Reflection as a Means of Improvement: A Higher Education Perspective

Kem Ramdass

University of South Africa, Department of Mechanical and Industrial., South Africa

Abstract--**Institutions of higher learning in South Africa are being plagued with changes on a regular basis. Notwithstanding internal changes, institutions are faced issues of public funding, changing student demographics and profiles and student unemployment. The calibre of students produced in the education system and the agenda for higher education is questionable. Public trust in higher education is decreasing as more graduates are unemployed. In view of these challenges, universities are required to adapt and be open to change in order to meet the demands of stakeholders that "govern" them. In order to reduce the impact of these changes, service quality is considered as a means of improving teaching and learning in the university. Attention to "service quality" can help an organisation to differentiate itself from other organisations and through it gain a lasting competitive advantage. Thus, the support departments at the university were tasked on re-evaluating their processes in terms of value-add through reflection. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that best reflective methodology as a means of continuous improvement in education is imperative in order to enhance the student experience and this is achieved through a case study analysis.**

I. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In view of the challenges that higher education faces, the most recent being "#feesmustfall" it is becoming unreasonable in terms of the functioning of higher education. This continues to place unprecedented strain on the fiscal policy of institutions in the delivery of higher education. Universities strive to implement "cost cutting measures" and improvements in all facets of the institution. Therefore best reflective practice may be used as a strategy to improve the delivery of education in South Africa.

Best reflective practice can be described as the capability and capacity to reflect on actions so as to stimulate the process of engagement thereby creating a process of continual learning which involves critical attention to detail in examining everyday processes that enables developmental insight. Since the aim of education (both basic and higher) is to enable a student to apply himself/herself through knowledge, skills, attitude and behaviour in the world of business, reflection is a process that involves theoretical insight that is applied into practice [1;3]. It involves a connection between theory and practice, analysis and evaluation and rests on the foundation of theories, beliefs assumptions and actions [7]. The objective of work integrated learning is to provide practical experience to the student, thus honing on the reasoning and analytical abilities in students [4;7]. The ability to reflect is developmental as learning is an ongoing process and is central to the development of reflective practice[8].

According to Schön [9] there are two types of reflection, namely: retrospective (reflecting on what has happened) and reflection-in-action (thinking on your feet). The researcher concurs with Boud and Bates[2] who suggest that there is a relationship between the intellect and experience which lead to new understanding and appreciation. Boud [10] also indicates that reflection is a process that analysis, evaluates and reviews experiences.

It is important to note that reflection is gained through the application of knowledge and may be positive or negative. Should experience be negative, reflection would enable a person to introspect and learn to improve on from that experience. The researcher concurs with Trigwell et al [17;11] that reflection on experience enables the assessment and understanding in the application of knowledge. It is a personal process that triggers change in the individual. Reflection does not necessarily need to take place in the working environment; it can take place at any time.

As an example to demonstrate the point, the administration of health care by nurses in a hospital is used. Graduated nurses should have the theoretical knowledge and skills in administering health care. Clamp [4] reported that attitudes govern the administration of health care and that the generic reason for poor care is ignorance and incongruous attitudes. Should the receiver of the service respond by complaining, the respondent would reflect and adapt accordingly. Reflection enables learning to occur, thus improving the individuals' knowledge, skills, attitude and behavior [10, 11]. It can be seen as a mental process that takes place usually looking back at actions that have taken place. Reflective learning usually takes place through relationships between teachers, learners, learners and teachers, and learners and other people which endorses continuous learning in the life span of people which is termed life-long learning.

II. METHODOLOGY

Case studies are used to focus and obtain insight into a particular phenomenon , which in this case is the Best Reflective Process (BRP). Data was gathered through discussions and evaluations within the directorate. Although the results cannot be generalised, there is ability to reflect and manage inefficiencies that would add value to the organisation.

