizen *et al.* 1998:79). PQM can assist an institution such as Border Technikon to involve everyone to work towards the vision and values of the institution. It is easier to manage the institution successfully if the processes of the institution are clearly mapped.

By mapping processes such as the IO processes, it is possible to apply self-assessment – incorporating any existing system(s) such as ISO 9000 or

the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence in order to identify strengths and areas for improvement in the quality management of the institution's processes. Self-assessment has the advantage that it results in identified strengths and areas for improvement in the institution. Once these areas for improvement or "gaps" have been identified, internal and/or external benchmarks can be identified and these areas can be improved continuously. The process of benchmarking includes systematic investigation and learning from practices and experiences of other similar processes, units and institutions.

Lessons learned by mapping a process and assessing it with an instrument can continuously drive quality initiatives by reminding the IO manager and other process managers in the institution of what needs to be improved. IO managers will also benefit by becoming process owners and acquiring the skill to identify areas for improvement (gaps) and strengths.

The management framework can, in addition, serve as a checklist and the basis for action plans, not only for the IO manager in order to improve the quality of his/her management of the IO process, but also to inform the strategic plan, vision and values of the instructional programmes, schools, faculties, as well as the wider institution.

The first step to visioning is to assess your institution to establish what you do well and how you fit into the higher education market. A generic framework such as the one used in this study can be used to assess and improve the results of the institution, as well as to encourage an understanding of the concepts and values across the institution, in addition to a common vision. This "management tool" can furthermore assist the institution in integrating all its QI initiatives. This institution-wide self-assessment is linked to strategic planning based on purpose, process and people which, in turn, facilitates accelerated organisational learning. The primary benefit of this systems approach to quality management is that the organisation "learns by doing" (DeBaylo 1999).

8.9 RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE LEADERSHIP ROLE OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL OFFERING MANAGER IN THE INSTRUCTIONAL OFFERING PROCESS

The IO manager as leader is not the sum total of the IO process, but has to inspire, encourage and enable the AL team to collaboratively create a culture of openness, trust, community and energy (Mintzberg 2002). Every institution and process or unit in the institution has a culture or more than one culture and these cultures determine how people work together and how they respond to change. It is the responsibility of the IO manager as leader to "lead for change" and to manage constant change in the higher education landscape (Knowing 2002). The change process starts with the IO manager – how (s)he runs meetings, manages time and shares information impacting on the IO process.

From my experiences and reflections-in-action and reflections-on-action during this study, I realised that it is crucial that the IO manager understands the value of a team – such as the AL team/CI team – and its inputs (refer to paragraph 8.5). Without understanding the team dynamics, the IO manager might end up spending more time "fixing" problems instead of preventing them. The IO manager should rather be "low key", but engaging and interactively participating in the action plans of the team. It is the responsibility of the IO manager – wherever possible – to create an enabling environment, conducive to continuous improvement and achievement. This environment is necessary to enable the team to take responsibility for – and creatively reflect on/in - the process(es) it is involved in, whilst concurrently dealing with other responsibilities such as teaching, academic administration and academic development (Bartlett 2002).

8.10 LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES OF THE STUDY

As discussed in paragraph 1.8, this study was faced with some limitations and challenges – e.g. the stolen research journals, fieldnotes, books and articles – which were not within my control as action researcher. Inasmuch as I tried to support most of the claims made in this study by means of literature, the

danger of being participant-observer and participant-researcher lies in the interpretation of one's own observations. What is studied in one's own setting and commitment to one's own research, do have some subjectivity. But then again, the contribution of self is more demanding and greater. Therefore, although the findings of this research project have limited generalisability, the significance of this study can be of value not only to other technikons, but also to universities in the wider higher education system. These limitations merely provide platforms for future research, which will be addressed in the next paragraph.

8.11 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In future studies, it is recommended that the capabilities of the adapted SAEF model should also be extended to include not only other instructional offerings, but also instructional programmes, support and administrative departments, academic schools, faculties, the rectorate, and collaborative partners.

It would be beneficial to the institution to accommodate the national quality expectations by implementing a holistic quality improvement and quality assurance framework not only in preparation for external quality monitoring, but also for effective self-assessment and as a sound basis to ensure consistency and the credibility of the institution in the higher education "market".

A holistic approach – including the assessment of the education design and delivery process, together with its supporting processes - within the framework of an institution's strategic goals, could very well be an appropriate study to assist the external quality assurance body (the HEQC) in its difficult task of providing a workable quality assessment framework for all higher education institutions.

8.12 CONCLUSION

Managing quality and processes has been the focus of this study. It was also necessary to contextualise the importance of strategic, operations and process management in the quality management of a fundamental process in a higher education institution, namely the IO process. Change management also plays a role in continuously improving the management of this process and therefore some cultures of change have been studied as well.

The challenges for change in higher education transformation call for, *inter alia*, changes in the learning paradigm. The lecturers are required to become reflective practitioners and, on the one hand, it is expected of them to move beyond the parameters that they are comfortable in to more critical thinking. The students, on the other hand, are expected to think and ask new questions all the time. This proves that quality requires more "investment" into "continuous improvement" and not merely "accountability".

It cannot be emphasised enough that institutions must now take responsibility for quality in all their processes with the emphasis on teaching, learning, postgraduate supervision, staff development programmes, equity programmes, and many more. Managers at every level are required to become process managers, continuously improving towards processes that can add value and are in line with the institution's strategic plan, mission and goals (Liston 1999).

The challenge for IO managers and/or process owners is that they will now be managing clearly defined processes with specific responsibilities and accountabilities. This does not only imply that managerial performance is now open and measurable, but it also provides high performance satisfaction and demands. In addition to this, the management of the people dimension - as highlighted by MacDonald (1995) - has to be approached in a committed and systematic manner. Therefore it is essential to develop and maintain a *continuous communications process* throughout the IO process .

The IO manager is responsible for the management of the quality of the IO process, services, outcomes, student satisfaction, staff satisfaction,

graduates, benchmarking and sharing of best practices relating to the IO - particularly in a climate of change and transformation. In other words, the IO manager is responsible for managing and demonstrating continuous improvement towards performance excellence.

Achieving an effective quality culture in a learning organisation and in a constantly changing higher education landscape, is indeed a challenge for all higher education institutions. Commitment at the highest level is vital to the successful rollout plan and activities of quality management. It is, however, the commitment at the level of the delivery of instructional offerings and services – the so called "rock-face" level – which has the crucial impact on results, throughput and - ultimately – the graduation rates of higher education institutions. Considerable importance should be attached to regular self-assessment and consequential action plans based upon, *inter alia*, student and stakeholder needs, experiences and feedback. The developmental role of IO managers and AL teams in the cultivating of a dynamic and broadly-owned quality culture of continuous improvement towards performance excellence must not be underestimated. Likewise benchmarking and interpretation of self-assessment feedback results can be particularly powerful and insightful tools when applied as closely as possible to the point of delivery, namely the IO process.

An adaptation of the SAEF Framework has the potential to systemically assess different units or processes in the institution. It is also a framework to support the philosophy of TQM in a higher education institution such as Border Technikon. It could serve as an effective diagnostic tool to assess how a higher education institution can continuously and incrementally improve the quality of the management of its core "business" processes. This will ultimately have a significant impact on the satisfaction of its staff, students, the community and other stakeholders.

A bottom-up approach to CQI requires AL or CI teams of academics, support staff, managers, students and any stakeholder that can add value to the process to work together to identify quality improvement targets, action plans and to report clearly on outcomes. The single most significant and desirable benefit resulting from a systems approach to the quality management of

institutional processes such as the IO process, is a significant increase in research addressing the teaching and learning processes, as well as the impact of these on the quality of the institution as a whole.



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SELF-ASSESSMENT

This **Self-assessment Instrument** is to be used by assessors for the purpose of:

Assessing the quality of the management of an IO process (IO process)

Stage 1 – Key Instructional Offering (IO) Process Factors

Instructions: List the core values, concepts and framework of the Education Criteria for Performance Excellence in this IO process. In general, the factors should be taken from the IO Process.

The IO profile (*process map*) is the starting point for self-assessment and for writing a self-assessment report. It may also be used by itself for an initial self-assessment. If you identify topics for which conflicting, little, or no information is available, it is possible that your assessment need go no further and you can use these topics for action planning. *This was the case in this study (research project).*

IO performance areas:

1. Student learning results.
2. Student- and stakeholder-focused results.
3. Budgetary, financial, and market results.
4. Instructional programme and staff* results.
5. Instructional programme/IO effectiveness results.

* "Staff" includes lecturers, supervisors, IO manager(s) and other staff involved in the IO process.

Stage 1 – Comment Worksheets

Instructions: List strengths, areas for improvements and site visit issues following the directions given in the Assessor Handbook, Chapters 4 and 5 of the South African Excellence Foundation.

1. Leadership

How the behaviour and actions of the IO executive team and all other leaders inspire, support and promote a culture of performance excellence.

Leadership Summary

Leadership was difficult to identify in this IO process. The action learning team never really considered this or asked the following questions:

- Who would be the manager of this IO process?
- Who is the process owner and the owners of the various sub-processes of the IO process?

Considering this from an operational management perspective, these questions would have to be answered.

1. Leadership

How the behaviour and actions of the IO executive team and all other leaders (managers) inspire, support and promote a culture of performance excellence.

Self-assessment should demonstrate:

1a. How IO managers visibly demonstrate their commitment to a culture of performance excellence.

Areas to address *could* include *how* leaders (including the IO managers):

- set and deploy the IO values, short- and longer-term directions and performance expectations, including a focus on creating and balancing value for students and stakeholders;
- create an environment that promotes ethical values, equity for all students, empowerment, innovation, safety, IO agility, and IO and lecturer/staff learning;
- act as role models for the values and expectations of the IO process, leading by example;
- make themselves accessible, listen and respond to the IO's students, staff and stakeholders (support staff);
- review and improve the effectiveness of their own leadership; and
- address higher education responsibilities and practise good academic citizenship.

++ / +	Strengths	Reference
	An awareness exists that there is a definite need to identify an <i>IO manager</i> to create an environment for continuous improvement and act as role model for the values and expectations of the IO.	

- / - -	Areas for Improvement	Reference
	It is not clearly identified who the IO manager responsible for the IO Process: Research Methodology will be.	

No	Site Visit Issues	Reference
	NA	

ANNEXURE 1

1. Leadership

How the behaviour and actions of the IO executive team and all other leaders inspire, support and promote a culture of performance excellence.

Self-assessment should demonstrate:

1b. How IO leaders support improvement and involvement.

Areas to address *could* include *how* IO leaders:

- Fund continuous learning, facilitation and improvement activities.
- Use appraisal and promotion systems to support improvement and involvement.
- Are involved with students, fellow-lecturers/institutions and advisory boards/professional bodies to understand and respond to mutual interests.
- Review IO performance and capabilities to assess IO success; performance relative to competitors, comparable IOs, and/or other appropriately selected IOs; progress relative to short- and longer-term goals, including student achievement goals; and the ability to address changing IO needs. Include the key performance measures regularly reviewed by the senior IO leaders and managers. Include key recent performance review findings.
- Translate IO performance review findings into priorities for improvement and opportunities for innovation. How are they deployed throughout the IO and, as appropriate, to the feeder and/or receiving Instructional Programmes and partners to ensure IO alignment?
- Use IO performance review findings to improve both their own leadership effectiveness and the leadership system?

++ / +	Strengths	Reference
	Appraisal and promotion systems to support improvement and involvement in the management of the IO process do exist, though not formally documented.	
	Staff and students involved in small research projects from time to time.	

- / - -	Areas for Improvement	Reference
	Except for the SERTEC evaluations of previous years for instructional programmes, no formal self-assessment or review of the IO process itself is done.	

No	Site Visit Issues	Reference
	NA	

ANNEXURE 1

1. Leadership

How the behaviour and actions of the IO executive team and all other leaders inspire, support and promote a culture of performance excellence.

Self-assessment should demonstrate:

1c. How IO leaders recognise and appreciate colleagues' and stakeholders' efforts and achievements.

Areas to address *could* include *how* IO leaders recognise:

- individuals and teams at all levels within the IO; and
- individuals and teams outside the IO (*for example*, moderators, advisory boards and other higher education institutions).

++ / +	Strengths	Reference
	Moderators and advisory members from industry and other institutions serve on the advisory board of the instructional programme, but individual and team efforts and achievements are not formally recognised and visibly appreciated.	

- / - -	Areas for Improvement	Reference
	Although an advisory board exists for each instructional programme offering Research Methodology, stakeholders' efforts and achievements are not recognised and visibly appreciated at IO level.	

No	Site Visit Issues	Reference
	NA	

1. Leadership

How the behaviour and actions of the IO executive team and all other leaders inspire, support and promote a culture of performance excellence.

Self-assessment should demonstrate:

1d. How IO leaders address their responsibilities to the public prospective employers, parents, and practise good citizenship.

Areas to address *could* include *how* IO leaders:

- address the impacts on society of their operations; (Include key processes, measures and targets for safety, regulatory, accreditation and legal requirements and for addressing risks associated with the operations.)
- anticipate public and peer concerns with current and future services and operations; (How do the IO leaders prepare for these concerns in a proactive manner?)
- accomplish ethical practices in all transactions and interactions with students and stakeholders;
- with lecturers and students actively support and strengthen the key communities. How are key communities identified and areas of emphasis for IO involvement and support determined? How does community involvement reflect the mission and/or values of the instructional programme?

++ / +	Strengths	Reference

- / -	Areas for Improvement	Reference
	Miniprojects of students are not geared to actively support and strengthen key communities.	
	Key processes of accreditation and legal requirements are not specifically documented for the IO itself.	

No	Site Visit Issues	Reference
	NA	

2. Policy and Strategy

How the IO unit formulates, deploys, reviews and turns policy and strategy into plans and actions. How are the chosen strategic objectives and action plans deployed and progress measured?

Self-assessment should demonstrate:

2a. How policy and strategy and action plans are developed, communicated and implemented.

Areas to address *could* include *how* the IO unit:

- develops policy and strategy based upon:
 - o performance indicators;
 - o current and future student/stakeholder and market requirements, expectations and opportunities, including student achievement;
 - o values, mission and vision;
 - o IO's capabilities of its resource people;
 - o key external factors, requirements and opportunities, including the suppliers' and/or partners' strengths and areas for improvement, the competitive environment and the capabilities relative to competitors, comparable IOs and/or appropriately selected IOs;
 - o technological and other key changes that might affect the services and/or how the IO unit operates;
 - o the strengths and areas for improvement, including academics and support staff and other resources;
 - o the capability to assess student learning and development; and
 - o ethical, societal, budgetary and other potential risks;
- develops and deploys action plans based upon:
 - o achievement of key strategic objectives;
 - o allocation of resources to ensure accomplishment of action plans;
 - o key performance measures/indicators for tracking progress relative to action plans;
 - o overall action plan measurement system to achieve IO alignment covering all key deployment areas, students and stakeholders;
- projects performance based upon:
 - o key measures/indicators for both short- and longer-term planning time horizons;
 - o comparison of projected performance with performance of competitors, comparable IOs, key benchmarks, goals and past performance as appropriate; and
- communicates policy and strategy to all its staff, stakeholders and students.

