UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Managing quality assurance in private higher education institutions in South Africa

By

ELMARIE STANDER

99330955

Full dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Education (MEd)

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION MANAGEMENT, LAW AND POLICY

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

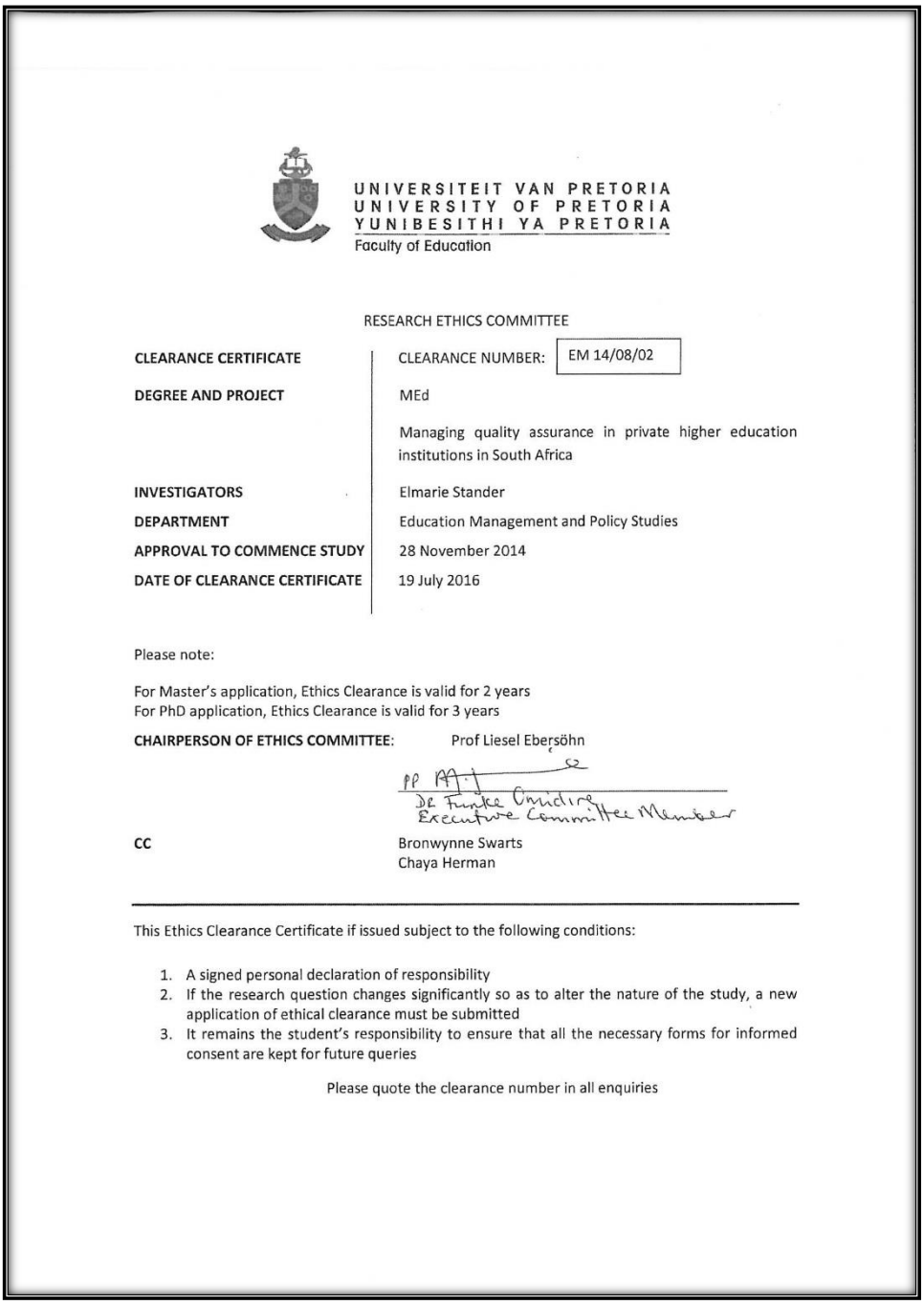
SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR CHAYA HERMAN

Declaration of originality

I, Elmarie Stander, declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work, and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree. All sources have been identified and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signature **Date**

Ethical Clearance Certificate and Statement



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA
Faculty of Education

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	CLEARANCE NUMBER: EM 14/08/02
DEGREE AND PROJECT	MEd Managing quality assurance in private higher education institutions in South Africa
INVESTIGATORS	Elmarie Stander
DEPARTMENT	Education Management and Policy Studies
APPROVAL TO COMMENCE STUDY	28 November 2014
DATE OF CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	19 July 2016

Please note:

For Master's application, Ethics Clearance is valid for 2 years
For PhD application, Ethics Clearance is valid for 3 years

CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE: Prof Liesel Ebersöhn

pp
Dr Funke Omidire
Executive Committee Member

CC Bronwynne Swarts
Chaya Herman

This Ethics Clearance Certificate if issued subject to the following conditions:

1. A signed personal declaration of responsibility
2. If the research question changes significantly so as to alter the nature of the study, a new application of ethical clearance must be submitted
3. It remains the student's responsibility to ensure that all the necessary forms for informed consent are kept for future queries

Please quote the clearance number in all enquiries

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this thesis, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval. The author declares that he/she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's code of ethics for researchers and the Policy guidelines for responsible research.