A. Defining the customer

Defining the customer in the context of academia would generate a great deal of discussion. Customers would certainly include students, however there is a difference

between customers and clients. Stakeholders in the higher education context would include parents, alumni, employers, taxpayers, the department of higher education (DHET), and the general public. Service quality includes tangibles (physical appearance of the service facility) reliability (performance of the promised service reliably and accurately) responsiveness (willingness to be helpful and prompt) assurance (knowledge and courtesy of employees) empathy (individualized attention). Extrapolating the work of the quality gurus, students may be classified as the raw materials in the teaching and learning process. The production of graduates may be seen as the output of the education system. The education system in SA can imbibe some to the hard lessons that industry has learned in order to prevent a catastrophic experience, should HE continue in the same vain. Hence, customer wants in higher education and the processes used in the satisfaction of these wants could be classified as a major issue.

In order to foster participation and student success, there needs to be a friendly and respectful environment that encourages learning. Students are often misjudged by their instructors and peers that often lead to conflict and unwarranted problems. Students, as customers of the organisation, need to be treated well so that their learning experience could flourish. The process of getting to know the "customer" is imperative in the HE context. "Most academics in South Africa are hired for their subject matter and research expertise; very few are knowledgeable about how to promote effective student learning. Enhancing academics' understanding of effective pedagogical and assessment practices and how to construct educationally sound curricula will lead to improved learning opportunities for students. So, too, will enhancing the learning environment – the physical and educational facilities and resources that are available to students to promote and support learning" (QEP:20, 2014).

From an industrial engineering perspective, one needs to consider the productivity ratio of input, process, output. Thus reflection would be a "common sense" derivative where the quality of the input would determine the quality of the output. In so doing, a thorough evaluation of the process would determine the quality of the output. Thus, if there is a problem in the system, the quality of output may be questioned. Reflection gives coherence to situations that are incoherent and normally unclear. Once reflection "improves" the current situation, with tried and tested results, normally performance improvement, "this improvement needs to be replicated in other centres where the same work is being done. Thus, the purpose of BRP is to engage with the operational plans of the department and to provide impetus for improvement through a structured process of "audit". The Best and Reflective Practice is run by a special team that is guided by the directorate for instruction support and services (DISS) in relation to the institutional strategic plan. The next section provides a case on the performance of the reflective practice and provides both commendations and recommendations.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE BRP PROCESS AND THE FINDINGS THEREOF

Please note that certain important aspects are covered in this paper.

A. Introduction

The Quality Assurance Framework and the Best Reflective Practice form the main pillars of quality enhancement in the directorate of instructional support and services (DISS) and is premised on the principles of Continuous Process Improvement and The Learning Organization. It is important to note that the responsibility of the quality management system (QMS) and best reflective practice (BRP) and the delivery thereof is placed in the hands of the director and ultimately the Executive Director of the Directorate for Teaching and Facilitation of Learning (DTFL).

The approach used in this BRP is focused on the evaluation of Best and Reflective Practice Strategic and Operational plans developed by the directorate through templates with questions related to various aspects in the directorate. The quality assurance team QA was (formed in January 2014) comprised of members of the 3 divisions.

The meeting set the stage for the purpose and importance of the BRP process as explained: BRP was described as a tool for continuous process improvement; self-reflective and evaluation of own processes within DISS. That it is a tool used to assess the health and level of quality of directorates' operations using both proactive and reactive approaches. The BRP focuses on quality assurance and quality enhancement. The three central directorates were requested to have a second look at the templates (departmental templates); lift items from the regional operational templates for inclusion in the central template, for consideration and approval at the next quality control (QC) meeting.

B. How is Best Reflective Process related to Higher Education Quality Control?

Quality teaching in higher education matters for student learning outcomes. But fostering quality teaching presents higher education institutions with a range of challenges at a time when the higher education sector is coming under pressure from many different directions. Institutions need to ensure that the education they offer meet the expectations of students and the requirements of employers, both present and for the future. Yet higher education institutions are complex organisations where the institution-wide vision and strategy needs to be well aligned with bottom-up practices and innovations in teaching and learning. Developing institutions as effective learning communities where excellent pedagogical practices are developed and shared also requires leadership, collaboration and ways to address tensions between innovators and those reluctant to change (www.oecd.org).