++ / +	Strengths	Reference
	Some action plans are developed and deployed based upon allocation of resources to ensure accomplishment of action plans.	

- / -	Areas for Improvement	Reference
	No clear policy on values, mission and vision except for information in syllabus is formulated in document format.	
	In the absence of IO process management no identification of technological and other support factors impacting on the quality of the delivery of the IO is done.	

2. Policy and Strategy

How the IO unit formulates, deploys, reviews and turns policy and strategy into plans and actions. How are the chosen strategic objectives and action plans deployed and progress measured?

Self-assessment should demonstrate:

2b. How policy and strategy are regularly reviewed, updated and improved.

Areas to address *could* include *how* the IO unit:

- reviews performance requirements and key performance measures; and
- tracks performance relative to plans.

++ / +	Strengths	Reference
- / - -	Areas for Improvement	Reference
	Because of lack of formal policy and strategy, performance requirements and key performances are not measureable.	
No	Site Visit Issues	Reference
	NA	

3. Customer (Student and Stakeholder) and Market Focus

How the IO unit determines the needs, requirements and expectations; enhances relationships with students and stakeholders; determines satisfaction of customers (student and stakeholder) and markets; determines the key factors that attract students and partners and lead to student and stakeholder satisfaction and persistence and to excellence in educational IOs.

Self-assessment should demonstrate:

3a. Knowledge of, determination and use of customer (Student) and market needs and expectations.

Areas to address *could* include *how* the IO unit:

- determines which student segments and/or markets the IO unit will address;
 - o this includes student segments currently served by other education providers and other potential programmes, segments and/or markets in this determination;
- evaluates, processes and acts on information received;
- listens and learns to determine students' general and IO-specific needs and expectations and their relative importance/value to students' and stakeholders' decision-making for purposes of educational programme and support service planning, marketing, improvements and other service development;
 - o in determination, uses relevant information from current former and future students, student segments and stakeholders in the determination process;
 - o this includes information on utilisation of offering(s) facilities and services; complaints; demographic data and trends that may have an impact on enrolments and needs; changing requirements and expectations the graduates will face; changing requirements and expectations resulting from programme, institutional, national or local requirements; education alternatives available to the pool of future students; and
- keeps its listening and learning methods current with educational service needs and directions.

++ / +	Strengths	Reference
- / - -	Areas for Improvement	Reference
	No formal system in place to determine customer needs and expectations.	
No	Site Visit Issues	Reference
	NA	

3. Customer (Student and Stakeholder) and Market Focus

How the IO unit determines the needs, requirements and expectations; enhances relationships with students and stakeholders; determines satisfaction of customers (student and stakeholder) and markets and determines the key factors that attract students and partners and leads to student and stakeholder satisfaction and persistence and to excellence in educational IOs.

Self-assessment should demonstrate:

3b. How customer (stakeholder) needs and expectations are determined.

Areas to address *could* include *how* the IO unit:

- obtains and uses relevant information from current, former and future stakeholders to determine and anticipate changing stakeholder needs and expectations;
 - resolves complaints promptly and effectively;
 - uses demographic data and trends that may have an impact on stakeholder needs;
 - uses changing requirements and expectations that stakeholders will face;
 - uses changing requirements and expectations resulting from programme, institutional, national or local requirements; and
- keeps its listening and learning methods current with stakeholder needs and directions.

++ / +	Strengths	Reference

- / - -	Areas for Improvement	Reference
	Complaints are not resolved promptly and effectively (e.g. mark queries, etc.)	

No	Site Visit Issues	Reference
	NA	

4. Academics and other Staff Management

How the IO unit motivates and enables academics and other (administrative and support) staff to develop and release their full potential in alignment with the IO unit's objectives and action plans and how the unit builds and maintains a work environment and academics and other staff support climate conducive to performance excellence and to personal and the growth of the IO-unit.

Self-assessment should demonstrate:

4a. How the IO unit's work and jobs, compensation, career progression and related workforce practices motivate and enable academics and other staff, as well as the IO unit to achieve high performance.

Areas to address *could* include *how* the IO unit:

- aligns the academics and other staff resources plan with policy, strategy and values;
- orientates new academics and other staff;
- organises and manages work and jobs to promote co-operation, initiative/innovation, the IO unit's culture and the flexibility to keep up to date with educational and IO-related service needs;
 - achieves effective communication and knowledge/skill-sharing across IOs, programmes, jobs and locations, as appropriate;
- work systems capitalise on the diverse ideas, cultures and thinking of the communities with which it interacts (the hiring and student and stakeholder communities);
- motivates academics and other staff to develop and utilise their full potential;
 - uses formal and/or informal mechanisms to help academics and other staff attain job- and programme-related development/learning objectives and the role of administrators, academic leaders and supervisors in helping academics and other staff to attain these objectives;
- the academic and other staff performance management system, including feedback to academics and other staff, support high performance and a student and stakeholder focus;
- accomplishes effective succession planning for senior leadership (IO manager) and career progression throughout the IO unit;
- identifies characteristics and skills needed by potential academics and staff;
 - work systems capitalise on the diverse ideas, cultures and thinking of the communities with which it interacts (the hiring and student and stakeholder communities);
- acknowledges and manages cultural diversity, ideas and thinking within its workforce; and
- resolves complaints promptly and effectively.

++ / +	Strengths	Reference

- / - -	Areas for Improvement	Reference
	No formal orientation of new staff.	
	All staff are not involved in continuous improvement activities.	

No	Site Visit Issues	Reference
	NA	

4. Academics and other Staff Management

How the IO unit motivates and enables academics and other (administrative and support) staff to develop and release their full potential in alignment with the IO unit's objectives and action plans and how the unit builds and maintains a work environment and academics and other staff support-climate conducive to performance excellence and to personal and the growth of the IO-Unit.

Self-assessment should demonstrate:

4b. How the IO unit's academics and other staff's education, training and development support the achievement of the unit's overall objectives, including building academics and other staff knowledge, skills and capabilities and contributing to high performance.

Areas to address *could* include *how* the IO unit:

- involves all its staff (*as individuals and teams*) in continuous improvement activities;
- empowers staff to take action and evaluate effectiveness;
- ensures that academics and other staff education and training contribute to the achievement of the IO unit's action plans;
 - balances its IO-related education and training approach with short- and longer-term objectives and academics and staff needs, including IO-related certification, licensure, development, learning and career progression;
- seeks and uses input from academics and other staff and their senior leaders and supervisors/administrators on IO-related education and training needs and delivery options;
- addresses in the academics and other staff IO-related education, training and development its key needs associated with IO-related technological change, leadership/supervisor/IO manager development, new academics and other staff orientation, safety, performance measurement/improvement and diversity;
- delivers academic and other staff IO-related education and training;
 - delivers formal and informal delivery, including mentoring and other approaches as appropriate;
 - evaluates the IO-related effectiveness of academics and other staff education and training, taking into account individual and the unit's performance; and
- reinforces the use of IO-related knowledge and skills on the job.

++ / +	Strengths	Reference

- / - -	Areas for Improvement	Reference

No	Site Visit Issues	Reference
	NA	

4. Academics and other Staff Management

How the IO unit motivates and enables academics and other (administrative and support) staff to develop and release their full potential in alignment with the IO unit's objectives and action plans and how the unit builds and maintains a work environment and academics and other staff support-climate conducive to performance excellence and to personal and the growth of the IO-Unit.

Self-assessment should demonstrate:

4c. How academics and staff are cared for.

Areas to address *could* include *how* the IO unit:

- includes well-being factors in improvement activities (*for example*, health and safety).

++ / +	Strengths	Reference

- / - -	Areas for Improvement	Reference
	It is not visible how academic and other staff involved in the IO process are cared for.	

No	Site Visit Issues	Reference
	NA	

5. Resources and Information Management

How the IO unit examines, analyses, manages and uses resources, information and performance data effectively and efficiently.

Self-assessment should demonstrate:

5a. How material and other resources are managed.

Areas to address *could* include *how* the IO unit:

- makes best use of venues, equipment and other resources;
- identifies, evaluates and uses alternative and emerging technologies;
- manages and optimises resource inventories;
- improves supplier relationships;
- gathers and integrates data and information from all sources to support daily operations and IO unit decision-making as an academic unit;
- selects and aligns measures/indicators for tracking daily operations, overall IO unit performance and academic delivery climate;
- selects and ensures effective use of key comparative data and information from within and outside the academic community;
- keeps its performance measurement system current with academic service needs and directions;
- communicates the results of IO-level analysis to academic and other staff and/or instructional programmes to enable effective support for decision-making; and
- aligns the results of the IO level analysis with its key academic results, strategic objectives and action plans. How do these results provide the basis for projections of continuous and breakthrough improvements in performance?

++ / +	Strengths	Reference
	Results of IO and analysis thereof are communicated to relevant staff from time to time.	

- / - -	Areas for Improvement	Reference
	It is not clear if best use is made of venues, equipment and other resources.	

No	Site Visit Issues	Reference
	NA	

5. Resources and Information Management

How the IO unit examines, analyses, manages and uses resources, information and performance data effectively and efficiently.

Self-assessment should demonstrate:

5b. How information resources are managed.

Areas to address *could* include *how* the IO unit:

- structures and manages information to support policy and strategy;
- evaluates and keeps current with changing academic and employer needs;
- ensures everyone has appropriate information to do their work;
- makes data and information which are needed, available; and how are these this made accessible to academic and other staff, students and stakeholders, as appropriate?
- ensures (data and information) integrity, reliability, accuracy, timeliness, security and confidentiality of;
- keeps its data and information availability mechanisms current with educational service needs and directions;
- ensures that hardware and software are reliable and user-friendly; and
- keeps its software and hardware systems updated and current with academic and industry service needs and directions.

++ / +	Strengths	Reference

- / - -	Areas for Improvement	Reference
	It is not clear how information resources are managed within the IO other than the IT support services.	

No	Site Visit Issues	Reference

5. Resources and Information Management

How the IO unit examines, analyses, manages and uses resources, information and performance data effectively and efficiently.

Self-assessment should demonstrate:

5c. How financial resources are managed.

Areas to address *could* include *how* the IO unit:

- improves financial parameters *such as* cash flow, profitability, costs and margins, assets and working capital relevant to the IO; and
- analyses and reviews IO unit performance against budget.

++ / +	Strengths	Reference
	Financial parameters such as cash flow are maintained.	
	IO performance is analysed and reviewed against the budget annually.	

- / - -	Areas for Improvement	Reference

No	Site Visit Issues	Reference
	N/A	

6. Processes Management

How the IO design and delivery processes (*key to the success of the IO unit*) are identified, learning-focused, student service- and support-centred, as well as systematically managed.

Self-assessment should demonstrate:

6a. How the IO design and delivery processes (*key to the success of the IO unit*) are identified, managed and learning-focused.

Areas to address *could* include *how* the IO unit:

- identifies key *design* processes of the IO and its related *delivery* system(s) and process(es) and their key performance requirements;
- incorporates changing student educational, developmental and well-being requirements into design and delivery processes; meets high standards; focuses on active learning; and ensures ongoing compliance with the IO's key design and delivery requirements;
- anticipates and prepares for individual differences in student learning rates and styles;
- develops information on students and/or individual students and uses it for purposes of engaging all students in active learning;
 - o incorporates changing student, stakeholder and market requirements into the design of the IO and its related delivery system(s) and process(es);
- incorporates new technology, including e-technology into the IO and its related delivery system(s) and process(es), as appropriate;
- designs processes address sequencing, linkages among other IOs, transfer learning from past design projects, new design technology, cycle time and other efficiency/effectiveness factors;
- incorporates a measurement plan that makes effective use of formative and summative assessment;
- establishes process ownership, responsibility and accountability in the monitoring and improvement of the delivery of the IO; and
 - o helps students and academics achieve the learning objectives by using key formative and summative assessments of students; in-process measures of the IO; and real-time student, academic and other staff and stakeholder input in the management of the IO.

(6a. continued)

Self-assessment should demonstrate:

6a. How the IO design and delivery processes (key to the success of the IO unit) are identified, managed and learning-focused.

Areas to address *could* include *how* the IO unit:

- evaluates/assesses the IO to minimise redesign efforts and their costs;
- improves the IO to achieve better student learning and improvements to services, as appropriate, including the use of research on learning, assessment, reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action and instructional methods and new learning technology;
 - shares improvements with other IOs, students, academics, staff and stakeholders, as appropriate;
- uses established systems, *for example*, quality, environmental, health and safety systems in its process management; and
- ensures that academic and other staff are properly prepared to implement the IO processes.

++ / +	Strengths	Reference
	This self-assessment is a positive input.	
	A process map of the IO was designed for the first time this year.	

- / - -	Areas for Improvement	Reference
	No clear performance requirements for all sub-processes and activities of the IO process.	

No	Site Visit Issues	Reference

6. Processes Management

How the IO design and delivery processes (key to the success of the IO unit) are identified, learning-focused, student service- and support centred and systematically managed.

Self-assessment should demonstrate:

6b. How the IO manages its key student services.

Areas to address *could* include *how* the IO unit:

- identifies its key student services and needs and prioritises methods of improvement, both incremental and breakthrough;
- encourages the innovative and creative talents of students, academics and other staff in process improvement of student services;
- manages and supports new or process changes through testing, training, communication and review;
 - uses in-process measures and feedback from students, academics, staff, stakeholders and suppliers in managing the student services, as appropriate;
- improves its student services to keep them current with IO service needs and directions in order to achieve better performance and to control overall costs;
 - ensures that improvements are shared with other IO units and processes, as appropriate; and
- evaluates the IO-related effectiveness of academics and other staff education.

++ / +	Strengths	Reference

- / - -	Areas for Improvement	Reference
	In the absence of an identified IO manager, it is not clear how the key student services are managed.	

No	Site Visit Issues	Reference
	NA	

6. Processes Management

How the IO design and delivery processes (*key to the success of the IO unit*) are identified, learning-focused, student service- and support-centred and systematically managed.

Self-assessment should demonstrate:

6c. How the IO unit manages its key processes that support the daily operations as an IO unit and its academics and staff in delivering services.