Signature **Date**

Summary

MANAGING QUALITY ASSURANCE IN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

With globalisation and the rise of the knowledge economy, there has been an increase in demand for higher education worldwide, which has resulted in the proliferation of private higher education institutions (PHEIs). Within this context, issues of quality and quality assurance processes, guided by national policies and frameworks, have become increasingly important. In South Africa, programme accreditation is one form of external quality assurance.

Literature reveals several gaps in the understanding of the management of quality assurance in the private higher education sector, and the topic of programme accreditation in relation to PHEIs in South Africa has received scant attention. The research question for this study was: *How do PHEIs manage quality assurance as they engage in the process of programme accreditation in South Africa?*

Exploratory, qualitative research methodology was deemed the most appropriate for this study and twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted with quality assurance managers at ten PHEIs in Gauteng. The conceptual framework, adapted from Zaki and Zaki Rashidi (2013), lists eight parameters relevant to the management of quality assurance within PHEIs in South Africa.

The findings of this study indicate a general lack of sound governance and management structures at PHEIs, an absence of institutional capacity, and academic leadership that is often deficient. The availability of relevant higher education resources within PHEIs remains a challenge. Concerning external quality assurance, the complexity of quality assurance and higher education legislation and various process-based challenges are some of the most common barriers for South African PHEIs. Recommendations are presented.

(249 words)

KEY WORDS: *quality in higher education; barriers and challenges; private higher education institutions (PHEIs); higher education policy and legislation; programme accreditation; quality assurance; standards*

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my appreciation to the following persons/organisations that made this dissertation possible:

a) Professor Chaya Herman, my supervisor at the University of Pretoria (Department of Education Management, Law and Policy Studies), for her guidance, expertise, training, patience and support throughout this entire process. I really appreciate everything she has done.

b) Special thanks to Dr Marianne Engelbrecht at the Council on Higher Education for her guidance and full support of my research. I really appreciate everything she has done, not only for sharing her expertise, but also for her encouragement throughout. She is also a dear friend.

c) The Council on Higher Education (CHE) for its support, guidance and understanding throughout this process.

d) Professor Jan Nieuwenhuis at the University of Pretoria for his assistance and support; and for sharing his knowledge, not only in research, but in the fields of quality assurance and the private higher education sector; and

e) My family, my husband, Hendrik Stander and two daughters, Ximen and Noa Stander, to whom I dedicate this work. I wish to thank them for their support, love and understanding. Thanks also to my mother, Elna Conradie, and my sister Elaine Bosman and her family. They are all very special to me.

Table of contents

List of tables

List of figures

List of acronyms and abbreviations

BRICS	An association of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CESM	Classification of Educational Subject Matter
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CHEPS	Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies
CMI	Contextualised Multiple Intelligence
DAAD	Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
DoE	Department of Education (national)
DBE	Department of Basic Education (national)
DoL	Department of Labour (national)
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
EFA	Education for All
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EUA	European University Association
FET	Further Education and Training
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent (in terms of staff)
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GET	General Education and Training
GFETQSF	General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework
GNP	Gross National Product (Statistics)
HE	Higher education
HEIs	Higher education institutions
HEMIS	Higher Education Management Information System (of DHET)
HET	Higher Education and Training
HEQCIS	Higher Education Quality Council Information System (of CHE)
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HEQF	Higher Education Qualifications Framework
HEQSF	Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework
ICTs	Information Communication Technologies
INQAAHE	International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
IUCEA	Inter-University Council for East Africa
LMS	Learner Management System

