

CHAPTER 2

THEORY OF LIFELONG LEARNING

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Transformation involves every aspect of South African life. The education system is no exception. Top quality education is a requirement for any prosperous country. "... there is a continual barrage of information, hype, and opinions about work, education (and increasingly, about education and training for work" (Cerrero, Wilson & Associates, 2001:62). A successful modern economy and society require citizens with a strong foundation of general education, as this will enable them to become progressively qualified in a lifelong process. Individuals should have the desire and ability to continue to learn for personal development and growth, which will in turn lead to a more rewarding life and the creation of a stronger economy.

South Africa must position itself for growth and survival. It has to adapt and innovate on an ongoing basis. The search for solutions to the country's educational problems include a commitment to lifelong learning. Lifelong learning means new education options throughout life. It is an opportunity for information acquisition and productivity.

"... for the first time in South Africa's history a government has been given the mandate to plan the development of the education and training system for the benefit of the country as a whole and all its people" (Department of Education, 1997:5).

The term "lifelong learning" will be discussed in full in this chapter. The researcher believes that, in order to provide an appropriate response for the educational challenges and demands, academics in institutions of higher learning should take the lead in instilling the desire for lifelong learning in their graduates, and they should be role models by participating in lifelong learning and taking it seriously. The researcher has exhausted literature and this is the information available regarding higher education. To achieve my objectives, the researcher had to refer to fairly old literature.

2.2 DEFINING LIFELONG LEARNING

The term "lifelong learning" was used as early as the late twenties. There is a bit of confusion as to what lifelong learning means exactly. According to Knapper & Cropley (1991:17), lifelong learning has a different meaning in different countries: "in the United States it has frequently been regarded as simply a new term for adult education (as in the 1976 Lifelong Learning Act, for example), and has been linked with "alternative" educational activities such as educational brokering. In Europe the concept has more frequently been associated with the linking of learning and work, especially through provision of paid educational leave, recurrent education, or with open learning".

In South Africa the concept of lifelong learning has been developed by the trade union movement, particularly in organisations within the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), as one of the components of a reconstructed education and training system capable of meeting both equity and development needs. One of the aims of a programme of lifelong learning, as Adrienne Bird of the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (Numsa) explains, is the "incremental skilling of workers by means of a system that knits together formal and informal or on-the-job learning" (DSA in Depth, 1993:42). From the above it is not surprising that the Skills Development Act (199) was a brain child of the department of labour. The challenge facing the department of labour, is to implement its dream and reap the fruits. Field (2000:133) states that "the education policy matra of the new millennium is lifelong learning". The researcher hopes it is not just one of the millennium excitement but a reality as it is significant for the nation.

Knapper & Cropley (1991:20) differentiates between lifelong education and lifelong learning. According to them, "lifelong education can be thought of as a set of organisational and procedural guidelines for educational practice aimed at fostering learning throughout life". It has an alternative approach to the provision of learning and experiences for all citizens.

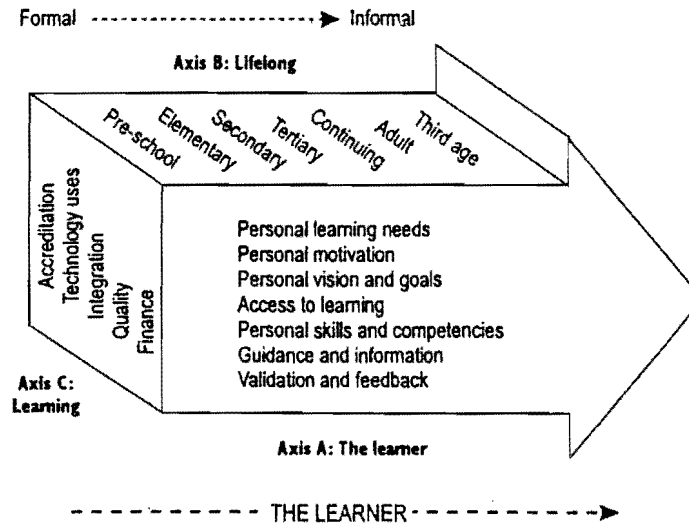
The following definition by Longworth & Davies (1996:21) will be used throughout this research, “lifelong learning is... the development of human potential through a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills and understanding they will require throughout their lifetimes and to apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment in all roles, circumstances, and environment.”

Delors as quoted by Wilson (1998:4) argues that “lifelong education should enable people to develop awareness of themselves and their environment and encourage them to play their social role at work and in the community”.

According to Longworth & Davies's (1996:21) definition each individual has a learning potential. Given learning opportunities, discarding learning barriers and providing access to education will encourage and motivate learning throughout life. The human being’s experience incorporates both continuity and change, hence the need for lifelong learning, which is a process, a continuum of interdependent elements.