Areas to address *could* include *how* the IO unit:

- identifies its key processes for supporting its daily operations (what are they?), as well as its academic and other staff in delivering the IO and student services;
- determines key support process requirements, incorporating input from academic and other staff, as appropriate;
 - determines the key operational requirements (such as productivity, timeliness, accuracy and safety) for these processes (what are they?);
- designs these processes to meet all the key requirements;
- deals with day-to-day operation of key support processes, ensuring meeting key performance requirements;
- controls and improves the key performance measures/indicators (what are they?) used for the control and improvement of the key support processes;
 - uses in-process measures and academic and other staff feedback in managing the support processes, as appropriate;
- minimises overall costs associated with tests, process/performance audits and assessments of support processes;
- encourages the innovative and creative talents of academics, other staff and students in support process improvement (how are improvements shared with other IOs and processes?); and
- manages and supports new or support process changes through testing, training, communication and review.

++ / +	Strengths	Reference

- / - -	Areas for Improvement	Reference
	It is not clear how the IO manager (not yet identified) manages the key processes that support the daily operations of the IO process.	

No	Site Visit Issues	Reference

7. Impact on Society/Community

What the IO unit is *achieving* in satisfying the needs and the expectations of the local community.

Self-assessment should demonstrate:

7a. Measurements of the IO unit's impact on society or the community.

Areas to address *could* include *measurements* used by the IO unit to understand, predict and improve the expectations and needs of the local community.
What are the IO unit's results for key measures/indicators of safety; regulatory, legal and /or accreditation compliance; and support of key communities?

- Performance as a responsible corporate authority, *for example*, equal opportunity practices in the management of the IO.
- Promotion of community involvement in outreach initiatives, *such as* education and training, sport, medical and welfare related to the IO.
- Reporting on activities to assist in the conservation of resources and sustainability of the environment in relation to the IO and its design and delivery.
- Integration of society's interest in teaching and learning actions designed to improve community expectations and needs.
- The promotion of a responsible life style.
- Accolades and awards received.

++ / +	Strengths	Reference

- / - -	Areas for Improvement	Reference
	Although a few research reports report on the benefits to the community, it is not clear how the impact of the IO process on the community is measured.	

No	Site Visit Issues	Reference
	NA	

8. Student and Stakeholder Relationships and Satisfaction

How the IO unit builds relationships to attract and retain students, to enhance student learning and the IO unit's overall ability to deliver its services; to satisfy students and stakeholders; to develop new opportunities; and how the IO unit determines student and stakeholder satisfaction.

Self-assessment should demonstrate the performance of the IO unit in satisfying the needs and expectations of its internal and external customers.

8a. Student and Stakeholder Relationships and Satisfaction Determination.

Areas to address *could* include *measurements* used by the IO unit to understand, predict and improve the satisfaction and loyalty of the internal and external customers.

What are the current levels and trends in key measures/indicators of current and past student and key stakeholder satisfaction and dissatisfaction, including comparisons with competitors' and/or comparable IO's levels of student and stakeholder satisfaction?

What are the current levels and trends in key measures/indicators of student- and stakeholder-perceived value, persistence, positive referral and/or other aspects of building relationships with students and stakeholders, as appropriate?

- Overall image:
 - Accessibility: How does the IO unit build relationships to attract and retain students; to enhance student performance and the IO unit's ability to deliver its services; to satisfy students and stakeholders; as well as to foster new and continuing interactions and positive referrals?
 - Integrity.
 - Level of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction: How are student and stakeholder satisfaction and dissatisfaction determined and how is this information used for improvement? How does the IO unit ensure that its measurements capture actionable information which reflects its learning and developmental climate and predicts students' and stakeholders' future interactions with the IO and/or potential positive referral? Describe significant differences in determination methods for different student and stakeholder groups.
 - Communication: How does the IO unit follow up on its interactions with students and key stakeholders to receive prompt and actionable feedback?
 - Number of awards and accolades received.
- Products and services:
 - Accessibility.
 - Responsiveness and flexibility in meeting customer needs: How does the IO unit keep its approaches to determining satisfaction current with educational or instructional programme needs and directions?
 - Defect, error and rejection rates: How does the IO unit obtain and use information on the satisfaction of students and stakeholders relative to benchmarks or to the satisfaction of these groups with its competitors or other instructional programmes delivering similar educational services, as appropriate?
 - Product or service consistency.
 - Price.
 - Reliability.
 - Percentage of complaints resolved on first contact: What is the IO unit's complaint management process? Include how it ensures that complaints are resolved effectively and promptly and that all complaints are aggregated and analysed for use in improvement throughout the IO and by the partners, as appropriate.
 - Corrective action resulting from complaints.
- Sales and after-sales support:

- Effective handling of complaints: How does the IO unit ensure that key measures/indicators used to monitor the effectiveness and progress of the IO unit's effectiveness and progress of its key relationships are accessible for stakeholders to seek information, to pursue common purposes and to make complaints?
- Reliability against defined commitments.
- Response time.
- Loyalty:
 - New or lost business: How does the IO unit determine key student and stakeholder contact requirements and maintain effective stakeholder relationships, including partnerships with key stakeholders, to pursue common purposes?
 - Willingness to recommend the IO unit.
- Loyalty:
 - New or lost business
 - Willingness to recommend the IO unit.

++ / +	Strengths	Reference

- / - -	Areas for Improvement	Reference
	Although some effort is shown to determine student and stakeholder satisfaction, it is not clear how the IO unit builds relationships to attract and retain students, to enhance student performance and to deliver its services to satisfy students and stakeholders.	

No	Site Visit Issues	Reference
	NA	

9. Academic and Other Staff Satisfaction

What the IO unit is achieving in relation to the satisfaction of its academics and other staff (support and administration).

Self-assessment should demonstrate the performance of the IO unit in satisfying the needs, requirements and expectations of its academics and other staff (support and administration):

9a. Measurements relating to academic and other staff satisfaction.

Areas to address *could* include *measurements* used by the IO unit to understand, predict and improve the satisfaction and involvement of its academic and other staff relating to:

What are the current levels and trends in key measures/indicators of the IO's academic and other staff well-being, satisfaction and dissatisfaction and development?

What are the current levels and trends in key measures/indicators of academic and other staff work system performance and effectiveness?

- Motivation and involvement:
 - Ethical conduct.
 - Safe and pleasant working environment.
 - Equal opportunities.
 - Training and development.
 - Recognition and appreciation of individuals and teams.
- Satisfaction and well-being:
 - Absenteeism and sickness.
 - Grievances.
 - Staff turnover.
 - Strikes and disputes.
 - Accident levels.
 - Use of facilities provided by the IO unit (*for example*, recreation, crèche, internet access, interlibrary loans, etc.).
- Services provided to the IO unit's academic and other staff:
 - Accuracy of personnel administration.
 - Communication effectiveness.
 - Speed of response to enquiries.

++ / +	Strengths	Reference

- / - -	Areas for Improvement	Reference
	Although a safe and pleasant working environment exists and training and development of academic staff take place, it is not clear how the satisfaction of academic and other staff involved in the OI process is measured.	

No	Site Visit Issues	Reference
	NA	

10. Supplier and Partnership Performance

What the IO unit is achieving in relation to the management of supplier and partnering processes.

Self-assessment should demonstrate the performance of the IO unit in relation to:

10a. Measurements relating to the performance of the IO unit's suppliers and partners.

Areas to address *could* include:

- Integrity.
- Reliability.
- Performance levels.
- Cost reduction due to performance audit.
- Enhancement of supplier and partner knowledge.
- Continuous improvement in product or service quality.
- Ability to respond to the IO unit's needs.
- Speed of response to customer complaints.
- Added value of the partnership.
- Application of equity principles (*for example*, employment practices).

++ / +	Strengths	Reference

- / - -	Areas for Improvement	Reference
	It is not clear how the performance of service IOs is measured.	

No	Site Visit Issues	Reference
	NA	

11. Business Results

What the IO unit is achieving in relation to its planned IO unit objectives and in satisfying the needs and expectations of everyone with a financial interest or other stake in the IO unit.

Self-assessment should demonstrate:

11a. Financial measurements of the IO unit's performance.

Areas to address *could* include information relating to:

- current levels and trends in key measures/indicators of budgetary and financial performance, including *measures* of cost containment, as appropriate:
 - o *instructional and general administration expenditures per student;*
 - o *income, expenses, reserves and endowments;*
 - o *the tax rate;*
 - o *tuition and fee levels;*
 - o *cost per academic credit (FTE);*
 - o *annual grants/awards;*
 - o *IO expenditure as a percentage of budget;*
 - o *annual budget increases or decreases;*
 - o *resources redirected to education from other areas;*
 - o *scholarship growth;*
 - o *percentage of budget for research;*
 - o *budget for community service.*
- Other relevant indicators including:
 - o Return on equity.
 - o Value added.

(Several of the above can be expressed in absolute terms or as ratios per unit of capital or per person employed.)

++ / +	Strengths	Reference
	The cost per FTE student is available from the South African Post-Secondary Education (SAPSE) office.	

- / - -	Areas for Improvement	Reference
	Information relating to student fees and bursaries is not readily available in time for students to make a decision with regard to their new academic year.	

No	Site Visit Issues	Reference

11. Business (IO Unit) Results

What the IO unit is achieving in relation to its planned IO unit objectives and in satisfying the needs and expectations of everyone with a financial interest or another stake in the IO unit.

Self-assessment should demonstrate:

11b. Additional measurements of the IO unit's performance.

Areas to address *could* include efficiency and effectiveness measurements of the IO unit's performance. The measurements could be related to the key processes described in the "Enablers", particularly Criteria 5 and 6, for example:

- Current levels and trends in key measures/indicators of market performance, including market share and new markets entered, as appropriate, for example:
 - o *Offering Web-based services.*
- Key processes:
 - o *Current levels and trends in key measures/indicators of the performance of key IO design and delivery processes.*
 - o *Student services and support processes that contribute to enhanced learning and/or operational effectiveness.*
 - o *IO capacity to improve student performance, student development, learning environment and climate, indicators of responsiveness to student or stakeholder needs, as well as supplier/partner performance.*
 - o *Other appropriate measures of effectiveness and efficiency.*
- Information:
 - o Accessibility.
 - o Relevance.
 - o Timeliness.
- Assets:
 - o Maintenance costs.
 - o Utilisation.
- Technology.
- Results for key measures/indicators of safety; regulatory, legal, and/or accreditation compliance; and support of key communities.

++ / +	Strengths	Reference

- / - -	Areas for Improvement	Reference
	Information on the performance of the IO compared to the same IO in other institutions or instructional programmes is not readily available.	
	It is not clear how the efficiency and effectiveness of the IO process is measured.	

No	Site Visit Issues	Reference
	NA	



A Questionnaire to Measure Team Member and Customer (Student) Perceptions About the Value of an Action Learning (AL) Experience

Team Name (if applicable)/Date

Directions: This evaluation form is intended to assess how much you liked participating in the AL team experience. Its goal is to improve future team efforts. Reflect on your team experience. Then, in the left column below, please tick off the box with the number which most accurately describes your reactions to the AL experience. Please respond as quickly as possible, because your first impression is likely to be the most honest. *Do not sign your name.*

Agree strongly 7	Agree 6	Agree slightly 5	Disagree slightly 4	Disagree 3	Disagree strongly 2	Neutral 1
------------------------	------------	---------------------	---------------------------	---------------	---------------------------	--------------

Purpose, objectives and structure

1. The AL team seemed to be focusing on a problem or an issue of importance to the instructional programme (the instructional offering process).

2. The team members were able to establish clear objectives for the team.

Team process

3. Team members worked together cohesively and effectively to achieve the team objective(s).

Management support

4. The team enjoyed sufficient support from management.

Organisational communication

5. The team was effective in communicating its efforts - and the reason for them - to the relevant department/instructional programme/instructional offering.

Supportive environment

6. The team facilitator helped to maintain a psychologically supportive environment during the AL team experience.

Team organisation

7. The team was effective in organising itself for action.

Team capability

8. I feel that, collectively, the team possessed the expertise required to solve the problem that it was challenged to solve.

Self-development

9. I feel that during this AL team experience I developed important competencies which I shall need to succeed in this instructional program/instructional offering in the future.

Group development

10. I feel that, collectively, the team developed important competencies and that each individual was enriched by and grew as a result of the experience.

Comments

11. What *specific areas for improvement*, if any, were apparent to you from this AL team experience? If you could wave a magic wand and make this better, how would that be done and why?

12. What *specific areas benefited particularly as a result of* this AL team experience? How did you benefit most? How did the team benefit? How did the instructional offering process benefit?

ANNEXURE 3



BORDER TECHNIKON
FACULTY OF HUMAN SCIENCES

POST-GRADUATE PROCEDURE MANUAL

BORDER TECHNIKON
Box 1421
EAST LONDON
5200

Website: <http://bortech.ac.za>

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©A W ERASMUS
Faculty of Human Sciences
School of Secretarial Studies and Education
East London
South Africa

Tel: +27 43 7085200
E-mail: aerasmus@indlovu.bortech.ac.za

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ANNEXURE 3

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**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY CURRICULUM 2001
FACULTY OF HUMAN SCIENCES**

MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION (Vermeulen Chapter 1)

- What is research
- Research as science practice
- The aims of research
- The characteristics of research
- Requirements for a research project
- Qualitative and quantitative research
- The epistemology
- Some ethical considerations

**MODULE 2: THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND THE REPORT
(Vermeulen Chapter 11)**

- Language, style and technical aspects
- The research planning
- The introductory section
- The method section
- The results section
- The discussion section
- References
- Summary
- Preparation of tables and graphs

MODULE 3: TYPES OF RESEARCH, STEPS IN THE PROCESS AND RESEARCH DESIGN (Vermeulen Chapter 2)

- Types of research
- Steps in the quantitative process
- Steps in the qualitative process

**MODULE 4: STATING THE PROBLEM AND FORMULATING THE HYPOTHESIS
(Vermeulen Chapter 3)**

- Stating the research problem
- Requirements for the stating of a problem
- Identifying a problem
- Formulating the hypothesis
- Aim with hypothesis
- The relation between variables
- Forms of hypotheses
- The null hypothesis

- Alternative hypotheses
- Research hypothesis
- Operational and statistical hypotheses

MODULE 5: STUDY OF THE LITERATURE (Vermeulen Chapter 4)

- The value of relevant literature
- Method of literature study
- Using ERIC
- Using the Internet

**MODULE 6: IDENTIFYING AND NAMING OF VARIABLES
(Vermeulen Chapter 5)**

- What is a variable?
- A hypothesis and its variables
- Independent variable
- Dependent variable
- External variables
- Control variables
- Intervening variables
- Choice of variables

MODULE 7: VALIDITY AND TECHNIQUES FOR THE MANIPULATION OF VARIABLES (Vermeulen Chapter 6)

- Internal validity
- Factors influencing internal validity
- External validity
- Test validity
- Construct validity

MODULE 8: TEST SAMPLING (Vermeulen Chapter 7)

- Sampling
- The population
- The sample
- Types of sampling
- The sampling procedure
- Techniques for probability sampling
- The size of a sample

MODULE 9: MEASURING AND EVALUATION (Vermeulen Chapter 8)

- Introduction
- Dimensionality
- Measurement levels
- Reliability of measuring

ANNEXURE 4.1

MODULE 10: DESCRIPTIVE METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION (Vermeulen Chapter 9)

- Methods of observation
- The interview
- Uses of the interview
- Types of interviews
- Possible research problems arising in the use of interviews
- Advantages of the use of the interviews
- Practical interviewing
- The questionnaire
- What is measured?
- Composition of the questionnaire
- Different types of responses or answers
- Application of a questionnaire
- Scoring
- Data processing with the aid of a computer .