It was mentioned that BRP is not taking over the quality audits in the organisation. It is a self-reflective and self-evaluation process that would enable directorates to implement systems and processes that strive to meet the vision and mission of the university, thereby eradicating "silos" that have developed over time. The BRP and quality assurance should align with operational plans and the Directorate of Quality Promotion and Assurance. The development of departmental templates and the evaluation thereof should provide divisions with areas for continuous improvement, and not use the information to demotivate staff. BRP will be used as a tool for quality assurance in the department to assess the health of the different units/directorates. Thus, focusing and harnessing the potential of employees while continuously improving service to students would create an enabling educational environment.

C. Evaluative Outcomes From Brp Review Team

- **General Observations**

The engagement with the DISS team was valuable and productive in terms of understanding the successes achieved by the Directorate. Overall, the team had invested time and effort to respond to the questions in the template. The major recommendation in terms of completing the template is that the Directorate can pay more attention to providing qualitative information so that the rationale for the evidence, and how it relates to the question, can be understood. During the operational template discussion, the issue was raised that the template does not facilitate realistic reporting on Directorate activities. If the staff members in the Directorate were not included in the process of developing the template, then this is a serious oversight. Although mention was made of a roadshow to market the template to all staff, it would seem that some felt that there was not enough involvement in adjusting the templates to reflect actual operational needs. The Directorate could also reflect on using the BRP process to reflect on challenges and how to use best practice to manage these.

- **Focus of the Review**

The review process focused on both the Strategic and Operational areas. The report will first present information regarding the Strategic review, followed by the Operational review. A staff conversation was conducted with a small group of staff members to get a sense of their understanding and experience of the BRP process. A summary of the outcome of this conversation is presented in the final section of this report.

D. Findings For Strategic Areas

- **General comments**

The DISS management team jointly presented the evidence required in the template and it was clear that the strategic foci of the directorate were embraced and understood by the team. Due to some technical challenges, not all the evidence could be opened by all from individual laptops and the panel had to rely on the evidence projected on screen and on request; this slowed down the process. Overall, the discussions were in-depth and was mutually educating.

- **Good practices**

Staff training report and individual training reports are very good and can assist is assessing the value of the training to the individual staff member as well as to the directorate. The template used for reporting on the training reflects the Name of the staff, Personnel number, Training attended and the Purpose of the training. Individuals who attended the training also submit their report on return from the training and reflect on the impact of such training. The directorate's initiatives and projects around digitization represent very good practice as shown by the sample evidence provided. Over and above the BRP Improvement Plan, the culture of continuous process improvement appears to be well entrenched via evaluation tools (e.g. for Virtual Learning Environment training).

Change Management: The rotation of the chair at staff and management meetings could contribute to acceptance or embrace of changes being discussed at the meeting/s. The directorate's approach in implementing the 11C's + 1 is innovative. Each of the 11 C's+1 is dedicated on a monthly basis and the staff is encouraged to live up to a specific C for each month and a variety of positive feedback reports from staff. Correspondence is sent out to the staff alerting them of the relevant C of the month.

The University 11 C's +1 is as follows as taken from the university correspondence:

> *"-COMMUNICATION: Ensuring shared meaning and promoting mutual understanding at all levels, by making explicit relevant decisions, actions, choices and events timeously and transparently*
> *- CONVERSATION: Active participation in dialogue that transforms the relationship and narrows the scope of differences while enhancing understanding and empathy*
> *- CONSERVATION: Preserving and utilising what is best from our legacy, making choices and decisions and taking actions in the present, which ensure a sustainable future*
> *- COMMUNITY: The university staff, students and alumni cohering around our shared vision, aspirations and interests in the spirit of Ubuntu, while embracing diversity in its multiple forms*
> *- CONNECTION: Reinvigorating stakeholder relations to find greater synergy, harmony and meeting of minds in pursuit of transformational goals*
> *- CARE: Fostering a sense of belonging among the members of the Unisa community so that they feel accepted, understood, respected and valued*
> *- COLLEGIALITY: Cultivating an ethos of professionalism, shared responsibility, mutual respect,*

civility and trust while understanding and acknowledging each other's competencies and roles
COMMITMENT: Dedicating ourselves individually and collectively, to promoting and upholding the vision, goals and values of Unisa
- CO-OPERATION: Working together proactively and responsively towards the realisation of Unisa's goals and aspirations
- CREATIVITY: Nurturing an environment that is open and receptive to new ideas, that liberates potential and leads to imaginative and innovative thinking and action
- CONSULTATION: Taking into account, in good faith, the views, advice and contributions of appropriate stakeholders and individuals on relevant matters... and
- COURAGE to act, decide and make choices with conviction and resolution in the best interests of the Institution."