Lifelong learning embraces all forms of learning, formal and informal, throughout life. Michael (1992: 20) call it a “seamless education”, which clearly means there are no boundaries, while Butcher (1995:1) argues that “learning should continue throughout life (rather than being limited to childhood) and should be of direct relevance to the needs and life experience of learners” be they social or economic. The figure below stresses learning for all and relevance.

Figure 2.1: The learning process



Source: Longworth & Davies (1996:20).

Informal education needs to be recognised. The new South African education policy has put a process of recognition of prior learning as a tool to bridge the gap between formal and informal education. "The recognition of prior learning evolved from the National Training Strategy Initiative in 1994 and its objectives is to assist in fast tracking skilled persons to qualification status within the NQF". (Faulds, 2001:20). Formal education is characterised by a certificate whilst informal education was not recognised. Recognition of prior learning is still at its infancy and very important in repositioning South Africa's education system.

In South Africa the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act was passed in 1995. The Act can be thought of a set of organisational and procedural guidelines. In terms of this Act, SAQA will establish bodies to implement the National Qualifications Framework(NQF). The bodies that will be established are the following:

National Standards Bodies (NSBs), Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs) and Education and Training Quality Assurers (ETQAs).

2.2.1 Functions of NSBs



National Standards Bodies (NSBs) shall perform the following functions:

- define and recommend to SAQA the boundaries of the discrete field for which it is constituted, eg. process, product or service, related to other fields;
- define and recommend to SAQA a framework of sub-fields to be used as a guide for the recognition and / or establishment of SGBs;
- recognise and / or establish SGBs within the framework of sub-fields, or withdraw or rescind such recognition or establishment;
- ensure that the work of SGBs meets the SAQA requirements for the registration of unit standards and qualifications as indicated in Appendix B to these regulations;
- recommend the registration of unit standards on the NQF to SAQA;
- recommend qualifications to SAQA;
- define requirements and mechanisms of moderations to be applied across ETQAs;
- appoint office-bearers, such committees and members of committees as required to carry out the functions designated, in consultation with SAQA; and
- such other functions as may from time-to-time be delegated by SAQA.

2.2.2 Functions of SGB's

SGBs shall perform the following functions:

- generate unit standards and qualifications in accordance with SAQA requirements in identified sub-fields and levels;
- update and review standards;
- recommend unit standards and qualifications to NSBs; and
- such other functions as may from time-to-time be delegated by SAQA.

2.2.3 Functions of ETQAs

"Education Training Quality Assurance Body" (ETQA) means a body established in terms of section 5(1)(a)(ii) of the Act, responsible for monitoring and auditing achievements in terms of national standards and qualifications, and to which specific functions relating to the monitoring and auditing of national standards and qualifications have been assigned in terms of section 5(1)(b)(i) of the Act".

The bodies within SAQA, e.g. SGBs, ETQAs will help SAQA to facilitate its objectives that will promote lifelong learning. Through SAQA Act does not provide a detailed guideline of the promotion of lifelong learning, it is clearly stated in its objectives that NQF will facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within education, training and career path through vehicles such as Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

SAQA has to establish enabling bodies like SGBs and ETQAs to fulfil its mandate. SAQA's mandate also include the development of NQF and its infrastructure. The bodies will be engaged in the implementation of NQF objectives.

Phillips (1997:1) summarises the functions of these bodies as follows: "NSBs and SGBs

will coordinate the development and registration of unit standards and qualifications for registration and protect the integrity of the standards and qualifications when they are implemented through the establishment of quality assurance systems such as moderation procedures, the registration of workplace assessors, accreditation procedures and human resources quality audit”.

Lifelong learning should continue throughout life and should be relevant to the learners in order to enrich their lives. Education that is linked to training will address the industry's needs. The qualifications will address the shortage of skills and knowledge. The introduction of the Skills Development Act (1998) will address continuous training in organisations.

The responsibilities imposed on SAQA are huge. Deliberations are in process in order to implement the expectations of the act. Initially SAQA allocated four levels on the NQF to higher education. The concerns of Council on Higher Education (CHE) resulted in agreement between SAQA and CHE that "sub-levels be used to accommodate the range of higher qualifications" (Department of Education, 2002:iii). The above statement clearly proves that the law is not cast in stone. Policy documents such as a new Academic Policy for Programmes and Qualifications in Higher Education will have an impact on existing legislation and regulations.

Since South African democracy is still new, lengthy consultations and deliberations with stakeholders is important to produce an enabling education regulation and policy.

The New Academic Policy for Programmes and Qualifications in Higher Education "proposes a number of new qualification type. Their meaningfulness and appropriateness for labour market needs and for employment purposes remains to be tested". (Department of Education, 2002:iv).

SGB's are formed and working very hard to generate unit standards, whether they will deliver the goods remains to be seen.