KAM	Key Account Manager
KSA	Knowledge, skills and abilities
MBA	Master's in Business Administration
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoL	Ministry of Labour
NAAC	National Assessment and Accreditation Council
NADEOSA	National Association of Distance Education and Open Learning Organisations in South Africa
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
NEIs	Nursing Education Institutions
NEPI	National Education Policy Investigation
NPHE	National Plan for Higher Education
NLRD	National Learner Records Database
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OECD	Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development
OQSF	Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework
PHEIs	Private higher education institutions
PQM	Programme and Qualifications Mix
QA	Quality Assurance
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
QEP	Quality Enhancement Project
QMS	Quality Management System
ROI	Return of Investment
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SA	South Africa
SAIA	South Africa Institute for Advancement
SAIDE	South African Institute of Distance Education
SANC	South African Nursing Council
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SETA	Sectoral Education and Training Authority
SET	Science, engineering and technology (SET)
TQM	Total Quality Management
TVET	Technical Vocational Education Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Quality and quality assurance have become very popular themes in higher education research over the past decades (Vettori, 2012). Often these terms are used interchangeably and there has been much debate about an appropriate definition of each term (Broadfoot, 1998; Harvey & Knight, 1996; Harvey, 2007; Mhlanga, 2013; Lagrosen, Seyyed-Hashemi & Leitner, 2004; Laske, Meister-Scheytt & Weiskopf, 2000; Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2002; Tam, 2001). Vlãsceanu, Grünberg and Pârlea (2004:46) define quality in higher education as a "multi-dimensional, multilevel, and dynamic concept". It has to do with the context of an educational model, the aims of the institution, and with particular "standards within a given system, institution, programme, or discipline". Harvey (2007) explains that this definition fuses the concept of quality, and the purposes and mechanisms or tools for measuring quality, adding that the way in which quality is contextualised, seems appropriate. Subsequently, quality is seen as a relative term for the user, as each stakeholder has different levels of influence and views of what quality is (Barnett, 1994; Lagrosen *et al.,* 2004; Lim, 2010; Tam, 2001). Despite the many varied definitions of both quality and quality assurance, the focus on quality in higher educational contexts generally points to the nature of learning; while quality assurance hinges on the notion of convincing others about the adequacy and credibility of the processes of learning (Cheng, 2003; Harvey, 2007). Quality assurance, therefore, includes a holistic approach which provides a framework in order to develop and sustain the quality of higher education; and is built on a system-based premise (CHE, 2004a, 2004b; Erez & Gati, 2004; Kettunen, 2008; Klein & Kozlowski, 2000; Vlãsceanu *et al.*, 2004). For the purposes of the study, the definition of Luckett (2006) was used, according to which quality assurance involves

> "[A] systematic internal and external management procedures and mechanisms by which an institution of higher education assures its stakeholders of the quality of its systems, processes, products and outcomes and of its ability to manage the maintenance and enhancement of quality. This term usually subsumes the meanings of quality assessment, quality management and quality enhancement" (Luckett, 2006:14).

Two types of quality assurance are identified – internal and external – and both are important aspects of the governance and management of higher education institutions. While external

quality assurance processes (such as accreditation) address both governance and management issues through policies and regulation documents prepared by regulatory bodies, councils or departments (Hénard & Mitterle, 2010, internal quality assurance focusses on safeguarding and building institutional capacity to ensure that the institution's and/or programme's quality mechanisms are in place, and meet its own objectives (Sanyal, 2013). Cheng's (2003) definition of internal quality assurance focusses on efforts for improving the internal environment and processes, with the purpose of achieving academic goals; while Martin and Stella's (2007) definition of internal quality assurance includes a more comprehensive view that has guided this study, and states:

> "Internal quality assurance refers to the policies and mechanisms implemented in an institution or programme to ensure that it is fulfilling its own purpose and meeting the standards that apply to higher education in general or to the profession or discipline in particular" (Martin & Stella, 2007:34).

In South Africa, external quality assurance of the higher education sector is administered by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) via its permanent sub-committee, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). The CHE's HEQC oversees and governs the quality of the higher education sector, as set out in the *Higher Education Act 101 of 1997*and the National Qualifications Act 67 of 2008. Apart from the CHE's mandate to accredit programmes, the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) registers and records all the qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) regulates all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), amongst many other functions.

The development of sound internal quality assurance practices in higher education has gained much popularity internationally, especially since the 1970s (Cheng, 2003; Green, 1994). In South Africa, this has become much more evident since 2001, with the establishment of the CHE's HEQC, whereby the state's intention is to see that both public and private HEIs are able to govern themselves. This includes the implementation of efficient and effective internal quality assurance processes and strategies (CHE, 2004a; DoE, 1997b; DoE, 2001). The goal is therefore to see that institutions successfully incorporate and join the efforts of both external and internal quality assurance processes and procedures, and that there are collaboration and alignment with one another, and especially with national policies (CHE, 2003a).

White Paper 3 of 1997 acknowledges the contributions of private providers in expanding access to post-school education and cautions against 'fly-by-night' operators (DoE, 1997a).

Although the White Paper for Post-Schooling (DHET, 2013b) commits to expanded access, improved quality and increased diversity of provisioning, the literature seems to indicate that many private higher education institutions (PHEIs) still lack effective and actively integrated internal quality assurance procedures and instruments (Altbach, 1999, Altbach, 2012; Baumgardt, 2013; CHE, 2003a; Cele, 2005, Essack, 2015).

1.2. PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The higher education sector in South Africa is divided into public and private higher education institutions (PHEIs). The *Higher Education Act 101 of 1997* allows only public universities to use the term "university" in their name[1], and therefore private providers are classified as "private higher education institutions" (PHEIs). While the White Paper for Post School Education and Training (DHET, 2013b) advises that a typology of different private institutions be developed, all private higher education institutions (PHEIs) are classified the same. Private higher education institutions (PHEIs) also receive no funding from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

With the emergence of globalisation and the knowledge society, there has been an increased demand for higher education globally (Altbach, 2012; CHE, 1999; CHE, 2004e; Carnoy, 2005; Higgs, 2006; Varghese, 2006; Sachs, 2008). In some countries, such as Malaysia, Brazil and Korea, the private higher education sector is even larger than the public higher education sector (Altbach, 2012, Lee, 2004; Tang & Hussin, 2013). The international expansion of higher education and the proliferation of PHEIs have highlighted issues of quality, which have increasingly become a concern (Sehoole, 2012). Many forms of state-regulated quality assurance models and methodologies have emerged. While governments, especially in developing countries, have been known to often apply 'light regulation' to their own public systems, they have placed stringent regulation for their private providers to protect the public against poor-quality private provision (Dittrich & Weck-Hannemann, 2010). Most of these quality assurance models and methodologies include a variety of frameworks and models of accreditation.