MODULE 11: STATISTICS (Vermeulen Chapter 10)

- Introduction
- Exploratory research and statistics
- Descriptive research and statistics
- Explanatory research and statistics
- Concluding remarks

ANNEXURE 4.2
(Extract from work schedule)



6. PRESENTERS OF SECTIONS – and PLANNING (two periods on main campus and two periods on College Street Campus later on the same day for part-time students)

LECTURES COMMENCE ON WEDNESDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2001

- 5.1 Module 1: Alan Weimann – Week 1 - Week of 19 Feb.
- 5.2 Module 2: Annatjie Erasmus – Week 2 - Week of 26 Feb.
- 5.3 Module 3: Lilla du Toit, Annatjie Erasmus and Noelene Terblanche – Week 3
Week of 5 March
- 5.4 Module 4: Alan Weimann – Weeks 4 and 5 - Weeks of 12 and 26 March
- 5.5 Module 5: Annatjie Erasmus – Weeks 6 and 7 - Weeks 2 April and 30 April
- 5.6 Module 6: Vuyisa Matsheke – Weeks 8 and 9 - Weeks 7 and 21 May
- 5.7 Module 7: Management Department – Weeks 10 and 11 -
Weeks of 28 and 4 June
- 5.8 Module 8: Noelene Terblanche – Weeks 12 and 13 - Weeks of 11 and 18 June
- 5.9 Module 9: HR Department – Weeks 14 and 15 - Weeks of 25 June and 23 July
- 5.10 Module 10: Lilla du Toit – Weeks 16 and 17 - Weeks of 30 July and 6 August
- 5.11 Module 11: Noelene Terblanche – Weeks 19 and 20 - Weeks of 13 August and
20 August

Revised planning: 24 May 2001



FACULTY OF HUMAN SCIENCES

PRACTICAL ASSIGNMENTS RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

ASSIGNMENT 1:

ESTABLISH AN AREA/A TOPIC OF RESEARCH

DUE DATE: 4 APRIL 2001

ASSIGNMENT 2:

DETERMINE THE RESEARCH PROBLEM/PROBLEM STATEMENT
FORMULATE A RESEARCH QUESTION
FORMULATE RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS
CHOOSE TYPE OF STUDY

DUE DATE:

ASSIGNMENT 3:

WRITE A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

DUE DATE: 15 JUNE 2001

ASSIGNMENT 4:

DESIGN MEASURING INSTRUMENT/S

DUE DATE:

ASSIGNMENT 5:

PILOT MEASURING INSTRUMENTS AND SUBMIT REVISED MEASURING
INSTRUMENT

DUE DATE:

ASSIGNMENT 6:

CONDUCT FIELDWORK AND HAND IN FIELDWORK NOTES

DUE DATE: END FIELDWORK - 25 JULY 2001

ASSIGNMENT 7:

WRITE UP RESEARCH PROJECT UNDER CLOSE SUPERVISION OF SUPERVISOR
HAND IN AND PRESENT PROJECTS

DUE DATE: 23 OCTOBER 2001

ANNEXURE 5



MEMORANDUM

TO : COMMERCIAL ADMIN RESEARCH METHODS STUDENTS
FROM : YOUR SUPERVISOR
DATE : 13 AUGUST 2001

PROJECT PLANNING

In order to complete your research methodology projects you should more or less maintain the following schedule:

Week 1: 13 August
Finalise questionnaires

Week 2: 20 August
Do sampling and distribute questionnaires

Week 3,4: 27 August and 3 September
Respondents complete questionnaires

Week 5, 6: 10, 17 September
Capture data

Week 7, 8: 24 September, 1 October
Analyse and interpret data

Week 9 - 12: 8, 15, 22, 29 October
Write up project

Thanks

ANNEXURE 6.1



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY MEETING

REPORT OF MEETING HELD ON 05/02/2001

1. PRESENT, STAFF INVOLVED AND NUMBER OF STUDENTS REGISTERED AS ON 5/2/2001

Faculty of Applied Technology:

1.1 **B.Tech. Tourism Management: (3322000) - Research Methods I - Semester 1**
D Tassioupoulos

1.2 **B.Tech. Fine Art: (4007) ?**
J Rankin and J Steele

Faculty of Human Sciences:

1.3 **B.Tech. Business Administration: (5007) - Research Methodology - Semester 2**
6 students registered so far – N Terblanche

B.Tech. Management: (5014) - Research Methodology
0 students registered so far – N Terblanche/W Plaatjies/J Masiza

1.4 **B.Tech. Marketing: (5003) - Advanced Applied Marketing IV**
E-mail from C Woodhall – their department will not fall in with general offering this year

1.5 **B.Tech. Human Resources Management: (5004) - Research Methodology**
12 students registered so far – S Home present – other contact person N Dwesini

1.6 **B.Tech. Cost and Management Accounting: (5008) - Research Methodology**
V Matsheke not present

ANNEXURE 6.1

1.7 **B.Tech. Internal Auditing: (3013) - Research Methodology**
V Matsheke not present

1.8 **B.Tech. Journalism: (5013) – Media Research Methods**
Contact person: A Weimann – not offered in 2001

1.9 **B.Tech. Office Management and Technology: (500698) - Research Methodology**
8 students registered so far – A Erasmus

1.10 **B.Tech. Education Post School: (5012) - Research Methods and Techniques**
No intake for 2001 - L du Toit present

2. The **School of Applied Art** tabled its arrangements as per 2000 and the meeting agreed that until a satisfactory core curriculum has been established, the School of Applied Art will continue lecturing and supervising its own students. The School will, however, have a look at the curriculum, as it will be used by the School of Tourism and Hospitality.

3. The **School of Tourism and Hospitality** explained that it had acquired the services of an outside person. The course outline and credit allocation will be discussed and lectures are to commence soon. The course was distributed via e-mail for other staff to look at.

4. A very productive discussion took place, endeavouring to look at the Research Methods issue from all possible angles. It was agreed by the meeting to schedule another meeting during which the SAQA outcomes for each programme will be used to determine the core competencies for Research Methodology.

ANNEXURE 6.2



REPORT OF RESEARCH METHODS MEETING HELD ON 12 FEBRUARY 2001 IN THE AD ROOM AT 14:00

1. PRESENT

N Terblanche – Management Department
L du Toit – Education Department and Secretarial Department
A Erasmus – Research Office
V Matsheke – Accounting Department (arrived at 14:40)

2. APOLOGIES

W Plaatjies – Management Dept
N Dwesini – Human Resource Dept
J Steele - Applied Art
J Rankin - Applied Art

3. OUTCOMES AND CORE CURRICULUM

Each department present tabled the SAQA outcomes for their respective Research Methodology courses and the meeting decided that the following modules would form the core curriculum for the offering for 2001. These appear in the order in which they will be dealt with during the year. The meeting agreed to use the following source for the theory presentations: *Research Orientation: A practical Study guide for Students and Researchers* (Vermeulen, 1998)

3.1 **MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION** (Vermeulen Chapter 1)

- What is research
- Research as science practice
- The aims of research
- The characteristics of research
- Requirements for a research project
- Qualitative and Quantitative Research
- The epistemology
- Some ethical considerations

3.2 **MODULE 2: THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND THE REPORT** (Vermeulen Chapter 11)

- Language, Style and technical aspects
- The research planning
- The introductory section
- The method section
- The results section
- The discussion section
- References

ANNEXURE 6.2

- Summary
- Preparation of tables and graphs

3.3 **MODULE 3: TYPES OF RESEARCH, STEPS IN THE PROCESS AND RESEARCH DESIGN** (Vermeulen Chapter 2)

- Types of research
- Steps in the quantitative process
- Steps in the qualitative process

3.4 **MODULE 4: STATING THE PROBLEM AND FORMULATING THE HYPOTHESIS** (Vermeulen Chapter 3)

- Stating the research problem
- Requirements for the stating of a problem
- Identifying a problem
- Formulating the hypothesis
- Aim with hypothesis
- The relation between variables
- Forms of hypotheses
- The null hypothesis
- Alternative hypotheses
- Research hypothesis
- Operational and statistical hypothesis

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- The value of relevant literature
- Method of literature study
- Using ERIC
- Using the Internet

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- What is a variable?
- A hypothesis and its variables
- Independent variable
- Dependent variable
- External variables
- Control variables
- Intervening variables
- Choice of variables

3.7 **MODULE 7: VALIDITY AND TECHNIQUES FOR THE MANIPULATION OF VARIABLES** (Vermeulen Chapter 6)

- Internal validity
- Factors influencing internal validity
- External validity

ANNEXURE 6.2

- Test validity
- Construct validity

3.8 **MODULE 8: TEST SAMPLING** (Vermeulen Chapter 7)

- Sampling
- The population
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- The sampling procedure
- Techniques for probability sampling
- The size of a sample

3.9 **MODULE 9: MEASURING AND EVALUATION** (Vermeulen Chapter 8)

- Introduction
- Dimensionality
- Measurement levels
- Reliability of measuring

3.10 **MODULE 10: DESCRIPTIVE METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION** (Vermeulen Chapter 9)

- Methods of observation
- The interview
- Uses of the interview
- Types of interviews
- Possible research problems arising in the use of interviews
- Advantages of the use of the interviews
- Practical interviewing
- The questionnaire
- What is measured?
- Composition of the questionnaire
- Different types of responses or answers
- Application of a questionnaire
- Scoring
- Data processing with the aid of a computer

3.11 **MODULE 11: STATISTICS** (Vermeulen Chapter 10)

- Introduction
- Exploratory research and statistics
- Descriptive research and statistics
- Explanatory research and statistics
- Concluding remarks

4. **WHERE AND WHEN OFFERED:** Coll Street Wednesday evenings 17:00 – 18:30
Room C4.9 – Main Campus – Wednesday afternoons: venue?

ANNEXURE 6.2

6. **PRESENTERS OF SECTIONS – and PLANNING**

LECTURES COMMENCE ON WEDNESDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2001

- 5.1 Module 1: Alan Weimann – Week 1 - 19 Feb
- 5.2 Module 2: Annatjie Erasmus – Week 2 - 26 Feb
- 5.3 Module 3: Lilla du Toit, Annatjie Erasmus and Noelene Terblanche – Week 3
5 March
- 5.4 Module 4: Alan Weimann – Week 4 and 5 - 12 and 19 March
- 5.5 Module 5: Annatjie Erasmus – Week 6 and 7 - 26 March
- 5.6 Module 6: Vuyisa Matsheke – Week 8 and 9 - 2 and 9 April
- 5.7 Module 7: Management Department – Week 10 and 11 - 30 April and 7 May
- 5.8 Module 8: Noelene Terblanche – Week 12 and 13 - 14 and 21 May
- 5.9 Module 9: HR Department – week 14 and 15 - 28 May and 4 June
- 5.10 Module 10: Lilla du Toit – Week 16, 17 and 18 - 11, 18 and 25 June
- 5.11 Module 11: Noelene Terblanche – Week 19 and 20 - 16 and 23 July

THE REMAINING THREE MONTHS OF THE YEAR WILL BE DEVOTED TO WRITING UP THE PROJECTS

6. **DATES FOR MONTHLY SUPERVISOR MEETINGS**

- 6.1 March: 30 – 13:00
- 6.2 April: no meeting
- 6.3 May: 25 – time to be confirmed
- 6.4 June: 29 – time to be confirmed
- 6.5 August: 31 – time to be confirmed
- 6.6 September: no meeting
- 6.7 October: 26 – time to be confirmed
- 6.8 November: date to be confirmed

Supervisors are to meet with their students on a bi-weekly basis and table progress reports of their students at these meetings.

The meeting closed at 15:00.



REPORT ON B TECH SUPERVISORS' MEETING HELD ON 30 MARCH 2001

1. PRESENT

The meeting was attended by the following staff:

H van Heyningen - HR Department
 N Terblanche - Management Department
 N Dwesini - HR Department
 B Hobololo - HR Department
 A Erasmus - Research Department

2. APOLOGIES

The following staff sent apologies:

W Plaatjes - Management
 J Masiza - Management
 A Weimann - Communication (to attend on invitation)
 J Rankin - Applied Art (to attend on invitation)
 D Tassiopoulos - Hospitality and Tourism (to attend on invitation)

3. ABSENT WITHOUT APOLOGY

The following B Tech supervisors were absent without apology:

V Matsheke - Accounting
 J Steele - Applied Art (to attend on invitation)
 N Mpako - Applied Art (to attend on invitation)

4. MATTERS DISCUSSED

4.1 Research modular progress, reconciliation with planning and planning Term 2

The meeting was informed of the progress made with the curriculum. The offering is on schedule and Alan Weimann will take the classes on 6 and 11 April for Module 4 - Stating the problem and formulating the hypothesis/research question.

Vuyisa Matsheke is responsible for the first two lessons of Term 2, namely Module 6 - Identifying and naming of variables. These two classes will take place on 9 May and 16 May 2001 respectively.

The next two weeks thereafter is the responsibility of the Management Department and Noelene will inform the applicable staff. These lessons will be the offering of Module 7 - Validity and Techniques for the manipulation of variables which will take place on 23 and 30 May 2001.

The next supervisors meeting will take place on 25 May and further progress will be discussed then. There will be no class on 2 May due to the additional supervisors and faculty board meetings.

4.2 Practical assignments

The list with practical assignment topics was discussed. The supervisors were satisfied with the assignments identified by the research officer. The meeting was informed that 4 April was the deadline for Assignment 1 - Choose a topic. Further deadlines were discussed and the deadline for Assignment 2 (Determine a research problem/Formulate a research question/Formulate a research hypothesis/Choose type of study) was set for 16 May. This deadline would accommodate the supervisors' training workshop scheduled for 15 and 16 May, as supervisors expressed their uncertainty on expectations with regard to guiding students through the research process.

The rest of the assignments are as follows:

Assignment 3: Design measuring instruments
 Assignment 4: Pilot measuring instruments and submit revised instrument
 Assignment 5: Conduct fieldwork and hand in fieldwork notes
 Assignment 6: Write up project and present it, as well as do an oral presentation.