Many ETQA's have applied to SAQA to be given the green light to operate. Deliberations on demarcations of operation are on to avoid either overlappings or stepping on one another's toes.

Policies and legislation are in place, the challenge to the government is to see whether the stakeholders and teachers have the skill and courage to make the mindset shift and to implement objectives set by government so that they will work in practice. Government set initiatives in which educators will be prepared to participate in full.

It should not be difficult to get an understanding of the benefits that the new education system brings, however participation in deliberations is important.

In view of the above, the researcher agrees with Department of Education (2000:20) "societal strategies for economic growth and wealth require a learning society and a learning nation so that there is a constant adaptation to cope with and succeed in new conditions, technologies and information".

Such joint ventures of all stakeholders, every citizen are important to nurture the next generation of lifelong learners.

According to Candy (1991:15) there is a relationship between lifelong learning and self-directed learning, which is viewed as part of lifelong learning. Lifelong learning also includes formal, non-formal and informal learning extended throughout the lifespan of an individual, so that the individual can attain the fullest possible development. The term "lifelong learning" appeals to the researcher because it entails growth, change and development.

Self-directed learning is referred to as self-managed learning. The learner is responsible for his/her own learning, i.e. the learner select possibilities to match learning content, according to his/her needs, and the learner is able to adjust to his/her own field or education, whether initial or continuing, since initial education is not enough in this changing world. Initial training is merely a basis, but it should enable the person to continue learning independently after leaving the system. Preparing people for lifelong learning is a way to ensure that they will be able to cope and manage to deal with whatever changes life has in store for them.

The position of government on lifelong learning is quite clear. Certainly as many government legislation and policy (for example White Paper (1997), a new Academic Policy for Programmes and Qualifications in higher education (2002), Curriculum 2005: Name the Lifelong Learning for the 21st Century (1997). The Lifelong Learning Educator in the South African Context (2000), Education White Paper: Special needs education, building an inclusive education and training system (2001) agree that lifelong learning is the route to follow in order to improve the economy and life style of South African citizens. The Skills Development Act (1997) and the Skills Levy Act (1998) have been implemented to fast track training. Organisations pay a levy of 1% of their payroll to the receiver of revenue. The money is earmarked for training through 24 sector education and training authorities. Organisations that train their employees will be rewarded by claiming the money back if proof of training employees is forwarded. Government expressed its frustration and disappointment at business failing to train its employees. Different newspaper reports claim that the money for skills development and training is lying untouched in bank accounts. (Citizen 20 February 2002 – over R3 billion), (Business Day 14 February 2002 – more than R1 billion), (Eastern Province Herald 14 February 2002 – more than R1 billion). Though the newspapers gave different amounts of unclaimed funds, evidence from amounts quoted calls for concern.

The researcher is concerned about the failure of organisations to utilise the money in the workplace. If skills development fails in an organised set up like the workplace, what about the unemployed? These people might be easily forgotten. There is no denying that the idea is noble but it is important for stakeholders to constitute the

framework of how skills development will take place.

The challenges facing the policy makers is to realise their vision "of a South Africa in which all our people have access to lifelong learning education and training opportunities, which will in turn contribute towards improving the quality of life and building a peaceful prosperous and democratic society (Department of Education, 2000:3).

Government blames employers and employers responded by "that failure to claim from Setas was no indication of lack of commitment to training, but was a frustrated response to an "onerous claiming procedure established by the government" (Ramashia, 2002:2). The remaining question is who is fooling who? The researcher feels that need to discuss their frustrations in order to come up with a winning solution.

2.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LIFELONG LEARNER

Knapper et al (1991) sum up a lifelong learner as someone who is strongly aware of the importance and need for lifelong learning, someone who is motivated to pursue his/her dreams of learning, is aware of the relationship between learning and real life and lastly he/she has the necessary skills that will enable him/her to pursue lifelong learning.

The characteristics needed by people to be lifelong learners include people with vision, people who are not afraid of change, people who see change as a challenge rather than an obstacle, people who see solutions to their problems through continuous learning and who are information literate. Such people realise that they cannot remain qualified no matter how educated or intelligent they may be; they need refuelling from time to time.

The increase in student numbers in institutions of higher learning and other private colleges is a good sign that people are taking education seriously. The increase in the number of adults in the abovementioned paragraph confirms that people take continuous education as a solution to the problem.

There is, however, a disturbing factor which might discourage lifelong learners. The lack of jobs might be a deterrent or barrier to motivating people to acquire the self-concept of lifelong learning.

2.4 REASONS FOR DEVELOPING LIFELONG LEARNERS

Many of the mission statements of South African institutions of higher learning refer to the importance of developing lifelong learners. According to Knapper et al, (1991:21-26), there are a number of reasons why institutions of higher learning should prepare students for lifelong learning.