In South Africa the emergence and growth of private higher education has also been noted (Kruss, 2002), and has been summarised in terms of a demand for "different", "better" or "more" education (Kruss, 2002). In 2002, there were 101 (conditionally) registered[2] PHEIs in South Africa (no statistics on the student enrolment available) (DoE, 2002), which had

[1] Section 54(7) of the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997
[2] There were many illegal operators that were not registered in 2002. The DHET does not have audited statistics of these operators, or the student enrolment figures in that year.

increased to 123 (with 119 941 students enrolled) by the end of 2013. At the beginning of 2016, there were 125 PHEIs registered.

Massification of the public higher education sector has played a major role in the proliferation of PHEIs. Student enrolment figures between 2008 and 2013 increased significantly (DHET, 2014b). In 2008, the public higher education sector enrolled 799 490 students and the private higher education sector enrolled 68 688 students. In 2013, the public sector enrolled 983 698 students and the private sector enrolled 119 941 students (DHET, 2014b; DHET, 2015b). The total number of students enrolled in 2008 was 868 178 to 1 103 639[3] in 2013. Consequently, the public higher education sector has seen a growth of 23 percent and the private higher education sector 74.7 percent since 2008 (Kruss, 2002). With the implementation of the programme accreditation framework and its criteria as published by the CHE in 2004, and more stringent regulation from the DHET, especially since 2002, there has been a greater focus on quality in higher education. International ideologies of 'good practices in higher education' also reached the South African shores. This, amongst many other influencing factors, highlighted numerous deficiencies within, and challenges for the private higher education sector holistically (Cele, 2005; Subotzky, 2002).

1.3. RESEARCH PROBLEM

A study conducted by the HEQC in 2003 concluded that various quality inadequacies remained prevalent in the majority of PHEIs (CHE, 2003a; Cele, 2005). The HEQC study established that within the majority of these institutions there was a lack of knowledge and an absence of implementation of a series of national policies and regulations that inform quality imperatives in higher education. The study also identified that most of these institutions had insufficient infrastructural resources (including libraries) to support meaningful teaching and learning, and a conspicuous absence of internal quality assurance mechanisms. There also appeared to be uneven teaching and learning practices, owing to a lack of sufficient staff and expertise, while this lack of in-house expertise also led to poor design and conceptualisation of learning programmes. In some institutions, the use of consultants or advisory boards presented impressive paper-based programme accreditation applications, but at the actual site visits supplementary and more serious concerns were raised.

More recent studies have indicated similar findings, but have added the complexity of the quality assurance legislative framework and its processes (Altbach, 2012; Baumgardt, 2013; DHET, 2013b; Essack, 2015; Ellis & Steyn, 2014). The Department of Higher Education and

[3] Statistics have been collected from the 2013 HEMIS database (extracted in October 2013).

Training (DHET) is also aware of this. In the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013b) the DHET states the following:

> "A further challenge within the quality assurance system relates to the complexity of the existing registration and quality assurance system for private providers, and the sequencing and timing of various processes across the quality assurance bodies. The DHET must develop better communication between itself, the CHE, SAQA, Umalusi and the SETAs, as well as clearer processes for private provider regulation and accreditation. Ultimately, we develop a plan to expand and improve capacity for quality assurance for private providers…" (DHET, 2013b:43).

However, literature reveals numerous gaps in the understanding of the management of quality assurance in the private higher education sector; and the topic of programme accreditation in relation to PHEIs has also received scant attention. While South African literature does indicate that some barriers to the management of quality assurance have been identified (Cele, 2005; CHE, 2003a; CHE, 2004e; DHET, 2013b; Essack, 2015), most of these sources seem dated and the voice of the PHEIs remains virtually silent.

While the literature highlights most of the challenges linked to internal quality assurance, very few barriers and challenges are mentioned in relation to external quality assurance processes and practices and, more specifically, PHEIs and their experiences with programme accreditation.

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTION AND SUB-QUESTIONS

Research question:

How do private higher education institutions (PHEIs) manage quality assurance as they engage in the process of programme accreditation in South Africa?

The following sub-questions guided the study:

i. How do different PHEIs understand quality and quality assurance?

ii. How do stakeholders understand the quality assurance legislative framework for PHEIs in South Africa?

iii. How do PHEIs manage quality assurance?

iv. What are the barriers and challenges PHEIs face in the management of quality assurance as they engage in the process of programme accreditation in South Africa?