The due dates for these will be confirmed at the next supervisors meeting to be held on 25 May.

4.3 Supervisor duties and immediate supervisor needs and guidance required

4.3.1 It was agreed that the research officer would address the Faculty of Human Sciences board meeting on 2 May with the explicit purpose to inform managers of academic units of the special demands made on and additional responsibilities of the B Tech supervisors, as well as to share some perspectives on supervision. The necessity of attending to supervision workshop will also be underlined due to the fact that no further NRF supervisors grants will be allocated as from 2002 to staff who cannot present proof of attending such a workshop.

It was acknowledged that it would not be possible to make much changes to work loads of the current academic year, but that this address should initiate a process of better understanding of the need to accommodate these demands in the academic programmes.

4.3.2 An additional meeting was scheduled for Monday, 9 April with the main purpose to discuss the topics received and to supply guidance on how supervisors should start the supervision process from the point where students hand in topics.

It was decided that the head of each departmental supervisors group would, in conjunction with other supervisors, distribute students to staff with whom topics have most appropriate subject-matter knowledge. A system of co-supervisors was also discussed and agreed upon to incorporate staff who do not yet have a master's qualification into the system.

It was also agreed that supervisors can be drawn from the complete available pool - departments would in this way not be limited to supervisors available from their own departments.

4.3.3 A further additional meeting of supervisors will take place on 2 May 2001 just before the faculty board meeting. The main purpose of this meeting will be to highlight the expectations and role of supervisors which effectively start when students hand in Assignment 1. The research officer will prepare guideline documents from the supervisors' workshop presented by Prof Chris Kapp.

ANNEXURE 6.3

Supervisors are expected to make appointments with individual students to discuss topics and the rest of the course the practical assignments are to take. The initial meetings must take place between 9 April and 5 May in order for the students to hand in Assignment 2.

The meeting was again informed that supervisors should have bi-weekly meetings with each individual student and a written report on each student's progress should be tabled at the next supervisors' meeting on 25 May

4.4 The meeting closed at 14:10.

NOTES TO SUPERVISORS:

As I was typing up this report, I realised that we were missing a crucial step of the research process - namely the proposal - during the discussion of the practical assignments. Although the first two assignments cover part of the proposal process, I think we should revisit Assignment 3 and consider this to be the proposal, allowing sufficient time for students.

Proposal writing was one of the theory modules and all supervisors should refer to the theory in Vermeulen (Chapter 11) to supervise students with the proposal process. Let us discuss this at the meeting on 9 April as well as draw up a standardised Border Technikon B Tech proposal format which can be captured in future formal documentation to distribute to B Tech students.

Report compiled by:

A ERASMUS
ACTING RESEARCH OFFICER

31 March 2001



FROM THE DESK OF THE RESEARCH OFFICE

REPORT OF SUPERVISORS MEETING HELD ON 2 MAY 2001 AT 12:30 IN THE
AD SEMINAR ROOM

1. PRESENT

The following staff were present at the meeting:

L du Toit	: Education
N Terblanche	: Management
J Masiza	: Management
A Erasmus	: Research/Secretarial

2. APOLOGIES

The following staff sent apologies:

N Dwesini	: Human Resources
V Matsheke	: Accounting
H van Heyningen	: Human Resources

3. ISSUES DISCUSSED

The points on the agenda was discussed. In addition to the normal organisational issues, Article 2 will be discussed at the next standard meeting of 25 May.

- 3.1 Special attention was given to the role and function of the supervisor in the support given to the student during the **literature review phase**. It was emphasised that the literature review does not come to an end on completion of the proposal. The literature review should be sustained for the duration of the project. Supervisors are to pay special attention to the writing style of students and as a result of this discussion Annatjie was tasked to consult other technikons on the use of the 1st vis a vis the 3rd person in order for us to accept a norm.
- 3.2 The importance of **regular supervision** was emphasised. All supervisors should submit a progress report on each student at the standard meeting of 25 May. The main supervisory function during the coming weeks is the conceptualisation of project topics.

After the 16th when problem statements and research questions/hypotheses have been submitted the main function will be to refine these. This will be a **retrospective exercise** but between the 16th of May and the 14th of June **continuous support** on completing the proposal will be given.

It was pointed out that we have to bring to students' attention that a number of draft proposals can be submitted but on the 14th of June the final proposal will be submitted for **assessment** purposes.

Supervisors were invited to either attend Annatjie's consultation sessions or to invite her to their own consultation sessions. Supervisors were encouraged to keep field notes of consultation sessions, type these up and use as point of departure during successive consultation sessions.

- 3.3 The issue of **assessing the proposal** was raised and Annatjie was tasked to consult other technikons and supply feedback on this issue at the meeting of 25 May.
- 3.4 The issue of **project management** was discussed and it was pointed out that due to the time pressures the supervisors will play a major role in especially in this area.
- 3.5 The meeting was in favour of the suggestion made that we steer the students doing Research Methods in 2002 to choose topics which come from our own Masters studies - especially from the "recommendations" section.
- 3.6 The issue of 'access letters' was discussed and the meeting expressed their comfort with letters, containing the official stamp being issued by the research office. The meeting acknowledged that - by the research office issuing the letters - a learning opportunity is taken away from the students, but this is necessitated by the shortage of time.

The meeting closed at 13:30

*Apologies for the confusion on the starting time of the meeting. As a result of this Bernhard arrived at 12:35 and with nobody else there yet I gave him the documentation and he left. My apologies Bernhard.



FROM THE DESK OF THE RESEARCH OFFICE

**REPORT OF B TECH RESEARCH METHODOLOGY SUPERVISOR MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 25 MAY AT 13:00 IN THE AD SEMINAR ROOM**

1. PRESENT

The following staff were present at the meeting:

L du Toit	: Education
N Terblanche	: Management
M Mwebi	: Management
N Gwanya	: Accounting
H van Heyningen	: Human Resources
B Hoboloko	: Human Resources
A Erasmus	: Research/Secretarial

2. APOLOGIES

The following staff sent apologies:

N Dwesini	Human Resources
V Matsheke	Accounting
J Masiza	Management

3. ISSUES DISCUSSED

- 3.1 Literature review:** Staff were requested to impress upon students that the literature review process does not stop on completion of the proposal but continues for the duration of the project. Students were requested to consult at least 10 sources of reference for the proposal phase. The feasibility of placing a minimum number on sources for the project was discussed and the meeting resolved that this would not be done. Students will be encouraged to continue with the literature review at the same pace as with the proposal.
- 3.2 Nature of supervision:** The meeting discussed the retrospective as well as supportive nature of supervision. The necessity of negotiating the structure of supervision with each individual student was also highlighted.
- 3.3 Assessment of proposal template:** Annatjie distributed a provision template for the assessment of proposals. Supervisors are to send comments to Annatjie before Thursday 31 May. Annatjie will incorporate the comments and table final version at the meeting on 22 June when all supervisors will meet to assess all Human Sciences B Tech proposals. This meeting is scheduled for 08:30 in the AD seminar room.

- 3.4 Use of 1st person vs 3rd person:** The meeting resolved that during this period that policy has not yet been written and will be developed towards the end of the year we will adopt the use of the 3rd person in proposals and projects.
- 3.5 Assessment of offering:** Departments were reminded to consult their respective NATED documents for assessment requirements. To enable the building up of a year mark, Assignment 3 will be the first assignment to be assessed and given a mark. The meeting further resolved that students who submit assignments after the due date will receive a nil-mark. Departments were urged to ensure that this is communicated to B Tech students.
- 3.6 Access letters:** Supervisors who do not want to write their own access letters can request the research officer to supply this service.
- 3.7 Research Methodology modular progress:** The Management Department will take responsibility for Module 7 - Validity and techniques for the manipulation of variables - for the weeks of 28 May and 4 June. Thereafter Noelene Terblanche will do Module 8 - Test Sampling- for the next two weeks, namely weeks of 11 and 18 June.
- 3.8 General planning:** The revised planning dated 24 May was handed out.
- 3.9 Practical assignments - Assignment 4 etc:** The meeting resolved that Assignment 4 will cover the piloting of the measuring instrument and this will be done during the June break. The due date is Monday 23 July.
- Fieldwork which is Assignment 5 will be commenced immediately thereafter and the due date for this is 21 September.
- Assignment 6 is the project itself and students are to start with writing up their projects during the September break. A possible due date for this is 29 October to correspond with the date published for test marks to be handed in. This leaves November for the assessment of projects and final marks to be forwarded to the Examination Department on 20 November as per prospectus. The arrangements regarding Assignment 6 should be finalised at the meeting on 22 June.
- The assessment of Assignments 4 - 6 should be placed on the agenda for the meeting of 31 July.
- 3.10 Report on student progress:** The Secretarial Department was the only department to table a report. The Human Resources and Accounting informed the meeting that they have reports and will forward to the research officer in due course. The Management Department's report is outstanding but the department will submit a report on all activities up until 22 June during that meeting.
- 3.11 Supervisors seminar:** Annatjie shared the feedback as collated by Esther Hoffmann and each department will be supplied with a copy of the document via email.
- 3.12 Qualified supervisors:** This is an issue which needs continues attention. For implementation purposes during 2001 it was resolved that only staff with a research masters or a research component in their masters will be independent supervisors. Other staff would be co-supervisors. This would make provision for capacity building. The meeting also resolved that due to the our state of being under-capacitated all staff who fits the requirements should participate in the supervision programme HOD's are however urged to handle this matter with great care.

ANNEXURE 6.5

Supervision is not an issue which can be forced upon staff. It is recommended that all staff who do not feel equipped at least be co-supervisors.

- 3.13 Allocation of topics to supervisors:** The meeting discussed the allocation of topics. In the secretarial department due to there being two qualified supervisors and one being on leave during the second semester, Annatjie will take all the students. The management department has not yet received all topics. In the Human Resources Department students have been allocated to staff, but due to the issue of supervision/co-supervision another allocation might have to be done. The Accounting Department Rep is to follow up with Ms Matsheke who received the topics from the Research Officer. The issue of allocating time on the 2002 timetable was also discussed under this item and Annatjie suggested that we propose 1 period per week per B tech student. This item needs to be discussed at the meeting of 31 July.
- 3.14 Assignment 3 due date - 14 June:** The meeting agreed to move this date to 18 June - supervisors are to communicate this to students.
- 3.15 Supervisors continuous development:** Article 2 was discussed.
- 3.16 Date of next meeting:** The next meeting will take place on 22 June for combined assessment of proposals

The meeting closed at 15:00

BORDER TECHNIKON

MINUTES of a SENATE meeting held at 10:00 on WEDNESDAY, 23 MAY 2001 in the COUNCIL CHAMBERS

PRESENT: Professor L R Brunyee (Chairperson/Vice-Chancellor)
 Professor A M Mdebuka (Vice-Chairperson)
 Mr M D Jobodwana (External Council representative)
 Dr M Xaba-Mokoena (External Council representative)
 Professor D N Jaftha (External Consultant)
 Professor K Bennett (External Consultant)
 Mr J Bhana (Registrar)
 Mr G J Mulder (Dean: Faculty of Applied Technology)
 Mr C Novukela (Dean: Faculty of Human Sciences)
 Mr P Roets (HOD: End User Computing)
 Mr A Pretorius (Co-Op Education)
 Dr C Woodhall (HOD: Marketing)
 Mr J Proud (HOD: Civil and Building)
 Mr M Siswana (HOD: Analytical Chemistry)
 Mr N Knickelbein (Administration Manager)
 Mr J Valiathazhel (Foundation Studies)
 Mr D Tassiopoulos (Hospitality and Tourism)
 Dr A Weimann (HOD: Communication)
 Mr S Ngcobo (NUTESA)
 Ms L Mpepo (HOD: Human Resources Management)
 Ms S Du Plessis (Chief Librarian)
 Dr L Smith (Academic Development Officer)
 Mrs A Erasmus (Acting Research Officer)
 Ms L du Toit (AD: Secretarial and Education)
 Mrs G Bartlett (HOD: Accounting)
 Ms J M Masiza (HOD: Management)
 Mrs G Pendu (SAPSE officer)
 Mr L Magnus (Mechanical Engineering/Observer)
 Mr J Clark (Electrical Engineering)
 Mr C van Zyl (Mechanical Engineering)
 Mr C Clack (representing HOD: Civil and Building)
 Ms N Mpako (Applied Art)
 Mr V Bhagwandeem (Director: Student Affairs)
 Mr M N Mabece (SRC representative)
 Ms A Salayedwa (SRC representative)
 Ms L Mgweba (Secretariat: Committee Services)

APOLOGIES: Mr Z Mkovane (Director: Human Resources)
 Mrs V Mxoli (Non-Academic Employee representation)
 Mr A Luyt (Acting HOD: Computer Studies)
 Mr A Dandala (Strategic Planner)

1. WELCOME

The Chairperson welcomed all present. The meeting observed a quiet moment of prayer before the meeting could start.

2. SENATE MEMBERSHIP

2.1 Confirmation of membership for this meeting

RESOLUTION: That Mr Magnus from the Faculty of Applied Technology be accepted as an observer. That membership for this Senate meeting be confirmed.

10.1 WORKSHOPS ON SUPERVISION

RESOLUTION: That all supervisors and potential supervisors of B Tech graduates attend workshops on supervisory skills and research methods. Attendance is compulsory.

ACTION: RESEARCH OFFICER

21. CLOSING

There being no further matters to discuss, the meeting closed at 17:30.

MINUTES APPROVED AND SIGNED ON THIS.....DAY

OF.....