There is a shift in emphasis from pure knowledge acquisition to practical knowledge utilisation. Factual-based is giving way for knowledge-based education. The new curriculum requires learners to be able to design and solve problems, to access and assess information critically and effectively, to analyse and question, and to organise and critically evaluate.

"The tremendous increase in the volume of information, accompanied by dynamic technological innovations, has become so rapid that no one individual can expect to know everything, even in the most specialised disciplines. As our knowledge base expands in size and complexity, the ability to succeed in our society is likely to be dependent upon an individual's level of proficiency and competency to make significant and continuing contributions within this expanding environment. The characteristics of the process whereby trained professionals remain current and, therefore, effective, will be critical in the rapidly changing environment of tomorrow's workplace, hence the need for information literacy" (Pask & Smith, 1987:188). Institutions of higher learning must graduate students who are information literate and can operate independently in a fast-

changing environment rich with information.

The shift from pure knowledge acquisition to practical utilisation is a challenge for the country. In most schools, especially the disadvantaged ones (rural schools being the most hard hit), introducing the new education dispensation will be a tough task. With little or no resources at all, it will be a difficult mission to accomplish. The educators also need to be trained in order to be ready for the change and be able to embrace the change. Lastly, lack of funds could slow the process.

Constant changes in all spheres of life makes it necessary for everybody to become a lifelong learner in order to be competitive. The following are reasons why change is important:

2.4.1 Change

Change is the main factor that has led to the increased interest in the promotion of lifelong learning. Any country that wishes to keep pace with accelerating change requires continuous learning. Lifelong learning holds promise for reforms at all levels. Change requires people capable of adapting to changing circumstances. Such adaptations require the individual to learn early in life as well as later in life, to actually learn new things at various points in his/her life. According to Knapper et al (1991: 22), change today has two features:

- The rapidity with which changes are occurring and the present set of changes are by contrast occurring so rapidly that the cycle may repeat itself several times within a single lifetime.
- It is global: it transcends regional and national boundaries.

2.4.2 Change in work

Most graduates will have more than one career in their lifetimes because the working world is changing rapidly on account of technological progress, the explosion of information, the development of manufacturing techniques and the emergence of new products. Occupational preparation of graduates will be obsolete after a few years, and lifelong learning is therefore a matter of survival.

2.4.3 Social change

Changes facing South Africa are not only in the workplace. The increasing volume and complexity of information means that children are exposed to many socialising agencies lying outside the family. Some people will find it difficult to cope psychologically and socially.

2.4.4 Special groups

The accessibility and flexibility of the new education dispensation will address the needs of special groups in society who are at an educational disadvantage because, according to the principles of NQF, education and training will be gained anywhere at any age and in different forms, be it formal or informal.

According to Department of Education (2001:16) inclusive education and training "are maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curricula of educational institutions and uncovering and minimising barriers to learning". The quoted document above looked at the special needs of learners and also embraces that learning occurs informally as well as formally and no one must be left being whether abled or differently abled.

2.4.5 Demographic change

There are demographic changes that are evident in institutions of higher learning and the workplace such as the following:

- There are more students than before and they are diverse with regard to colour, education background, economic background, to just name a few aspects, especially in institutions that were meant for a certain group of people.
- There is a more diverse workforce.

People need coping skills in order to survive, hence the need for lifelong learning. Longworth & Davies (1996:25), summarises the reasons for lifelong learning as shown in the following figure:

Figure 2.2: Changing paradigms for a lifelong learning age

<p>Influence of science and technology</p> <p>Restructuring of industry</p> <p>Global demographics</p> <p>Influence of television and other media</p>
<p>Changes in the nature of work</p> <p>Focus on the individual</p> <p>Environmental imperatives</p> <p>New global power structures</p>

Source: Longworth & Davies (1996:25).

All these factors above, all combined influences the pressures that require radical shifts in education and they also create profound adjustments in learning. Qualifications attached to jobs determine whether the qualification is indeed necessary, but factors such as changes in the nature of work might require a top up to an already existing

qualification. Achieving a qualification that does not need an individual to learn continuously is impossible based on the changing paradigms for a lifelong learning age.

The paradigms pose a challenge to existing qualifications, job descriptions, job specifications and employability.

Changes in the nature of work demand different ways of doing your job. These challenges can be successfully managed through lifelong learning. Through managing the challenges of changes in the nature of work does not necessarily imply employability, being able to manage them help individuals to cope, and face the challenges.

Lifelong learning is the strategy to sustain growth and development, and to keep us in readiness to conquer the fast changes that are overtaking us and shortening our knowledge cycle. It is the function of all institutions that are involved in education and training to provide and equip all members of the labour force with the skills needed to meet the rapidly changing demands of the South African economy. Industry needs highly and relevantly skilled people to ensure the success of businesses. Industry needs people who will add value and also take the organisation forward in the face of continuous and rapid change.