1.5. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study explored the management of quality assurance in private higher education institutions (PHEIs) in South Africa. In doing this, I examined the following:

i. I compared understandings of quality and quality assurance as reported in literature and in current higher education policies with those of the participants interviewed to determine whether there are any significant differences in these understandings. Such an analysis would reveal whether there are significant differences that should be addressed.

ii. The expectancies of quality assurance bodies often differ from those of the PHEIs themselves. This study explored how PHEIs understand the quality assurance legislative frameworks (especially related to programme accreditation) in South Africa. In addition, perceptions of PHEIs on how other higher education stakeholders understand these frameworks were explored. This would reveal possible gaps that should be addressed.

iii. Several theories on the management of quality assurance in private higher education exist. The study explored evidence of effective (or the lack thereof) management of quality assurance practices in the private higher education sector. This study aimed at identifying how PHEIs manage quality assurance in a South African setting.

iv. Anecdotal evidence in conversations with PHEIs reveal that private higher education institutions (PHEIs) often grapple with various barriers or challenges PHEIs face as they engage in quality assurance procedures and processes. In light of this, the study attempted to present findings that would identify and explain what these barriers and challenges are so that authorities could develop strategies to address them.

The aim of the study was to explore and identify the challenges and barriers private higher education institutions in South Africa face in the management of quality assurance as they engage in the process of programme accreditation, and to provide recommendations.

1.6. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In choosing a suitable conceptual framework to understand and theorise the barriers and challenges for PHEIs in the management of quality assurance processes, the Octet of Quality in Higher Education Framework (Zaki & Zaki Rashidi, 2013) was deemed most appropriate as it identifies eight core parameters that encourage and contribute towards the quality assurance of an academic institution. Adapted from the aforementioned model (Zaki & Zaki Rashidi, 2013), this study presented its own modified conceptual framework, also recognising eight parameters.

The conceptual framework provided a base for understanding and framing the concept of quality assurance in PHEIs within the study and to clarify the findings, based on the empirical investigation. It informed the development of the interview schedule. Moreover, it was used as a framework for the initial coding in the data-analysis process, using Atlas.ti, and directed discussions in identifying the barriers and challenges for PHEIs as they engage in management of quality assurance practices and procedures.

A detailed discussion will follow in Chapter 4.

1.7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative exploratory enquiry was deemed most appropriate for the purpose of the study as it contributes to fundamental knowledge and theory of quality assurance in higher education (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2002; Patton, 2015).

I conducted twelve semi-structured interviews with quality assurance managers or directors, deans, faculty heads and registrars at ten PHEIs in Gauteng. The majority of the questions were open-ended and provided a framework in which participants could respond. Views on the barriers and challenges regarding the management of quality assurance, and specifically programme accreditation in their own PHEIs remained the focus (Patton, 2015). The philosophical base for this study is hermeneutics (Shaw & DeForge, 2014). Inductive analysis was mainly used throughout the study (Patton, 2015).

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed using ATLAS.Ti 7.5.6.

1.8. RATIONALE

My personal experience was the initial trigger for this study. In 2011 I found myself faced with new challenges as I was involved in the process of programme accreditation as programme co-ordinator at a prospective private higher education institution (PHEI) and it soon became apparent that the complexity of the accreditation process holds many different meanings and experiences for different stakeholders. The main rationale was driven by practical concerns. I later accepted a position at the Council on Higher Education in the Accreditation Directorate.

The gap in the body of knowledge relevant to the aforementioned topic was the secondary rationale, driven by academic concerns. This highlighted the absence of the voice of the private higher education (PHE) sector, especially with regard to the management of quality assurance (and programme accreditation) in South Africa.

1.9. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study contributes to the body of knowledge in relation to quality assurance and, more specifically, to programme accreditation. It further presents recent data which identifies barriers and challenges PHEIs face in terms of the management of quality assurance.

The findings from this study could guide policy-makers and regulatory bodies to construct capacity development strategies within the sector. In addition, this study has highlighted certain hindrances with regard to the external quality assurance processes and their regulatory bodies and councils in South Africa. These could be examined for future development.

To the private higher education sector, the findings of this study present recommendations to PHEIs in terms of the management of quality assurance in PHEIs in South Africa. It identifies key parameters responsible for driving and/or impacting on quality assurance within PHEIs. To conclude, the recommendations also present three focus areas that provide recommendations for the improvement of the management of quality assurance of PHEIs in the South African context.

1.10. OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

This study is divided into eight (8) chapters.

Chapter 1 has presented the introduction to the study.

Chapter 2 provides the literature review and identifies gaps in existing research. It attempts to conceptualise quality, quality assurance, quality assurance management and quality control within the higher education sector; and to distinguish between external and internal quality assurance and their relationship. Programme accreditation received special focus as one form of external quality assurance processes in higher education in South Africa. Governance and management within private higher education are discussed, with an explanation of how institutions are embedded in a global, national and institutional environment. The chapter ends by identifying barriers and challenges for PHEIs with regard to the management of both internal and external quality assurance in South Africa identified in the literature, and highlights the gaps identified in the existing research.