.....
 CHAIRPERSON

ANNEXURE 8.1



BORDER TECHNIKON

FACULTY OF HUMAN SCIENCES

ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE B TECH RESEARCH PROPOSALS

PROCEDURE FOR ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSALS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF TEMPLATE FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2001

1. SUPERVISORS WILL MEET ON 22 JUNE TO ASSESS PROPOSALS
2. EACH SUPERVISOR WILL RECEIVE A SET OF ALL PROPOSALS WITH TEMPLATES ATTACHED
3. TEMPLATES WILL BE COMPLETED INDIVIDUALLY AND CONSENSUS WILL BE REACHED BY MEANS OF DELIBERATIONS
4. ASSESSMENT WILL BE DONE BY RATING EACH CATEGORY. A TOTAL MARK WILL BE ALLOCATED BASED ON THE RATING TO FACILITATE THE YEAR MARK PROCESS (FOR THE DEPARTMENTS FOLLOWING THIS ROUTE) CATEGORIES ARE BASED ON COMPONENTS OF PROPOSALS AS REQUESTED IN ASSIGNMENT 3

5. THE RATING SCALE IS 1 - 5

1 / 5: POOR	(0 - 20 %)
2 / 5: AVERAGE	: (20 - 40 %)
3 / 5: GOOD	: (40 - 60 %)
4 / 5: VERY GOOD	: (60 - 80 %)
5 / 5: OUTSTANDING	: (80 - 100 %)

CATEGORY 1	1	2	3	4	5
TITLE					
ORIGINAL					
RELEVANT AND APPROPRIATE					
CURRENT					
SATISFACTORILY DEMARCATED					
CONCISE YET DESCRIPTIVE					
ACCEPTABLE IN TERMS OF AVAILABLE SOURCES AND DATA					
TRUE REFLECTION OF CONTENTS OF PROPOSAL					
CONTAINS IMPORTANT VARIABLES					
TOTAL OUT OF 40					

CATEGORY 2	1	2	3	4	5
INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT					
FORMULATED CLEARLY, EXPLICITLY, UNAMBIGUOUSLY AND UNDERSTANDABLY					
CONGRUENT TO TITLE AND OBJECTIVES OF STUDY					
CULMINATES IN HYPOTHESIS OR RESEARCH QUESTION/S					
IS THE PROBLEM AREA CLEARLY DEMARCATED?					
DOES IT CAPTURE THE THEORETICAL AND/OR PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE?					
DOES IT INDICATE THE UNIT OF ANALYSIS (OBJECT OF STUDY)?					
TOTAL OUT OF 30					

CATEGORY 3	1	2	3	4	5
BACKGROUND TO PROBLEM					
IS THE AREA OF CONCERN CLARIFIED?					
IS THE NEED THAT EXISTS TO DO RESEARCH INTO THE PROBLEM WELL DESCRIBED?					
HOW WELL IS THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM OUTLINED?					
THE RESEARCHABILITY OF THE PROBLEM					
TOTAL OUT OF 20					

CATEGORY 4	1	2	3	4	5
RESEARCH QUESTION / HYPOTHESIS					
QUESTION WELL FORMULATED					
DOES THE HYPOTHESIS CONTAIN THE VARIABLES?					
TOTAL OUT OF 10					

CATEGORY 5 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	1	2	3	4	5
ARE THE AIMS/OBJECTIVES CLEAR?					
ARE OBJECTIVES CLEARLY DEFINED?					
ARE THE OBJECTIVES FEASIBLE AND REALISTIC?					
ARE THE OBJECTIVES RELEVANT TO PROBLEM STATEMENT?					
ARE THE OBJECTIVES RELEVANT TO RESEARCH QUESTION/HYPOTHESIS?					
TOTAL OUT OF 26					

CATEGORY 6 IMPACT/FEASIBILITY/BENEFITS OF STUDY	1	2	3	4	5
DID STUDENT INDICATE ON WHO THE STUDY WILL HAVE AN IMPACT?					
DID THE STUDENT INDICATE THE FACTORS WHICH WILL CONTRIBUTE/HINDER THE FEASIBILITY?					
DID THE STUDENT INDICATE THE BENEFITS OF THE STUDY?					
TOTAL OUT OF 16					

CATEGORY 7 LITERATURE REVIEW AND CITING TECHNIQUES	1	2	3	4	5
RELEVANT AIM AND PROBLEM STATEMENT SUFFICIENTLY COMPREHENSIVE					
OFFERS LOGIC AND ORGANISED SUMMARY					
PRESENTS PREVIOUS RESEARCH CORRECTLY					
CITING CORRECT					
DOES IT PROVIDE A RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH PROBLEM?					
TOTAL OUT OF 30					

CATEGORY 8 DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	1	2	3	4	5
TYPE OF STUDY APPROPRIATE TO RESEARCH PROBLEM					
DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES / MEASURING INSTRUMENTS DESCRIBED					
DATA PROCESSING AND INTERPRETATION PROCEDURES DESCRIBED					
DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES DESCRIBED					
IS RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY ADDRESSED?					
SAMPLING PROCEDURES ADDRESSED					
TOTAL OUT OF 30					

SUMMARY OF MARKS:

CATEGORY 1: _____

CATEGORY 2: _____

CATEGORY 3: _____

CATEGORY 4: _____

CATEGORY 5: _____

CATEGORY 6: _____

CATEGORY 7: _____

CATEGORY 8: _____

TOTAL MARK out of 200: _____

PERCENTAGE: _____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

TECHNIKON VAAL TRIANGLE
 CAPE TECHNIKON
 PE TECHNIKON
 WITS TECHNIKON
 PROFESSOR CHRIS KAPP



PROGRESS REPORT ON B TECH RESEARCH METHODOLOGY STUDENTS

DEPARTMENT : SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND SECRETARIAL STUDIES
 PROGRAMME : B TECH OFFICE MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY
 SUPERVISOR : A ERASMUS
 QUALIFICATIONS : HDE COMMERCE (US)
 NDIP COMMERCIAL PRACTICE (TECH SA)
 M TECH COMMERCIAL ADMIN (VAAL TRIANGLE TECH)
 DATE OF REPORT : 7 MAY 2001

1. Students enrolled for the programme

The following seven B Tech students from the programme Office Management and Technology are enrolled for Research Methodology:

- Ms N A Tokoyi : 9209379
- Ms N F Mboyiya : 9208798
- Ms N Kula : 9602431
- Ms X M Mzileni : 9600167
- Mr M Moni : 9700617
- Mr X Ntoyakhe : 9600584
- Ms B L Citwa : 9002529

2. Report on consultation sessions

I had first meetings with Ms Mboyiya, Ms Kula, Mr Moni and Ms Tokoyi to approve their topics. Ms Mzileni and Mr Ntoyakhe still need to discuss their topics with me.

3. Individual reports

Ms Tokoyi, Ms Mboyiya and Ms Mzileni attend the evening class in East London and in my capacity as research officer I don't always go to the evening class. I only go to the evening class if I have to make announcements applicable to all research methods students.

3.1 Ms Mzileni

Ms Mzileni is repeating the course and during last year she could not build up the required momentum. Her topic this year was submitted in time, but she has not made any effort to see me to discuss the topic. I have looked at the topic "Communication in an office environment" and cannot say without

having a meeting with her where she wants to go with this. **Progress not on track.**

Action to be taken: I plan to send a letter with the lecturer responsible for the lecture on Wednesday evening 9 May to inform her of the above as well as what is required from her to make a success of the course this year.

3.2 Ms Tokoyi

I met with Ms Tokoyi and we discussed her topic. She has submitted her topic: "High rate of unemployment in the Eastern Cape and how to reduce it" which needs a lot of discussion and refinement. Based on the discussion she decided to choose another topic which she will hand in on 23 May together with Assignment 2. **Progress behind schedule.**

3.3 Mr Ntoyakhe

Mr Ntoyakhe is repeating the course. I had one meeting with him where we went through his work of last year. During this meeting the importance of regular supervision sessions was pointed out to him. I am of the opinion that with less courses this year Mr Ntoyakhe will be able to cope with the demands of Research Methodology. He certainly has the mental capability to succeed.

Mr Ntoyakhe is as a result of registering late a little behind the other students and is currently busy with determining a field of research as well as his topic. He is well aware of the fact that he should clear the topic with me before advancing with Assignment 2. **Progress not on track.**

3.4 Ms Mboyiya

I have delivered an 'access' letter at the Technical College for Ms Mboyiya to pass on to the principal of the college. Up to now I have had no feedback from her. I plan to follow up on this issue on Wednesday 9 May during the evening class. Ms Mboyiya submitted her topic: "The absence of planning as a managerial function in the office" which is a result of our first meeting. **Progress on track.**

3.5 Ms Kula

I had the first meeting with Ms Kula. She seems to understand the process of development which takes place from the point where an area of research is determined up to where the topic is formulated. She submitted her topic: "Value-added experiential learning of Border Technikon Secretarial students" which is a result of our first meeting. **Progress on track.**

3.6 Mr Moni

I am having the second session with Mr Moni on 8 May to discuss the problem statement and research question. Due to the correct formulation of his topic first time round, we did not have an in-depth discussion so that I could be satisfied of his conceptualisation of the topic and project. He required this preliminary meeting to discuss his progress on Assignment 2 due to his involvement during the graduation period. **Progress on track.**

ANNEXURE 8.2

3.7 Ms Citwa

Ms Citwa submitted Assignment 1 and 2 simultaneously by means of a fax dated 8 May. I have looked at her work and sent a reply to make arrangements for a meeting since she will be going on maternity leave soon. I recommended that she reformulates her topic to only include the necessary components. Other than that her topic is fine. I will assess Assignment 2 together with the other students' work after 23 May. **Progress on track.**

ANNEXURE 8.3
(Example of feedback report to student)



FROM THE DESK OF YOUR SUPERVISOR

30 May 2001

Dear Mr Moni

Please sign and date both copies of this report indicating your agreement on the contents and hand one copy back to me in the envelope provided. Keep the envelope for moving documents between you and me.

This report contains feedback on Assignment 1 and 2. Please read through and make an appointment with me to discuss any of the points you need clarification on. You should please take note of the points as you will have to incorporate the comments when working on Assignment 3.

See attached a PROVISIONAL template we will be using when assessing Assignment 3. Also note that the due date for Assignment 3 has been extended to Monday 18 June.

1. Topic: Your topic seems fine. You might find though that with the formulation of your title you will need some refinement. Remember that your title should contain your variables
2. Research Problem: We will have to discuss this. Are you saying that if information is not managed appropriately at departmental level this (will or might) influence - this is a vague word - what do you mean by it? - the standard - do you mean level - of production - what do you mean by production?! - of the WHOLE organisation???

I suggest you embark on a little writing exercise where you just sit and write on how you came about in identifying this problem. Let me look at the writing exercise and let us discuss it. This will give me more insight into the background of your problem and what led you to it.

3. Problem Statement: This is actually where you should have stated your problem. I see however you have phrased this in a research question. Here I see you brought in another word to qualify your meaning of 'influence' which is shows some forward movement in the research process, but I am not sure if this is the dimension and the only dimension you would like to research. You have to give this some more thought.
4. I want to emphasise that before you continue with Assignment 3 you work a little more on your conceptualisation of the following: positively; departmental information management; influence; production LEVEL; organisation.

We did not make provision for a section on conceptualisation in Assignment 3 but it would be good if you can insert this section. It will really help you a lot!

ANNEXURE 8.3
(Example of feedback report to student)

5. I am not going to comment on the type of study you chose, at this stage. We will pick this discussion up when working on Assignment 3. Remember that up until 18 June you can discuss Assignment 3 with me, but upon due date you hand in the final document for assessment.

Regards
Mrs Erasmus

Student Signature: _____ Supervisor Signature: _____

Date: _____ Date: _____

ANNEXURE 8.4
(Example of second feedback report to student on same assignment)



FROM THE DESK OF YOUR SUPERVISOR

5 June 2001

Dear Mr Moni

Please sign and date both copies of this report indicating your agreement on the contents and hand one copy back to me in the envelope provided. Keep the envelope for moving documents between you and me.

This report contains the content of our discussions earlier today.

1. I read the memo you wrote in response to my request in the previous feedback report and I think you can use this information as part of the background to your problem in Assignment 3. Do you have time to type this memo out and put a hard copy in my pigeon-hole?
2. You can continue with Assignment 3 now.
3. Please pay attention to the conceptualisation of constructs such as 'Information System' etc which you will be using in your project.
4. Pay attention to the formulation of your title - we discussed the following today: "The importance of the management of information systems (on departmental level) in the organisational decision-making process. This sounds a bit lengthy to me. See what you can do about it. Ensure that the title includes your variables.
5. Make sure that you state your problem clearly, then develop your research question to serve as a tool to use to address the problem.
6. Remember that the problem statement is a result of the process of problem identification.

Regards
Mrs Erasmus

Student Signature: _____ Supervisor Signature: _____

Date: _____ Date: _____



**BORDER TECHNIKON
B TECH RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

MINUTES of a RESEARCH METHODOLOGY meeting held on FRIDAY, 5 November 1999 at 10:00 in the ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT ROOM

PRESENT: *Dr W van Averbek (Chairperson/Research officer)
Dr A Weimann (HOD: Communication)
Ms L Mpepo (HOD: Human Resources Management)
Ms S Du Plessis (Chief Librarian)
Dr L Smith (Academic Development Officer)
Mrs A Erasmus (Programme coordinator B Tech: OMTECH)
Ms L du Toit (AD: Secretarial and Education)
Mrs G Bartlett (HOD: Accounting)
Ms N Terblanche (HOD: Management)*

APOLOGIES: *Ms V Matsheke (Supervisor: Accounting)*

1. WELCOME

The Chairperson welcomed all present.

2. LEARNING BY DOING

The approach to the REM course is "learning by doing". To do research means to engage in a research project. A research project has a cycle involving a number of logical steps. As the theoretical aspects of research are explained to students, they will be required to apply these in the form of assignments. These assignments are incremental, i.e. they constitute important "steps" in the development cycle of their own research project. The last assignment will be the submission of their completed project reports and an oral presentation of their reports to a panel of staff and students.

3. FACULTY EFFORT

All students taking a REM course in the Faculty of Human Sciences, including B Tech Marketing students registered for "Applied Marketing" will attend the same course. Each week's session will be offered twice, once in the late afternoon (15:00 – 17:30) at main campus, and once in the evening (17:30 – 19:00) at College Street. Whereas for logistical reasons students are encouraged to attend at the same venue every week, they are also given the opportunity to switch venues when they are unable to attend at their regular venue.

4. TEAM TEACHING APPROACH

Staff supporting the Research Methodology offering will use a team-teaching approach. This means that several lecturers will be present in each session, and that different people may present the different aspects of research methodology and research project. All lecturing staff who form part of the team can be approached for advice. For advice outside the specified time periods allocated to the Research Methodology offering students are encouraged to make appointments with the staff they want to consult.

5. DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC ADVICE

Each Department or School that offers a B Tech programme and has students attending the REM and Project offering will assign a specific staff member who can be consulted for subject-related matters. The names of these staff will be advertised. For any assistance, advice, information or queries, please contact the research office at 708 5286 or e-mail: wvaver@undlovu.bortech.ac.za

6. CLOSING

There being no further matters to discuss, the meeting closed at 13:00.

MINUTES APPROVED AND SIGNED ON THIS.....DAY

OF.....

ANNEXURE 10



BORDER TECHNIKON FACULTY OF HUMAN SCIENCES

COORDINATION OF STUDENT POST GRADUATE RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

1. INTRODUCTION

The student post graduate research activities at Border Technikon are currently pitched at the B Tech Level. The 2001 prospectus indicates the following programmes for the six Schools of the Faculty of Human Sciences of which most of the programmes have a 2001 intake.

SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

B Tech Business Administration
B Tech Management

SCHOOL OF MARKETING

B Tech Marketing

SCHOOL OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

B Tech Human Resources Management

SCHOOL OF ACCOUNTING

B Tech Cost & Management Accounting
B Tech Internal Auditing

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

B Tech Journalism

SCHOOL OF SECRETARIAL STUDIES AND EDUCATION

B Tech Commercial Administration /Office Management and Technology
B Tech Education Post School

2. COORDINATION REQUIREMENTS AUGUST TO NOVEMBER 2001

For the period August to November 2001 the coordination function of the said activities would mostly involve the following tasks:

- assist supervisors who call for assistance
- hold meetings with supervisors to discuss operational issues such as problems dealing with supervision, project management student progress
- arrange project presentation session
- coordinate publication of projects to be placed in resource centre
- deal with student research related problems as they arise and refer those that are supervisor related to the Supervisor
- liaise with Departments on assessment of projects and coordinate the submission of final assessment to the Examinations Department



**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY CURRICULUM 2001
FACULTY OF HUMAN SCIENCES**

MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION (Vermeulen Chapter 1)

- What is research
- Research as science practice
- The aims of research
- The characteristics of research
- Requirements for a research project
- Qualitative and Quantitative Research
- The epistemology
- Some ethical considerations

**MODULE 2: THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND THE REPORT
(Vermeulen Chapter 11)**

- Language, Style and technical aspects
- The research planning
- The introductory section
- The method section
- The results section
- The discussion section
- References
- Summary
- Preparation of tables and graphs

MODULE 3: TYPES OF RESEARCH, STEPS IN THE PROCESS AND RESEARCH DESIGN (Vermeulen Chapter 2)

- Types of research
- Steps in the quantitative process
- Steps in the qualitative process

**MODULE 4: STATING THE PROBLEM AND FORMULATING THE HYPOTHESIS
(Vermeulen Chapter 3)**

- Stating the research problem
- Requirements for the stating of a problem
- Identifying a problem
- Formulating the hypothesis
- Aim with hypothesis
- The relation between variables
- Forms of hypotheses
- The null hypothesis

- Alternative hypotheses
- Research hypothesis
- Operational and statistical hypothesis

MODULE 5: STUDY OF THE LITERATURE (Vermeulen Chapter 4)

- The value of relevant literature
- Method of literature study
- Using ERIC
- Using the Internet

**MODULE 6: IDENTIFYING AND NAMING OF VARIABLES
(Vermeulen Chapter 5)**

- What is a variable?
- A hypothesis and its variables
- Independent variable
- Dependent variable
- External variables
- Control variables
- Intervening variables
- Choice of variables

MODULE 7: VALIDITY AND TECHNIQUES FOR THE MANIPULATION OF VARIABLES (Vermeulen Chapter 6)

- Internal validity
- Factors influencing internal validity
- External validity
- Test validity
- Construct validity

MODULE 8: TEST SAMPLING (Vermeulen Chapter 7)

- Sampling
- The population
- The sample
- Types of sampling
- The sampling procedure
- Techniques for probability sampling
- The size of a sample

MODULE 9: MEASURING AND EVALUATION (Vermeulen Chapter 8)

- Introduction
- Dimensionality
- Measurement levels
- Reliability of measuring

ANNEXURE 11

MODULE 10: DESCRIPTIVE METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION (Vermeulen Chapter 9)

- Methods of observation
- The interview
- Uses of the interview
- Types of interviews
- Possible research problems arising in the use of interviews
- Advantages of the use of the interviews
- Practical interviewing
- The questionnaire
- What is measured?
- Composition of the questionnaire
- Different types of responses or answers
- Application of a questionnaire
- Scoring
- Data processing with the aid of a computer

MODULE 11: STATISTICS (Vermeulen Chapter 10)

- Introduction
- Exploratory research and statistics
- Descriptive research and statistics
- Explanatory research and statistics
- Concluding remarks



BORDER TECHNIKON
FACULTY OF HUMAN SCIENCES

LEARNER GUIDE 2001:
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

COMPILED BY MS L DU TOIT AND DR A WEIMANN

This learner guide is just a guide. Additional tasks, assignments etc for assessment purposes can be added by the lecturer(s).

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ANNEXURE 13.1

BORDER TECHNIKON



RESEARCH MANUAL

Updated 11 September, 2001



1. **Introduction**
2. **Creating New Policies**
3. **The Research Philosophy of the Technikon**
 - i) Research for Higher Degrees
 - ii) Research for Institutional Development
 - iii) Research for Knowledge generation & contribution to social development
4. **Internal Research Funding**
 - i) Topping up Fund
 - ii) Matching Grant
 - iii) Mini-Grants
 - iv) Proposal Preparation Grant
 - v) Research Equipment Grant
 - vi) Research Methodology Training Grant
 - vii) Publication Grant
5. **Other Related Grants**
 - i) Study Subsidy
 - ii) Research Grant
 - iii) Conference Attendance Grant
 - iv) Staff development grant for conference and courses attendance
6. **Guidelines for Research Grant Applications**
7. **Procedures for Applying for Research Grants**
8. **External Sources of Funding for Research**
9. **Publishing Research Reports**
10. **The Research Register**
11. **Research Services and Activities Forms**

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ENGLISH

Processes of interpreting novels ...

READING

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- uncluttered design
- self-paced learning
- guided self-assessment
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TEACHERS

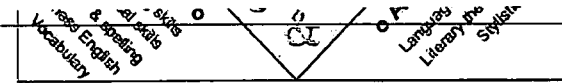
GENERAL

Writing & reading, Oral & practice, Grammar, Basic

LEARNERS

ADVANCED

Theory & history, Poetry & periods



This software programme can be purchased for home use for R150.
Contact Helma at hsmits@indlovu.bortech.ac.za

Further reading:

LANGUAGE AWARENESS PROJECT

ARTICLE: EDUCATION FOR LEARNING

A note about language, and about 'What is Good English' :

The design of **E4E** © is based on systemic functional linguistics, a linguistic system created by M.A.K.Halliday. All languages are made up of systems within systems. Although you need not worry about this when using the program, systemic linguistics looks methodically at the inter-relationships among evolving systems. 'Systemic' does not mean systematic, but 'created out of systems'. 'Functional' means language is studied as it happens to be used in different situations (in real life) or contexts (written). In this way of looking at language, 'good English' is English which is appropriate (suitable) to the context or situation in which it is used. 'It is I' is therefore *not* necessarily better English than 'It's only me' when used to answer the question 'Who's there?'

Updated 15 July, 2002

TITLE..... RESEARCH TECHNIQUES IN HUMAN ENGINEERING
Author(s)... CHAPANIS,A
Publisher... JOHNS HOPKINS PRESS, 1965

TITLE..... RESEARCH METHODS IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
Author(s)... FRANKFORT-NACHMIAS,C NACHMIAS,N
Publisher... ST MARTIN'S PRESS, C1996

TITLE..... DOING NATURALISTIC INQUIRY : A GUIDE TO METHODS
Publisher... SAGE PUBLICATIONS, C1993

TITLE..... RESEARCH IN EDUCATION AND THE BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES : CONCEPTS AN
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Author(s)... MASON,EJ BRAMBLE,WJ
Publisher... BROWN & BENCHMARK, C1997

TITLE..... EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH
Author(s)... VOCKELL,EL
Publisher... MACMILLAN, C1983

TITLE..... PSYCHOLOGY APPLIED TO WORK : AN INTRODUCTION TO INDUSTRIAL AND
ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY
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TITLE..... LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE RESEARCH : PERSPECTIVES AND STR
ATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT
Publisher... ABLEX, C1991

TITLE..... PLANNING A RESEARCH PROJECT : A GUIDE FOR PRACTITIONERS AND TRA
INEES IN THE HELPING PROFESSIONS
Author(s)... HERBERT,M
Publisher... CASSELL, 1990

TITLE..... HANDBOOK OF RESEARCH ON SCIENCE TEACHING AND LEARNING : A PROJE
CT OF THE NATIONAL SCIENCE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION
Publisher... MACMILLAN PUBLISHING, C1994

TITLE..... GENDER IN SOUTHERN AFRICA : CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL ISSUES
Publisher... SAPES BOOKS, 1992

TITLE..... RESEARCH ORIENTATION : A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR STUDENTS AND RESEA
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Author(s)... VERMEULEN,LM SHAW,FB
Publisher... LM VERMEULEN PUBLISHERS, 1996

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Publisher... HSRC, 1996

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Author(s)... GILLHAM,B
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TITLE..... APPROACHES TO SOCIAL RESEARCH
Author(s)... SINGLETON,RA STRAITS,BC STRAITS,MM
Publisher... OUP, 1993

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Publisher... JUTA, 1995

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Author(s)... NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION
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TITLE..... KNOWING WHERE TO LOOK : THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO RESEARCH
Author(s)... HOROWITZ,L
Publisher... WRITERS DIGEST, 1988

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Author(s)... ROTHWELL,WJ SREDL,HJ
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Author(s)... LEEDY,PD
Publisher... MACMILLAN, C1993

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Publisher... ROUTLEDGE, 1988

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Author(s)... HARRIS,C
Publisher... ITP, C1996

TITLE..... POLITICAL SCIENCE STUDENT WRITER'S MANUAL
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Author(s)... NEL,PA RADEL,FE LOUBSER,M

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 FOR RESEARCHERS, SUPERVISORS AND MASTER'S AND DOCTORAL CANDIDAT
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 Publisher... JL VAN SCHAIK, 1996

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 Author(s)... MOUTON,J
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 Author(s)... HANNAGAN,TJ
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 Author(s)... LUNINE,LR
 Publisher... AMACOM, C1985

TITLE..... TRAVEL, TOURISM, AND HOSPITALITY RESEARCH : A HANDBOOK FOR MANA
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 Publisher... GOWER, 1996

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 Author(s)... STENHOUSE,L
 Publisher... HEINEMANN, 1975

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A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS
Author(s)... POYNTER, JM
Publisher... JOHN WILEY, C1993

TITLE..... SURVEYING EMPLOYEES : A PRACTICAL GUIDEBOOK
Author(s)... JONES, JE BEARLY, WL
Publisher... HRD PRESS, C1995

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Publisher... OXFAM, C1992

TITLE..... BUSINESS RESEARCH METHODS
Author(s)... EMORY, CW COOPER, DR
Publisher... IRWIN, C1991

TITLE..... BUSINESS RESEARCH METHODS [MULTIMEDIA]
Author(s)... COOPER, DR SCHINDLER, PS
Publisher... MCGRAW-HILL, 2001

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Author(s)... WELMAN, JC KRUGER, SJ
Publisher... ITP, C1999

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Author(s)... AULT, PH AGEE, WK WILCOX, DL
Publisher... HARPER COLLINS, C1992

TITLE..... PRIMER ON ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR
Author(s)... BOWDITCH, JL BUONO, AF
Publisher... JOHN WILEY, C1994

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DISSERTATIONS IN THE SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES
Author(s)... KRATHWOHL, DR
Publisher... SYRACUSE UNIV PRESS, C1988

TITLE..... EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
Author(s)... MAHLANGU, DMD
Publisher... DE JAGER-HAUM, C1987

TITLE..... PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION : A THEORETICAL FR
AMEWORK FOR ACTION RESEARCH
Author(s)... ZUBER-SKERRITT, O
Publisher... KOGAN PAGE, 1992

TITLE..... ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE TEACHING
Author(s)... WIDDOWSON, HG
Publisher... OUP, C1990

TITLE..... DOELTREFFENDE GEESTESWETENSKAPLIKE NAVORSING : NAVORSINGSBESTUU
R VIR NAVORSERS, STUDIELEIERS EN M- EN D- KANDIDATE
Publisher... JL VAN SCHAIK, 1996

TITLE..... RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
Author(s)... MELVILLE, S GODDARD, W
Publisher... JUTA, 1996

TITLE..... DO YOUR OWN MARKET RESEARCH
Author(s)... HAGUE, PN JACKSON, P
Publisher... KOGAN PAGE, 1987

TITLE..... RESEARCH METHODS IN LIBRARIANSHIP : TECHNIQUES AND INTERPRETATI
ON
Author(s)... BUSHA, CH HARTER, SP
Publisher... ACADEMIC PRESS, C1980

TITLE..... INVENTIVITY : THE ART AND SCIENCE OF RESEARCH MANAGEMENT
Author(s)... GILMAN, JJ
Publisher... VAN NOSTRAND REINHOLD, C1992

TITLE..... RESEARCH DESIGN : QUALITATIVE & QUANTITATIVE APPROACHES
Author(s)... CRESWELL, JW
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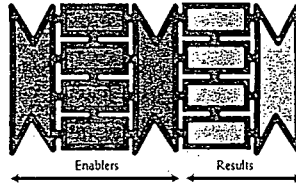
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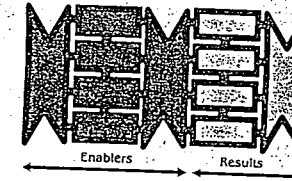
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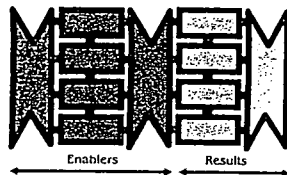
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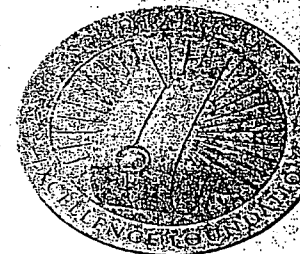
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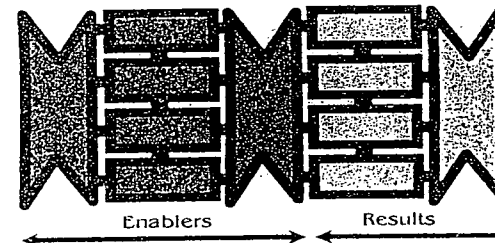
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E.C. HOFFMANN

A.W. Erasmus
A.W. ERASMUS

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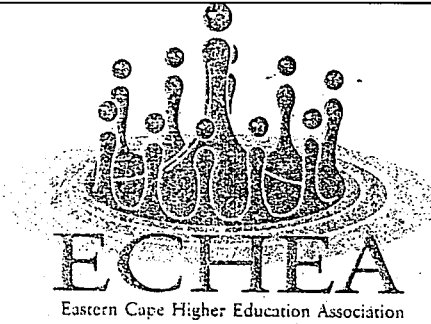
Research Proposal and Design Workshop

6 – 7 March 2001

Granted:

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, written over a horizontal line.

Prof. Johann Mouton
Director: CENIS



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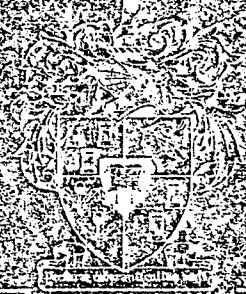
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Presenter

Research Manager



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22 – 25 October 2001

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Kursusbestuurder/Course Manager



ANNEXURE 18

REPORT TO NRF ON RESEARCH VISIT TO NEW ZEALAND – APRIL 1999

Compiled by L du Toit

NRF GUNNR: 2040604

The literature shows that New Zealand and Australia are the countries where Action Learning and Action Research have been applied successfully in Higher Education for many years - therefore the researcher's choice to visit the Northern Island of New Zealand.