2.5 LIFELONG LEARNING MODELS

The researcher looked at four lifelong models and scrutinised them in order to identify the ones that relate to South Africa's new approach.

2.5.1 THE INDUSTRY-ORIENTED CENTRAL/SOUTH EUROPEAN APPROACH

Job and employment oriented
Promoted continuing education for all
Driven by university-industry partnerships
Adult level
Training, not learning, focus

2.5.2 THE JAPANESE AND PACIFIC RIM APPROACH

Two models that are kept quite separate

a) Job and skills driven - initiated in companies by companies
Has a Training and a learning focus
Companies as learning organisations

b) Community driven – initiated by government and communities
Lifelong-learning community centres
Mainly for adults, but also includes non-school youth programmes

2.5.3 THE NORTHERN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICAN APPROACH

Relies heavily on partnerships
Includes open universities, distance and open learning
Recognises importance of school education
Empowerment of people in industry through learning

2.5.4 THE 14TH INTEGRATED “LEARNING FOR A LIFETIME” APPROACH

Cradle to grave (Lifelong)

Focus on development of human potential through learning

Applies holistically within and between all sectors of the community – whole-of-life vision

Multiple partnerships for mutual advantage

Creates personal, organisational, national, international values and attitudes

Source: Longworth (1992:4)

Though the approaches in each model above differ, they have a common feature, that is to promote lifelong learning. The format in which lifelong learning should follow differs from model to model. Some models emphasise education and training, or training and learning or learning and development. However there is a link between all the concepts used in the models, thus they should not be seen as separate but in relation to each other as mentioned in Chapter One. They all involve "learning" but at different levels in the life of an individual.

It is also interesting to note that all models mention partnerships in the promotion of lifelong learning, e.g. university-industry, government and communities, companies, universities and school education. Learning takes place at different levels, throughout life, and the learning is provided by different structures from families, communities and industry. It can either be formal or non-formal. Learning at each stage plays an important role and for the development of a whole person.

However there seems to be little mention of from when to when should lifelong learning take place. The industry-oriented model make mention of university-industry partnerships and adult, what happened to the learning that took place before university? The Japanese and Pacific Rim approach is job and skills driven, and mainly for adults. The model excludes learning at other levels and concentrate of learning of adults at

jobs. The Northern Europe and North American approach make mention of the importance of school education, university and industry. However the model excludes the informal learning that takes place before the age of school education.

The 14th Integrated "Learning of lifetime" approach is the only model that addresses lifelong learning from cradle to grave. The model is inclusive. This model enjoys more support due to its inclusive characteristic. Possibly the greatest virtue of this model lies in the fact that it applies holistically within and between all sectors of the community-whole-of-life vision. Training needs differ at different levels and should therefore be addressed differently.

The researcher agrees with Longworth (1992:4), that the integrated learning for a lifetime approach seems to fit well in the South African approach. The model looks at "the whole-person, whole-organisation, whole-nation, whole-society approach" UNESCO, OECD, the European Round Table of Industrialists and the World Initiative on Lifelong Learning favour the model too. The opportunities for learning should be available for all, poor, rich, unemployed semi-skilled, unskilled as well as skilled. The learning should reach all parts of the country. Though inclusion is legislated, poverty is a discriminator in participation in learning. Two thirds of South Africa's poor live in three rural provinces – Eastern Cape (24%), KwaZulu Natal – (21%) and Northern Province (18%). (Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers, 2000:58). Working place offers opportunities for workers especially professionals. The gap between the skilled, semi-skilled, unskilled and poor should be closed. The South African government also supports the integrated learning for a life time approach model by emphasising that "an education system does not exist to simply serve a market, important as that might be for economic growth and material prosperity. Its primary purpose must be to enrich the individual and by extension then broader society, (Department of Education, 2002:19). The Skills Development Act 1998 was passed in order to address lifelong learning, especially in the workplace. The purpose of this Act is –

- to improve the quality of life of workers, their prospects for work and labour mobility;
- to improve productivity in the workplace and the competitiveness of employers;

- to promote self-employment; and
- to improve the delivery of social services

The Act stresses the commitment of the government to improving the skills and competency of the workers and creating a love of learning in the era of lifelong learning.

The employers will pay a skills levy of 0,5% of their total payroll to the South African Revenue Services from 1 April 2000. The levy will go up to 1% from 1 April 2001. Companies that do train their employees will be rewarded with grants.

The White Paper on Higher Education (1997:7) sums up by stating that "Higher Education plays a central role in the social, cultural and economic development of modern societies. In South Africa today, the challenge is to redress past inequalities and to transform the higher education system to serve a new social order, to meet pressing social needs, and to respond to new realities and opportunities". It is evident that government is committed to provide a learning society.