Areas of concern

The Directorate should do more on the management of diversity. The issue of diversity management should be looked at beyond the racial diversity but encompass other forms of diversity and show how this is managed. There has to be an indication or evidence of how the directorate advances diversity.

Recommendations

Since the Directorate has developed a number of Service Level Agreements (SLA's), they should use these as tools to help manage the interdependencies and indicate who this is done. Draft SLAs should have been added as evidence of management of stakeholder relationships.

The Directorate has embarked on regional visits. Presentations made by the directorate to the regions could be used as evidence regarding communication of the vision to stakeholders. The interaction with the region by the directorate is meant to communicate to the regional stakeholders the DISS's vision. On the question of how does the directorate's leadership foster a culture of continuous process improvement in its activities: It could add value if the directorate would implement some kind of an evaluation tool to signify improvement or satisfaction with the service.

E. Analysis Of The Above

The following has been noted as improvement initiative for best practice:

- The development of the template and the clarity of questions require understanding by all, therefore it is necessary for regular communication and clarification in the implementation of any endeavor.
- Staff training and reporting is an important facet. Of significance is the feedback of the value-add issues that would make a difference to the individual in the day to day activities.
- The 11 c's +1 provides and concretises the importance of working together.

- Diversity management is an issue that is of importance in terms of people working together.
- The development of service level agreements to ensure service delivery between departments.
- Regional visits to understand the dynamics and challenges faced by regional staff and improve the status quo

IV. FINDINGS FOR OPERATIONAL AREAS

A. Financial Position

The Directorate did not provide sufficient evidence to indicate that they inform staff about financial policies and that all staff is consulted in terms of the budgeting process. Sufficient evidence was presented to indicate regular updating of signatories and procurement management. The expenditure spread sheet presented as evidence, highlighted a serious underspend and evidence was provided to indicate how the management committee addressed this.

- **Areas of concern**

  The evidence submitted did not show how all staff members are included in the process of contributing to the operational budgeting process. In addition, no evidence was submitted of budgeting as a standing item on the monthly staff meetings agenda.

- **Recommendations**
  - Telephonic conversations between the financial officer and director need to be followed up with an email to preserve the communication for evidentiary purposes.
  - The Directorate should include evidence of the feedback loop on communication to all staff with regards to over- and under spending and remediation strategies.
  - Copies of a current asset register should be requested and provided as evidence.

B. Policies, Procedures And Systems

The Directorate provided sufficient evidence of documented policies although not sufficient evidence was provided regarding their visibility.

- **Areas of concern**

  The evidence submitted for the communication of policies and procedures only related to the FOL division.

- **Good Practice**

  Good practices are the Integrated Tutorial Model (ITM) meetings to discuss policy and procedural changes and the ITM consultation with the regions to communicate information about the model implementation.

- **Recommendations**
  - The internal communication is stored on a shared drive - a screenshot of the internal drive should be added as evidence.
  - The Student Success Forum minutes can serve of evidence of how DISS policies and procedures are communicated across departments and directorates.
  - Qualitative comments with regards to specific evidence could enhance understanding of how the evidence supports specific practices (for example, the ARCSWiD, CPD and AATTeL workshop).

C. Human Resources

The Directorate provided sufficient evidence to show how training and development plans are in place and that these are aligned with the IPMS and PDP of individual staff members. The Directorate also included sufficient evidence to indicate compliance with IPMS schedules.

- **Areas of concern**
  - The Directorate did not provide sufficient evidence to indicate how staff records are store confidentially.
  - The Directorate did not provide sufficient evidence to indicate the monitoring of talent management and employment equity – minutes of meetings are insufficient evidence.
  - The Directorate did not provide sufficient evidence to indicate the measures that are in place to manage absenteeism.