Chapter 3 provides the policy context for programme accreditation for PHEIs in South Africa. The regulatory environment is briefly explained and the most relevant and important legislation to the private higher education sector is reviewed. The chapter presents a short overview of the process of programme accreditation and highlights the expectations of the

state in terms of assuring the quality of higher education provisioning in South Africa. The programme criteria and minimum standards for both programme accreditation and re-accreditation are briefly presented, and how these are affected by contact and distance modes of provisioning. The differences between the requirements for programme accreditation for public universities (public higher education institutions) and PHEIs are also highlighted.

Chapter 4 presents the conceptual framework. The aim of the conceptual framework is to understand the parameters (or key areas) responsible for effective management of quality assurance in higher education, both external and internal to an institution. The Octet of Quality in Higher Education (framework for quality) by Zaki and Zaki Rashidi (2013) was deemed most appropriate.

Chapter 5 presents the research methodology. This chapter justifies the use of qualitative research methodology for this study. It describes the research design, methods, instruments and processes undertaken to collect and analyse the data. It also provides an overview of the ethical considerations of the study.

Chapter 6 provides the qualitative findings obtained during the study. Four key themes emerged from the data, which corresponded with the four sub-research questions for this study (as listed in Chapter 1) namely:

i. participants' knowledge and understanding of both quality assurance and quality in higher education (linked to sub-research question 1);

ii. participants' views and perceptions on the requirements of the quality assurance legislative environment in higher education (linked to sub-research question 2);

iii. participants' views on the management of quality assurance within the institutions (linked to sub-research question 3); and

iv. institutional barriers and challenges linked to the management of quality assurance and the legislative environment (linked to sub-research question 4).

Chapter 7 presents the findings. The conceptual framework for this study, assisted in the analysis of the data, identified barriers and challenges PHEIs face with regard to the management of both internal and external quality assurance at institutional level. The findings of this study point to a general lack of sound governance and management structures at PHEIs; however mostly evident in smaller institutions. The use of part-time staff and consultants seems to be the norm, while academic leadership and ownership is often deficient. The availability of appropriate and relevant higher education resources seems to be

one of the most common barriers PHEIs face in terms of the management of quality assurance and includes monetary, physical and human resources. Aspects regarding quality assurance and stakeholder relationships, identified communication; the complexity of quality assurance and higher education legislation; various process-based challenges of external quality assurance processes and procedures; and the criteria and minimum standards linked to programme accreditation and re-accreditation are some of the most common barriers. The findings confirmed that there exists a clear link between the expectations of the state, through its external quality assurance processes, and the successful management and implementation of internal quality assurance processes within an institution. The findings were presented under three central themes that were identified as the major barriers and challenges PHEIs face as they engage in the management of quality assurance at institutional level: resourcing, capacity development and programme design.

Chapter 8 focusses on the recommendations and conclusion. Derived from the findings of this study, this chapter provides recommendations for both PHEIs and for regulatory bodies and councils. In conclusion, the chapter identifies areas for impact, states the contribution of this study, and identifies further opportunities for research.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the literature review and identifies gaps in research. It attempts to conceptualise quality, quality assurance and quality assurance management within the higher education sector, and to distinguish between external and internal quality assurance and their relationship. Special focus is placed on programme accreditation as one form of the external quality assurance processes in higher education in South Africa. Governance and management within private higher education is discussed and how institutions are vested in a global, national and institutional environment is explained. The chapter ends by identifying barriers and challenges for private higher education institutions (PHEIs) from the literature regarding the management of both internal and external quality assurance in South Africa, and highlights the gaps in research.

2.2. DEFINING QUALITY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

This study makes a distinction between quality and quality assurance. A discussion on each follows.

2.2.1. Quality

Quality in higher education is often considered an ambiguous term (Harvey, 2007; Laske *et al.*, 2000; Mhlanga, 2013; Singh, 2010; Vettori, 2012) and a 'relative concept' (Harvey & Green, 1993:10; Tam, 2001). This is mostly due to the nature of its stakeholder involvement (Zaki & Zaki Rashidi, 2013). Lim (2010:14) explains that "... there are as many definitions of [quality] as there are stakeholders".

Despite the many variations, quality in higher education, according to Harvey and Green (1993), is preferred and holds five interrelated definitions or ways of thinking about quality (Becket & Brookes, 2008; Geda, 2014; Green, 1994; Harvey & Knight, 1996; Harvey & Stensaker, 2008).

Table 2.1 (below) represents Harvey and Knight's (1996:2) five proposed ways of thinking as adapted for this study. They are often referred to as 'perceptions about quality', or 'conceptions of quality'. A brief discussion on each follows.

Table 2.1: Five proposed ways of thinking

1. Quality as exceptional	1. Traditional notions of quality
	2. Excellence (exceeding high standards)
	3. Checking standards
2.Quality as perfection or consistency	1. Zero defects
	2. Quality culture
3. Quality as fitness for purpose	1. Fitness for purpose 1 – Customer satisfaction
	2. Fitness for purpose 2 – Mission
4. Quality as value for money	1. Performance indicators
	2. Customer charters
5. Quality as transformation	1. Enhancing the participants
	2. Value added
	3. Empowering the participants

Source: Adapted from Harvey and Knight (1996:2).