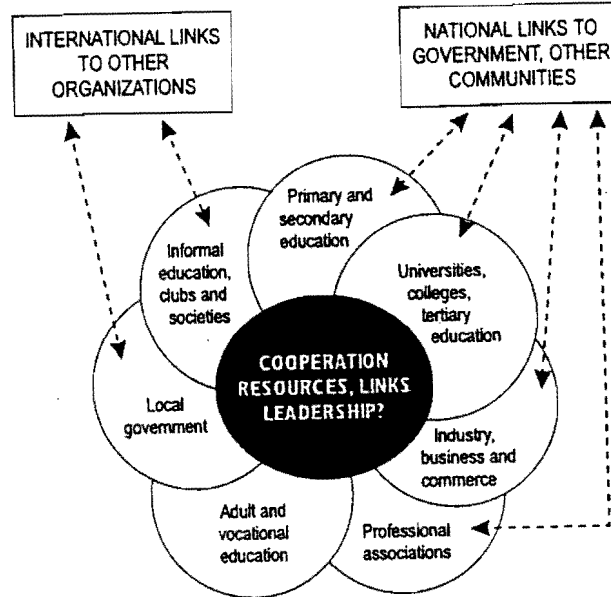
2.6 SKILLS FOR A LIFELONG LEARNING AGE

People should learn to learn by being able to search for new knowledge and combining such knowledge with existing knowledge. They should be able to link the information and apply it to new situations. They should be curious and ask questions and apply their minds to reason, be able to retrieve information and analyse or interpret it.

Globalisation is about sharing ideas and learning from other countries. People should be able to receive information, analyse it and use it to their benefit. They should be flexible and able to adapt to new situations. It is important that individuals should not feel forced to be lifelong learners, but should rather take responsibility for upgrading their competence and realise the value of doing that.

2.7 LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Figure 2:3 An integrated lifelong learning community



Source: Longworth & Davies (1996:126)

There are many partners that play a role in the promotion or provision of lifelong learning. Unlike lifelong models, this model states clearly who are the partners, how are they clustered and how they influence one another. Each partner plays a different role.. Though the outcomes might be different, it is expected that individual acquire knowledge in every step/

All the partners in this model encourage individuals to commit to lifelong learning by addressing different issues at different levels.

The research problem posed a question as to whether a thoroughly conducted needs determination for academics will contribute to their commitment to lifelong learning and ultimately to their improved performance? An integrated lifelong learning community if properly used might address the different needs of lecturers at different levels from national to international. Surely the needs should be satisfied by one or some of the sectors. The variety of the sectors offers variety of learning at different levels.

Learning individuals will lead to learning families and communities, which will give birth to a learning society. This simply means that everybody will be included in the learning process, with no more exclusions. It is up to the leaders of education to make this dream a reality. By "leaders", the researcher includes everybody who has "light" to let it shine in our country. God in The Bible Society of South Africa (1994:3), said "let there be light" and everybody knows that the good God does not discriminate: He wanted everybody to share the light. In the context of this research, "light" means "education". "... learning societies can be attained by improving the education, training and qualification levels of individuals" (Hodgson, 2000:161).

2.8 THE PROMOTION OF LIFELONG LEARNING THROUGH NQF

The National Qualification Framework is the foundation for a system of education and training which will ensure access, flexibility, progressing and portability. A successful lifelong learning approach will motivate and encourage individuals to be participants. It might not be easy to motivate individuals if money is not the incentive. Individuals should realise that lifelong learning is not all about money, but about growth. A person's growth will benefit that person self, the person's family, the communities and society as a whole. Knowledge is power. Promoting lifelong learning will be a difficult process, especially in South Africa, but it is a journey that the government and interested stakeholders are prepared to travel, as the evidence is clearly stated in Government Gazettes and numerous discussion papers and articles published that the researcher has read, such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (1994); Discussion Documents: Norms and Standards for Teacher Education Training and Development (1997), and the Government Gazette (White Paper on higher Education, 1997) to name just a few.

NQF will enable citizens to become progressively qualified in a lifelong process. By integrating education and training into one system with a credit-based qualifications framework, all citizens' chances of developing their capacities will be radically increased, whether they are involved in full-time or part-time study, employed or unemployed, in general education or in occupational preparation. The system will be learner-centred and achievement-led.

To make sure that the above statement is implemented, the SAQA act was passed in October 1995, which enables South Africa to develop its own National Qualification Framework (NQF).

The new qualifications structure will be based on a more flexible combination of fundamental, core and elective learning credits. It requires a shift away from traditional learning and is geared towards integrating education and training and will be programmes-driven. This new structure will provide opportunities for further learning and progression.

Recognition of prior learning will be taken into consideration, that is recognising of what the person knows and can do. Skills, knowledge and experience with specific occupational qualifications will be matched.

The system will enable learners to have access to the education and training that matches their current knowledge and skills. Once in the system the learner can keep progressing up levels by gaining credits for successfully completed unit standards.