- **Recommendations**

  It is recommended that appropriate measures be instituted to manage absenteeism. For example, daily attendance registers and feedback to staff about absence patterns and trends.

- **Good practice**

  The culture of communication with regards to absences in the FOL division is highlighted as a good practice since it shows a culture of accountability to managers.

D. Infrastructure

The Directorate provided sufficient evidence to indicate how offices are equipped and cleaned and how institutional safety and regulation standards are adhered to.

- **Recommendations**

  The Directorate highlighted the lack of adequate facilities to accommodate staff and correspondence about attempts to secure space for the DISS staff will serve as evidence of attempts to resolve this issue. The cleaning services were highlighted as a serious health concern. The information can be elaborated on to highlight the issue experienced and the details behind attempts to address the OHS issues.

E. Fast And Efficient Application Process

This section did not have relevance for the Directorate since the evidence supplied related to the My Studies @ Unisa brochure (and not the My choice @ Unisa brochure as indicated on the template).

- **Recommendations**

  Engagement with the template by all staff could interrogate the relevance of specific sections and questions in the template.

F. Technology

The Directorate presented sufficient evidence to indicate how new technologies are investigated and experimented with. The Directorate highlighted challenges in terms of lack of space to place hardware being available for technology research and training. However, no evidence was presented to indicate how this challenge is being addressed.

- **Areas of concern**

  It would seem that research projects are done on an ad hoc basis. It is recommended that a research plan be compiled to structure research within all divisions. There is also confusion about ethical clearance procedures involved with conducting research projects. The Video Conference facilities are heavily overbooked and this compromises the support for teaching and learning. Preference should be given for teaching and learning discussions by Video Conference (VC). The Scopia system was discussed as an alternative system to the VC, especially for staff activities such as meetings. The shortcomings of the Scopia system were highlighted and needs further investigation before full roll out as an online meeting alternative. The evidence provided for video recordings and podcasts did not indicate whether these are digitized, edited and produced according to user requirements.

- **Good practice**

  The VC section provided examples of how other systems such as Scopia and the conversation of satellite venues to VC venues are being investigated and implemented to expand the capacity of this important teaching and learning tool. The various procedures and systems related to VC are also clearly stated and new developments are communicated to all Unisa staff.

- **Recommendations**

  A number of staffing issues were highlighted, for example VC expansion to integrate satellite offices (growth from 30 to 103 with three permanent staff), and is impacting on support that can be provided. These serious shortcomings curtail the ability to carry out their function. Recommendations were made to communicate the serious operational implications of the lack of technology infrastructure available. The staff support for VC services needs attention to recruit appropriately qualified individuals. The evidence for the

video recording and podcast section of the report requires further substantiation to appropriately justify the requested information. It was suggested that the qualitative narratives provided by staff during the discussion should be included as further evidence.

G. Telecentres

The evidence in the telecentres are appropriate to the questions asked but a narrative account within the comments section would facilitate ease of reading as most of the information is contained within contracts or other documents that are not relevant in their entirety.

- **Areas of concern**

Evidence on staff training needs to be updated, as the Intcom article provided is insufficient.

- **Good Practice**

The student survey conducted is a good practice to measure the student experience of using the telecentre facilities.

- **Recommendations**

It is recommended that research related to the impact of the telecentres on the student experience be conducted, as well as an assessment of the training for administrators at the centre.

H. Experiential Learning

The Directorate provided sufficient evidence to support the qualitative information provided related to the WIL programme.

- **Good practice**

The evidence provided clearly illustrated the process of WIL and indicated extensive online information available for students and lecturers. The updates to the website are completed regularly and detailed records of the changes are kept.

I. Adequate Tutoring And Learner Support To Promote Effective Learning

The Directorate provided sufficient evidence in terms of face-to-face and e-tutorials.

- **Areas of concern**

In some regions, there seem to be gaps in terms of understanding in terms of the role of the directorate of instructional and support services (DISS) in the payment and appointment of e-tutors.

- **Good Practice**

The reporting on the tutoring systems is highlighted as a point of strength. In particular, the monitoring systems are seen as an asset for the FOL.