The first definition of quality refers to it being perceived as something ‘exceptional’ or seen as something ‘special’. This definition can further be sub-divided into three categories. The first is a traditional notion of quality, which sees quality as ‘distinctive’ and different from others. In higher education, it is usually operationalised within exceptionally high standards of academic achievement (Harvey, 2007). The second view sees quality as exceeding very high standards (Harvey, 2007:5). A third is seen as passing a set of required minimum standards, which involves the function of “checking standards” (Harvey, 2007:7; Gola, 2004; Green, 1994; Harvey & Knight, 1996). Several countries are implementing standards and guidelines in their quality assurance models in higher education (Kohoutek, 2009; Hénard & Mitterle, 2010) as a means of ‘measuring’ quality. Consequently, each concept of quality has its own implications for standards and indicators as emphasised in a particular quality assurance system (Van Damme, 2002).

The second definition relates to quality in terms of ‘consistency’. Broadly speaking, it is very similar to the traditional notion of excellence. The focus is placed on processes in meeting all specifications that are set (Van Berkel & Wolfhagen, 2002). The notion of ‘consistency’, often also referred to as ‘perfection’ (or the concept of getting it ‘right every time’), defines quality in terms of the ‘absence of errors’. In such a case, a design or a specification will often be standardised, which means that any deviation is of sub-standard quality (Harvey & Knight, 1996). Within this definition there are two distinctive approaches. A short discussion on each follows.

The first refers to a 'zero defect' approach which redefines 'quality conformance' to 'specification', rather than to exceeding high standards. Subsequently, the functions of a 'zero defect' approach would entail the identification of (possible) defects within the process, instead of relying on a final inspection or evaluation at the end of the process. The goal is to ensure that no faults are present in the higher education product or service it is offering. In this approach, a clear distinction is made between quality and standards. Quality standards are often reflected in mechanisms used for quality control. Some higher education institutions (HEIs) use, for instance, ISO 9000:2000 International Code of Practice for Quality Management Systems to Education and Training (SAQA, 2001b) and ISO 9001:2008 (OMNEX, 2016). Others have developed their own standards or tools to ensure compliance with their own and external goals (Becket & Brookes, 2008; Hénard & Mitterle, 2010; SAQA, 2001b; Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2003).

The second approach refers to the creation of a 'quality culture' (Harvey, 2009; Harvey & Stensaker, 2007; Harvey & Stensaker, 2008), and is often used to define an approach where everyone in the organisation takes full responsibility, within the institution, for the quality of the higher education product or service (Crosby, 1979). This approach then forms a chain of internal customer-and-supplier relations. Each unit is responsible for the quality within its own unit or department, creating a quality culture. Such an organisation holds the ideology of seeing everyone in the organisation, both customer and supplier, as part of its creation of a quality culture (Green, 1994; Geda, 2014; Geertz, 1973; Harvey, 1995; Harvey & Knight, 1996; Harvey, 2006; Harvey, 2007; Loukkola & Zhang, 2010). According to the literature, a sound culture for teaching and learning often refers to a positive climate (points to how students and faculty experience the climate or atmosphere), sound classroom environment, sound external stakeholder relationships, effective leadership, management and administration, neat buildings and facilities, availability of resources, high professional standards amongst educators, order and discipline, effective instructional leadership and a shared sense of purpose (European Commission, 2013; Van Deventer & Kruger, 2010).

The third definition of quality points to where quality is seen in terms of 'fitness for purpose,' and where quality finds meaning only in relation to the purpose of the higher education product or service (Harvey, 2007; Geda, 2014). The definition then offers two alternative priorities for specifying its purpose. The first refers to 'quality as fitting-the-customer's satisfaction', and calls for a comparison between the outcomes of a process, and the specified requirements. Hence, the product or service has conformed to customer needs, requirements or desire (Mizikaci, 2006). This hinges on the harmonious relationship between the identified customer requirements, including specific outcomes, and the requirements of