As stated in chapter one, in the recent World Competitiveness Report, South Africa ranked last in the world. If South Africa is to find the solution that will address the skills and knowledge problems, the country needs a revolution in the mindset of education providers of learning and assessment.

The NQF is doing away with rigidity, which was one of the characteristics of the past education system. The new idea is the “pursuit of multi-skilling and reskilling to address job changes and the explosion of new knowledge.

According to Faasen & Metcalfe (1997: 7), “the NQF is like a map indicating all the registered qualifications in South Africa, the relationship among them and the pathways a learner can follow to fulfil the vision of lifelong learning and development”.

Once in the programme, the learner can keep progressing up levels by gaining credits for successfully completing units. Lastly, learners can move across different fields, meaning that they can transfer their credits horizontally and vertically. Accredited credits will be transferable across different programmes.

2.9 THE PRINCIPLES OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK

These principles were developed to evaluate whether the new education system is achieved.

- **Credible:** The principle calls for education to be credible both in South Africa and around the world.
- **Coherent:** The education should provide clear learning pathways.
- **Relevant:** Learning is provisional and never stops, what makes a person successful today might not in future, hence the need for professional growth and the ability to deal with change and uncertainty with confidence and relevance.
- **Quality focused:** It is important to have the workforce that is willing to learn and continually update their knowledge. A willingness to learn continually is far more important than the qualification a person has at the moment. Quality will only improve through continual updating of the previous knowledge.

- **Flexible:** Technological change modifies or eliminates some other type of jobs thereby rendering many workers obsolete. The affected individuals will need reskilling in order to be active workers. The NQF will prevent career barriers. A person will not be trapped in one learning situation but will be able to move between different fields of education. Learners will be able to transfer credits from one place of learning to the other. Flexibility will encourage appropriateness.
- **Accessible:** A means of expanding learning opportunities to all individuals for the well-being of the nation. Services should be open, with no age or sex restrictions. Prior learning will be recognised and assessment criteria will be put in place to deal and control the process.
- **Articulation:** Articulation will allow students to move between providers of education
- **Portable:** The NQF principles offer occupational flexibility where people are able to readily move among related job qualifications. Reskilling, when the work becomes obsolete means a second chance, even for people who for any reason dropped out of school.
- **Responsive:** It is important for a country to have an adaptable and flexible workforce. The workforce that is responsive to the needs of industry and the country as a whole, is capable of acquiring whatever skills may be relevant to the changing times. Forms of work are likely to change to take account of not only new technology, but also changing industrial and societal demands. Changes in the workplace and the nature of the workforce requirements have changed and will keep on changing. For example, in South Africa today there is a demand for mathematics and science teachers. Teachers will have to acquire new skills to be responsive and adapt. They need new skills for job changes.

- Reflective: It is important that curricula be compiled in close consultation with stakeholders, to ensure that students graduate with qualifications that are applicable to today's workplace demands. People trained for a job should be ready for immediate utilisation in their workplace.
- Progressive: The principles of NQF offers occupational flexibility where people are capable of readily moving between levels and higher up the ladder of the levels.

The NQF has been introduced in response to the economy and the country's needs for different skills, and is a new approach to overcome the shortfalls of the present education system. We can't deny the fact that it is going to be a long road to walk before reaching our destination.

Curriculum development, according to the NQF, should not be separated from the capacity building of staff. Management should also participate through strategising, guiding and supporting, so that the process can move smoothly.

A big task awaits all the interested parties who have to sell the concept. Potential learners need to know about the opportunities available to them so that they can improve themselves through lifelong learning. The principles set by the NQF are, as stated by Knapper et al (1991:18), "a set of organisational, administrative, methodological and procedural measures which accept the importance of promoting lifelong learning".

To ensure that education and training meet the quality standard, ETQAs will be formed and accredited by SAQA to oversee the implementation of the new system. The introduction of the Skills Development Act 1998 will address training in the workplace. Assessors will be registered to assess and award credit for units standards and qualifications in their fields of expertise to ensure the quality of learning. Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a process that will be used to recognise the skills and knowledge of people, irrespective of whether such skills and knowledge were achieved formally or informally. This process will help learners who acquired learning outside of a formal

learning environment. They will be able to receive credits towards unit standards and qualifications, provided they are able to meet the assessment requirements of the unit standards.

The NQF will change the way education is viewed. People will realise that learning relates to competence. The performance of the learner will count more than that of the teacher. Any learning activity should be aimed at making the learner more capable, whether in the formal delivery system or outside of it. Appropriate assessment criteria should be put in place to address the informal education system and RPL. The purpose of learning activities should be to empower the learner. Approaches to teaching should also be attended to, there should be a move away from teacher-centred to learner-centred teaching methods which encourage learners to be active participants.