- **Recommendations**
  - The suggestion was made that DISS embark on another roadshow to clarify the role of DISS in the payment and appointment of e/tutors.
  - It is acknowledged that the high-risk module situation is a fluid situation, which makes it difficult to plan for (for example, a module may be in the high risk group every second year). Submissions to the school teaching and learning committee (STLC) forums need to take place in order to discuss these challenges and find ways to adjust policies and procedures related to this.
  - It is recommended that policies and procedures related to the tutoring/e-tutoring services be discussed and revised to adapt to specific contexts and to resolve practical issues experiences as a result of the implementation of policies.

J. Professional Development Of Teaching Staff

The professional development division provided appropriate and sufficient evidence. The qualitative comments further explained the relevance of the evidence provided.

- **Good Practice**

The grounding of professional development practice in theory is commended.

- **Recommendations**

Proof of workshop attendance and feedback could further strengthen responses to the questions.

K. Staff Conversation

Staff was present during a conversation about their understanding and experience of the BRP. The following summary reflects the main themes discussed:

- Even though the BRP is thought to be a process that can impact positively on practice, the BRP is not discussed and worked on by everyone throughout the year. The recommendation is that everyone has to engage with the process on a continuous basis.
- The BRP is seen as an audit and not a reflection.
- Participants appreciate the involvement of the central Directorates in the BRP process and see it as an effective communication and information-sharing tool.

The BRP process can be improved by:
- all staff being involved on a continuous basis (not just management and the Quality Committee and just before the audit itself);
- a dry run before the actual audit to encourage discussions about the evidence;
- understanding the implications and implementation of BRP results
- engaging with templates continuously to ensure the relevance of the process

Participants were asked about their understanding of challenges related to blended learning. Staff challenges include:

o Change management issues: understanding the new business model and the need to change; resistance to change (for example resistance to training and development);

o Too many staff are not digitally literate and do not function on the same level as students;

o The "work at home" staff is not on track and have been left behind; and

o A gap between student needs and staff understanding those needs fully and this creates problems for students.

Student challenges include:

o The majority of our students come from disadvantaged backgrounds;

o Student are not using myUnisa, they rather use other platforms such as WhatsApp;

o Students do not have the equipment and connectivity (for example, free WiFi other than at the university).

o Needs of students with disabilities not addressed.

Way Forward

o Evaluation of the template by all DISS staff and revision of the question. Some questions were not relevant to the divisions.

o How? Divisional managers to send BRP template to staff and request feedback by 15 Feb 2015. Divisional managers to evaluate suggestions and change accordingly. Final template to be forwarded.

o Improvement plan to be developed by divisional managers with staff and forwarded to the BRP team.

o QA FRAMEWORK to be rolled out in a similar manner - divisional heads to send to all staff and request feedback. QA team to collate information and develop final framework by 30 May 2015.

V. ANALYSIS OF THE ABOVE

• Dissemination of information and communication and communication is problematic and requires a feedback loop to ensure that all parties understand

• Management of absenteeism, confidentiality, and talent management are issues of concern and is important for the effective functioning of the institution

• There is a lack of facilities where staff from a department is accommodated. Staff members are scattered around and this hinders communication and management

• There needs to be an evaluation of the application template to ensure understanding as to what is required.

• There is a lack of a well-functioning technology infrastructure in the institution.

• Student experiences provide valuable input for improvements.

• The tutor system requires careful monitoring and evaluation to determine its value-add.

• Due to the "silo mentality and operation" departments need to clarify their roles

• The understanding of policies and procedures is imperative for the effective functioning of the institution.

• There needs to be understanding and awareness of the function of the BRP.

• Digital literacy is a matter of concern and requires investigation.

• There is a gap between student's needs and staff understanding of the needs.

• In conclusion of this section, the highlighted points above ensure that the current scenario needs attention and reflection for improvement.

VI. CONCLUSION

A. QA website for BRP

A website needs to be developed that provides information on the BRP process and QA initiatives to the Unisa community. Only one person will be given access to upload documents on the website. The scribe will be the ideal person to do this. QC's should have access to upload documents on the website.