The research/study visit to New Zealand had two purposes:

1. To investigate the "Management development through Action Research" aspect as part of the PhD thesis; and
2. To investigate the practice of Action Learning and Action Research in the classroom/lecture hall as another component of the PhD thesis.

1. *Visit to the University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand*

- Visited Dr Jeremy Kedian at the University of Waikato. He is manager/senior consultant of the Educational Leadership Centre of the University. This centre assists educators and other clients in Waikato and New Zealand. It also develops capacity by consolidating its links with other institutions through Action Learning and Action Research concepts.
- The international links provide educational leaders in New Zealand with an opportunity to mix with the international community, develop links and networks, compare educational activities, share expertise, arrange exchange programmes, and many other possibilities.

Other areas of operation in the centre are:

- Research, particularly Action Research;
- Readers-Net (An Electronic discussion Forum)
- National and International Conferences/Retreats/Training Institutions
- NETWORK (Membership, Regional Seminars, Newsletters)
- Workshops and seminars
- Developmental Contracts
- Consultancy (both National and International for individuals, Schools and groups or companies)
- University Qualifications (in Educational Leadership) and
- Leaders Press (Publishers of Educational Resources).

Outcomes:

The key concept that emerged from this visit and some of the unstructured interviews with Dr Kedian and his staff in this unit, is how Action Thinking, Action Learning and Action Research can assist in the management of a learning,

ANNEXURE 18

changing organisation in Higher Education. Action Thinking becomes a technique in the everyday running of an organisation and has as its result continuous improvement and learning in the institution. Staff can be empowered to do continuous self-assessment and improvement through action learning and reflective thinking techniques.

Dr Kedian recently visited South Africa and the United Kingdom. On the researcher's invitation, he also fitted in a day's visit to the Border Technikon. One of his primary purposes was to consolidate the links between his Educational Leadership Centre and those of the University of Natal, University of Reading, University of Lincoln, Humberside and the University of Sheffield in the UK. His visit to Border Technikon included sharing concepts like: Strategic Thinking, Futurous Thinking, Action Thinking and Action Learning with the management team of Border Technikon.

2. *Visit to Massey University (Education Campus), Palmerston North in New Zealand*

The researcher visited Dr Jenny Posskitt who did both her Masters and PhD through Action Research in Education. Action Learning is implemented successfully in the lecture room and day to day operation of the university.

Outcomes:

Some field observations were done in the lecture rooms and field notes were taken - unfortunately most of these were lost in the theft from the researcher's car in June 1999 in East London.

In the interview with Dr Posskitt, valuable advice (based on her practical experience and research) was given on Action Learning in the classroom, how to keep an Action Research Diary, Journal, Field notes and memos to oneself, while busy with your research. She also looked at the researcher's Annotated Bibliography and initial proposal and commented that it was thorough and covered a wide range of literature on Action Learning and Action Research.

She also advised that the researcher's proposal should be more focused and narrowed down.

A substantial number of literature and articles were obtained from Massey University on Action Learning in the classroom and improving quality of teaching and learning through action learning.

The researcher would like to thank the NRF for their financial aid that made this very valuable experience in New Zealand possible.

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SELF-ASSESSMENT FEEDBACK REPORT

(ADAPTED INSTRUMENT BASED ON
SAEF* LEVEL 3 AND THE BALDRIGE
EDUCATION CRITERIA FOR
PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE)



2000 Self-assessment Feedback Report

IO PROCESS: REM (REM)

*Adapted and used with the permission of the South African Excellence Foundation (SAEF)

SELF-ASSESSMENT FEEDBACK REPORT

1 LEADERSHIP (20%)

Summary:

Although the IO process: REM is managed on an *ad hoc* basis there is little other evidence indicating how the leader(s) le(are) visibly demonstrating commitment to a culture of performance excellence in the process. There is some support for the lecturer(s) of the IO, but from the evidence provided, it appears that only the lecturer or academic with the most impact on management can get some support concerning resources and training. The low score is a result of the lack of good evidence of many appropriate, sound and preventative approaches which are reviewed in order to improve and are thoroughly integrated into all areas of the process. The deployment in some cases appears to be good, but the depth and span achieved is not always clear from the evidence.

2 POLICY AND STRATEGY (30%)

Summary:

The IO process has no systematic and consultative method of strategy and policy development and progress reviews in line with the vision of the programme and the faculty. There is little evidence that results and progress made are measured against performance indicators. It is not clear if relevant facts are taken into consideration when policy and strategy are developed. The processes followed in the formulation of policy and strategy, communication and feedback loops are not clear.

3 CUSTOMER (STUDENT AND STAKEHOLDER) AND MARKET FOCUS (32.5%)

Summary:

Some meetings regarding the IO includes student stakeholders. There is little evidence of stakeholder involvement, except for the student questionnaire that is completed annually to assess lecturer performance. As some of these actions are only planned, it is difficult to positively assess the deployment thereof, their effectiveness and what review actions are in place. It is also not clear how complaints are currently handled.

4 ACADEMICS AND OTHER STAFF MANAGEMENT (20%)

Summary:

Academic and other staff are involved in the IO process through their involvement in meetings but there is no evidence of other involvement. In addition, the Faculty decides on an *ad hoc* basis who will be responsible for the IO each year. There is little evidence of innovative ways of encouraging and recognising academic and other staff's efforts and for caring for them.

5 RESOURCES AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT (45%)

Summary:

Some knowledge resources are available in the resource centre of Border Technikon, but no visible effort has been made to improve physical and other resources needed for the IO: REM. There is also no evidence indicating how expenditure is monitored and to ensure that expenditure is according to plan.

6 PROCESSES (20%)

Summary:

There is no evidence of processes in place to establish the level of complying with programme and student needs. There is also no evidence of processes in place to establish what results are achieved in relation to the activities carried out in the enablers, nor how benchmarking is done.

7 IMPACT ON SOCIETY/COMMUNITY (10%)

Summary:

There is little evidence to indicate performance improvement and achievement relative to IO, programme and any external target set.

8 STUDENT AND STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS AND SATISFACTION (15%)

Summary:

There is very little evidence indicating the satisfaction of the students and other stakeholders with respect to the design and delivery activities in the IO process. No evidence of targets set to achieve student and stakeholder satisfaction is available.

9 ACADEMIC AND OTHER STAFF SATISFACTION (20%)

Summary:

There is little evidence that indicates that the academic and/or other staff are satisfied. There is no trend of satisfaction levels of the academic and other staff to determine whether there was an improvement or not, nor were there comparisons of results with neither external, nor own targets. There is no indication of what is done to improve the results for the academic and other staff's satisfaction levels of recognition and training and development received, although much is done to train and improve the academic staff, as explained under Criterion 4.

10 SUPPLIER AND PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE (05%)

Summary:

There are no visible links between this criterion and Criterion 7. The evidence shows that some consultation with other technicians on this IO has taken place. However, it is not clear what the results, added value or improvements are as a result of these

11 IO: REM RESULTS (15%)

Summary:

Some results were deployed and the relevance of the results was understood. Few results relative to targets and trends were recorded. Although the ITS indicated the results, the priorities of service delivery were not clearly determined. There is no evidence of targets set for results, nor how these were met. There is no visible, accessible evidence of the impact of these results on the financial results of the IO: REM.

Individual assessment time (hours):	148
Consensus time (hours) – including preparation and documentation:	32
Feedback report time (hours):	02
Administration time (hours):	19
Total time (hours):	201
Value – based on R250 per hour:	R50 250.00

SUMMARY OF CONSENSUS MEETING

Consensus date:	17 January 2000
Senior assessor:	(L du Toit, M.Ed, SAEF Executive Facilitator and Senior Awards Assessor, Border Technikon, Associate Director)
AL team	[A Weimann, Ph.D. (Education)] (W van Averbek, Ph.D.) (J Poskitt, Ph.D.) (J Kedlan, Ph.D.)

CRITERION 1: LEADERSHIP

- 1a How IO managers visibly demonstrate their commitment to a culture of performance excellence.**

Strengths

- 1 A culture of performance excellence, using the SAEF Management Framework, was formally introduced at institutional level.
- 2 The SAEM has been implemented at some of the institutional levels.

Areas for improvement

- 1 Besides the function and the adoption of the Excellence Model to measure performance, no further evidence is provided on how the leaders themselves have physically demonstrated their commitment to a culture of performance excellence.
- 2 No clear indication of how the IO process is managed.

- 1b How IO leaders support improvement and involvement**

Strengths

- 1 The Head of the School in which the B.Tech.: OMTECH and IO: REM are housed, took ownership of the performance management process and is a trained SAEF assessor as well as an executive facilitator.
- 2 Funding was made available by the Border Technikon and the NRF for this investigation and study.

Areas for improvement

- 1 No evidence of assessments or reviews done in this IO.
- 2 Little evidence of co-ordination of the IO process.

- 1c How IO leaders recognise and appreciate colleagues' and stakeholders' efforts and achievements**

Strengths

- 1 Some evidence of *ad hoc* liaison with moderators of IO: REM

Areas for improvement

- 1 No evidence of recognised individuals and teams at all levels within the IO process is available.

- 1d How IO leaders address their responsibilities to the public (prospective employers, parents) and practise good citizenship**

Strengths**Areas for improvement**

- 1 No evidence of projects which are geared towards the benefit of the community.

CRITERION 2: POLICY AND STRATEGY

- 2a How policy and strategy are developed, communicated and implemented**

Strengths**Areas for improvement**

- 1 No clear policy on values, mission and vision except for information in the syllabus.
- 2 No evidence of targets set for the performance of the IO: REM.

- 2b How policy and strategy are regularly reviewed, updated and improved**

Strengths**Areas for improvement**

- 1 No evidence of a clear strategy is in place to review performance requirements and key performance indicators.

CRITERION 3: CUSTOMER (STUDENT AND STAKEHOLDER) AND MARKET FOCUS

- 3a Knowledge of, determination and use of student and market needs expectations.**

Strengths**Areas for improvement**

- 1 There is no clear evidence regarding how the student and market needs are determined, satisfied or even exceeded.

- 3b How stakeholder needs and expectations are determined**

Strengths**Areas for improvement**

- 1 It is not clear how – if at all – stakeholder needs and expectations are determined.

CRITERION 4: ACADEMIC AND OTHER STAFF MANAGEMENT

- 4a How academics and other staff capabilities are developed and reviewed**

Strengths

- 1 Some evidence of *ad hoc* training and workshop/conferences attendance is available.

Areas for Improvement

- 1 No evidence of how academics and other staff are motivated to use their full potential and expertise.
- 2 Little evidence is available regarding how the necessary skills and training requirements of academic and other staff are determined.

4b How academic and other staff are involved, empowered and recognition is ensured**Strengths****Areas for Improvement**

- 1 No evidence of the use of IO-related knowledge and skills in the IO process.
- 2 No evidence of the involvement of academics and other staff (as individuals or teams) in continuous improvement activities.

4c How academics and staff are cared for**Strengths****Areas for Improvement**

- 1 There is no evidence available regarding how academics and other staff are cared for (for example, health and safety, etc.).

CRITERION 5: RESOURCES AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**5a How financial resources are managed****Strengths****Areas for Improvement**

- 1 It is not clear how financial resources are allocated to the IO process other than the FTEs generated.
- 2 It is not clear how the IO performance is analysed or reviewed against the budget.

5b How information resources are managed**Strengths****Areas for Improvement**

- 1 It is not clear how information resources related to the IO process are managed to support policy and strategy.
- 2 It is not clear if data and information availability mechanisms are up to date with the educational services and directions needed in the IO process.

5c How material and other resources are managed**Strengths****Areas for Improvement**

- 1 There is little evidence that best use is made of venues, equipment and other IO-related resources.

Areas for Improvement

- 2 There is little evidence that alternative and emerging technologies are identified, evaluated and used to improve IO performance.

CRITERION 6: PROCESSES**6a How IO design and delivery processes (key to the success of the IO) are identified, systematically managed and learning-focused****Strengths**

- 1 The "as-is" map of the IO process was available.

Areas for Improvement

- 1 No clear performance requirements for all the sub-processes and activities of the process map were available
- 2 Little evidence was available to determine if academics and other staff are properly prepared to implement the IO processes.

6b How the IO process manages its key student services**Strengths****Areas for Improvement**

- 1 No clear evidence was available concerning how key student services and needs are identified, prioritised and incrementally improved.
- 2 No evidence concerning how improvements are shared with other IO processes as appropriate.

CRITERION 7: SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS SOCIETY/COMMUNITY**7 Measurements of the impact of the IO process on local communities****Strengths****Areas for Improvement**

- 1 No evidence of how the IO process impacts on local communities, if at all.

CRITERION 8: STUDENT AND STAKEHOLDER SATISFACTION**8 Measurements relating to the satisfaction of the customers and stakeholders of the IO process****Strengths****Areas for Improvement**

- 1 There is no evidence at all regarding the current levels and trends in key measures/indicators of current and past student and key stakeholder satisfaction/dissatisfaction, including comparisons with competitors' and/or other comparable IO's student and stakeholder satisfaction.

CRITERION 9: ACADEMIC AND OTHER STAFF SATISFACTION

- 9 Measurements relating to the satisfaction of the academics and other staff of the IO process

Strengths

Areas for improvement

- 1 No evidence was available with regard to the motivation, involvement, satisfaction and well-being of academics or other staff members in the IO process.
- 2 It is not clear if and how services are provided to the academic and other staff of the IO process such as the accuracy of personnel administration, communication effectiveness and speed of response to enquiries.

CRITERION 10: SUPPLIER AND PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE

- 10 Measurements relating to the performance of the suppliers and partners of the IO process

Strengths

- 1 Some informal partnerships with other institutions offering the same IO exist.

Areas for Improvement

- 1 No evidence was presented regarding performance measurement, cost reduction or the added value of the informal partnership.
- 2 There is no indication of whether the design and delivery "services" rendered were satisfactory or not.

CRITERION 11: IO PROCESS RESULTS

- 11a Financial measurements of the performance of the IO

Strengths

Areas for Improvement

- 1 There is no evidence indicating what targets were set with regard to improvement for return on funds, etc.

- 11b Additional measurements of the performance of the IO

Strengths

- 1 A system exists that captures the number of students completing their research reports, but it is not interpreted and acted upon

Areas for Improvement

- 1 No other measurement of performance of the IO takes place, except for the results on the ITS.
- 2 There is no evidence as to the extent to which the performance indicators and priorities set out, are achieved.

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