The major concern of the NQF is to provide lifelong learning. Implementing the concept of lifelong learning will require particular knowledge, attitudes, skills and values on the part of academics to enable lifelong learning to contribute to our society and the economy. The above statement is emphasised by Knapper et al (1991: 47), when they state that "institutions of higher education would have a three-fold function in helping to implement lifelong education. Firstly, accept a role as simply one element in a system of lifelong education albeit an extremely important element. Secondly, institutions would also have an important part to play in promoting the development of the personal prerequisites and competencies for lifelong learning. Thirdly, there is the special responsibility of teachers in higher education to serve as effective models for lifelong learning".

The new approach calls for a change in the teaching and writing of textbooks in order to fit this changing paradigm. The teacher will no longer be the transmitter of information and teach facts only; students will be active participants in their own learning. Teaching and learning will be a partnership between the students and the teacher, focusing not on what the teacher will do, but on what the learner should be able to do. Assessment will no longer focus on what the learner remembers, in stead assessment will be based on demonstrations of what the learner knows, understands and can apply.

2.10 BENEFITS OF THE FRAMEWORK FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The discussion document, Lifelong Learning Through a National Qualifications Framework (1996:61), has identified 13 advantages of the NQF for tertiary education. The NQF will -

- allow for the achievement of both quality and relevance across the education and training system to ensure cross fertilisation between theory and application, and to ensure effective technology transfer;
- develop mechanisms for encouraging and managing link between education, research, and commercial interests;
- enhance access to and flexibility of options for learners;
- provide a sound basis on which to develop a HET strategy, leading to national and international confidence and reputation;
- increase awareness of career opportunities;
- increase awareness and information on educational opportunities, learning processes and forms of delivery;
- assure stakeholders of the quality and value of programmes and qualifications;
- increase benefits from investment in education through lifelong-learning opportunities and maintaining the currency of qualifications;
- encourage greater potential for provider specialisation arising from the increased portability of qualifications;

- increase emphasis on better performance and continuing development for providers, learners, and stakeholders in general;
- develop a basis for meeting specific sectoral, regional or RDP needs without compromising quality;
- regulate a system which enables national goals to be met, while at the same time fostering continuing improvement, recognising academic freedom and the desirability of encouraging individual and institutional growth and diversity;
- provide a grounding on which international business and education and training opportunities can be developed.

The Higher Education Quality Committee is the committee that develop mechanisms, and check whether institutions of higher education offer quality education. The committee together with other accredited ETQA's will ensure provision of quality education. Taking into account how many universities and technikons are in South Africa, and not forgetting private providers of higher education, the job is too big. Whether the merger proposed by the National Working Group will reduce the work of the committee remain to be seen.

The New Academic Policy for Programmes and Qualifications in Higher Education (2002) ensure access to and flexibility of options for learners.

Some of the points mentioned above are done by SAQA with other stakeholders like the Department of Education, Council on Higher Education (CHE) as well as Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). Some of their functions overlap.

Regulations are put in place for both public and private providers of education to ensure that institutions align themselves with National Imperatives, provision of quality education informing the public about educational opportunities.

To sum up, NQF will benefit learners in that learning will be accessible and flexible in order to cater for needs of different individuals. Learning will take place on the job, at schools and at tertiary institutions. Recognition of prior learning will enable learners to get into the system even without a certificate by assessing prior knowledge. The objective of the research was to investigate an acceptable way of effective staff development and training of higher learning. The provision of flexibility will provide lecturers with flexible times for attendance and also choosing part of a programme that expertise is needed thus promoting lifelong learning.

2.11 CONCLUSION

South Africa faces the challenge of making the country a “learning society”. Citizens have to be encouraged and empowered to take responsibility for planning their own professional development on an ongoing basis. With the majority of people being illiterate, one wonders how will they be made aware of the opportunities that the NQF offers. The education we had proved to be lacking in some of the qualities we need in order to face the 21st century with confidence and to be able to compete globally.

The researcher compares this process to that of a mode of transport that has many stops to pick up the passengers on its way to and from its destination. It will be a long journey... but there has to be a start. A country cannot afford to dwell on the past, but has to look at the present and have a vision for the future, and that is exactly what the NQF is all about. The journey will be characterised by flexibility, portability and mobility, with the destination being continuous improvement.

The individual will buy a ticket (fundamental education) and will travel around the world, boarding at a point and alighting at another point, as long as he/she has the right ticket, however the researcher agrees with Field (2000:13) that “lifelong learning is an uncertain business. It can be joyous, fruitful and deeply satisfying and it can be painful, exhausting and deeply disturbing”. Usually when people are engaged in learning, they dream of obtaining a satisfying job one day, be promoted and for self-actualisation. The reality is jobs are shrinking, it is gradually very difficult to get a job.



The challenge posed by this assumption is that people should study not only to get jobs, but to perform a job well with the information acquired during learning, be it running his/her own business or working for an organisation.