An important aspect that was mentioned several times was the appointment of a scribe that would be dedicated to the BRP team. However, in hindsight, would a dedicated scribe be sufficiently occupied with a workload that would benefit the institution or would it be a waste of resources? This needs to be discussed at length by the team. Central directorates should consider a secondment opportunity or members could alternate the responsibility and evaluate its success.

B. BRP Templates

User-friendly templates of divisions/directorates should be used as a working document where changes could be made as the process of evaluation unfolds. Evaluation reports should reinforce positive feedback. Negative observations need to be portrayed in a language that is befitting to all. The BRP team should be exposed to the evaluation process both in their divisions and in other divisions as well as the regions so as to obtain a holistic view of Unisa operations. It is important to consider the buy-in and involvement of all employees of Unisa in the BRP process so as to create a culture of quality enhancement as an ongoing function. Quality evaluation functions on a premise of evidence, therefore the templates have been formulated such that required evidence is provided so as to answer the relevant questions. This is required not only to fulfil the requirements of the template, but also the completion of the IPMS process. There was a notion of the development of communities of practice and this would be discussed further in the BRP meetings.

To ensure the success and the proactive nature of quality, reports and templates need to be submitted well in advance before the BRP session to the QC and the Director of the visiting team. Documents that serve as evidence need to be embedded in the revised template. Where there is no evidence, progress of the activity should be noted. Best practices should be shared among regions and central directorates. There needs to be consistency with templates in the regions, which will share commonalities with the central directorates. DISS will form part of the assessing team in the regions.

C. Alignment with the White Paper

Quality management is a proactive process that saves cost and improves service quality, thus the alignment to the White Paper that was released in November 2013 by the CHE. Continuous staff training on the benefits of the BRP process would create teamwork and synergy that would embrace effective and efficient service delivery both internally and externally. Quality service delivery should be aligned to the IPMS, thus motivating staff to embrace change in a positive work environment.

D. The BRP evaluation process

A BRP website needs to be created to provide the greater Unisa community with regular updates and success stories that could be shared. Timeous reporting on all matters and feedback to the BRP network would enforce regular communication within the institution. In order to obtain realistic information from staff and students, the BRP team needs to conduct interviews with participants randomly and staff/students should not prepare for the interview.

The BRP team, in conjunction with staff and students, should research into innovative ways of improving teaching and learning at Unisa. A quality manual should form part of the regular activities of the directorates/divisions so as to document all processes and procedures and within the system, thus creating collaboration and teamwork within Unisa. The development of a newsletter and regular positive staff experiences would enhance motivation and "going the extra mile" to assist students. Positive experiences on "hello peter" would be encouraging for the Unisa community. As the BRP process improves with a matter of time, it is envisaged that Unisa would embrace the TQM philosophy. The TQM philosophy started in the 1980s to the 1990s as a new phase of quality control and management. TQM developed as a catchall phrase for the broad spectrum of quality-focused strategies, programmes and techniques during this period, and became the centre of focus for the quality movement. A typical definition of TQM includes phrases such as: customer focus, the involvement of all employees, continuous improvement and the integration of quality management into the total organisation. The line manager would be tasked to resolve repeated negative feedback in the division. However if this continues, senior management would be asked to intervene and resolve the matter.

E. Memorandum of Understanding (MOA's)

MOA's would to be developed and signed in colleges, regions and the central directorate in order to determine the level of service. Staff would be held accountable and responsible for quality in all aspects in their respective directorates/divisions. In order to alleviate the "silo scenario" there needs to be active communication and collaboration between divisions/directorates. The engagement and communication with staff cannot be overemphasised, as this would lead to quality output for Unisa. Directors need to take the lead in creating a culture of quality.

F. Ethical conduct

In view of Unisa's ethic's policy, which needs to be practiced at all times, it is important to work together in order to boost the morale and conduct of staff and be accountable for all actions, both within and outside the organisation.

In conclusion, it is important to note that organisations continue for years without reflecting as to what is done and why is it done in a particular way. By instituting reflection in a formalized matter, organisations would be able to implement best practices and eventually improve the financial status of the organization.

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