the institution (Juran, 1988; Lagrosen, Seyyed-Hashemi & Leitner, 2004). It also places the focus on 'customer satisfaction' and involves the institutional responsiveness in monitoring customer satisfaction (Butt & Rehman, 2010; Green, 1994; Harvey & Green, 1993; Harvey, 2007; Lagrosen *et al*., 2004). However, Harvey and Green (1993) see the view of quality as 'meeting customer requirements' as problematic. This is mainly due to the contentious views of what constitutes a 'customer'. They argue that while students are engaged in a learning process, they cannot stipulate what is required and therefore cannot be called 'customers' (Harvey & Green, 1993; Lagrosen *et al*., 2004). However, given the nature of the profit and business imperative of PHE, students (and/or their funders) are often referred to as 'the customer'. The second alternative speaks of a 'mission-based fitness for purpose', which avoids the issue of determining who the 'higher education customers' are, but rather focusses on the institution itself. In this case, quality assurance is then defined in terms of the institution fulfilling its own stated objectives or mission (CHE, 2004a; CHE, 2004b; Harvey, 2007). As indicated in Table 2.1, the fourth definition of quality is coined as 'value for money' and relates to quality in terms of two variables. These refer to that which one can afford; and that which is considered as being a 'high standard.' Generally, this perspective holds a 'market-view' of quality, which is often linked to external forms of accountability (Baumgardt, 2013; Harvey, 2007). From a public higher education viewpoint, public universities (higher education institutions) have to demonstrate their worth and account for their use of public resources in the face of competition for public funding. In private higher education, students (and their funders such as parents or companies) consider their own investment in higher education in terms of value-for-money or return on investment (Carnoy, 2005). Moreover, students do not seek access only, but access with success (Griesel & Parker, 2009). Success is viewed in terms of the quality of the graduate, employability and personal growth (SAIA & The Kregse Foundation, 2014). Ultimately, for students and their parents, suitable employability is usually the pay-off, while companies seek specialised skills in being at the cutting edge within their own sector.

'Quality as transformation,' points to the fifth definition of quality, and is rooted in a notion of both a qualitative and a fundamental change. There are three elements of transformative quality in education: the first refers to the 'value-added' notion of quality and is focused mainly on the enhancement of the student in terms of knowledge, abilities and skills (Harvey & Knight, 1996). Quality higher education globally focusses on 'empowering the student' to affect their own transformation and involves actions such as students taking ownership of the learning process. However, the 'enhancement of the student' necessitates the enhancement of the service provided to the student, or the enhancement of an institution or a programme, as a result of internally and externally structured improvement activities (Green, 1994;

Harvey & Knight, 1996; Harvey, 2006, 2007). However, Badat (2010) warns that the "key levers for transforming higher education", both nationally and institutionally, include "planning, funding and quality assurance". Inadequate funding may compromise the provision of equal opportunities and the improvement of quality. Daniel, Kanwar and Uvalic-Trumbic (2009) concur, stating that widening access and expecting high quality delivery, while investing low costs, is not achievable (Daniel *et al*., 2009). Hence, the importance of sufficient funding in the assurance of the quality of higher education, regardless of its focus on transformation, seems inevitable.

In South Africa, in view of the prevailing higher education policy and educational context, the Council on Higher Education's (CHE) Higher Education Quality Council's (HEQC) understanding of quality includes fitness for purpose, value for money, and individual and social transformation, within an overarching fitness of purpose framework (CHE, 2001). It should be noted that 'fitness for purpose' requires institutions to position their institutional infrastructure, resources (CHE, 2003b) and contextual environment to ensure the realisation of their vision, mission and goals. However, 'fitness of purpose' encourages institutions to align their vision, mission and values with legislative framework requirements to ensure that learning programmes and supportive policies address the legislative obligations and transformation agendas of South Africa. This also includes the needs of the bordering and surrounding countries, and the world-wide social development and economic liberation imperatives which are rooted in the globalisation and internationalisation phenomena (CHE, 2004a; Cele, 2005). However, the process for programme accreditation with its framework and criteria, as published by the CHE, follows a mission-based 'fitness for purpose' approach to quality (CHE, 2004b; Mhlanga, 2013; Luckett, 2006; Soudien, 2007).

2.2.2. Quality assurance

Quality is not the same as processes of or approaches to quality assurance such as assessment, evaluation, audit or other forms of monitoring (Beck, 1992; Power, 1994, 1997). Given the earlier definitions of quality, quality assurance aims to ensure that the definitional elements are embedded in the offerings of institutions. The question therefore is: how do we assure that what is offered is, for instance, "fit for purpose"? Quality assurance therefore aims to assure the quality of higher education that is promised to both internal and external stakeholders. Quality assurance can therefore be defined as "an all-embracing term referring to an ongoing, continuous process of evaluating, assessing, guaranteeing, maintaining and improving the quality of a higher education system, institutions or programmes" (Vlãsceanu *et al.,* 2004 in Sanyal, 2013). It further suggests that quality assurance exists at three levels, institutional, programme and course level, while at all times, it has to address issues which

are highlighted by its stakeholders (Lim, 2010; Luckett, 2006, OECD, 2012; Vlãsceanu *et al.,* 2004 in Sanyal, 2013).

Quality assurance can be divided into internal and external quality assurance (Sanyal, 2013; Luckett, 2006). While most external quality assurance bodies or councils require PHEIs to develop, implement, maintain and improve their own quality assurance, the process of quality assurance should ideally begin internally. If the focus is on external quality assurance as the driving force, we have a hegemonic regime that authoritatively dictates its will to others, which does happen globally in the higher education sector in many countries. External quality assurance is there to support and guide the institutions (Hénard & Mitterle, 2010).

a. Internal quality assurance

Another type of quality assurance identified in this study refers to internal quality assurance. The management of internal quality assurance refers to the actions of internal stakeholders to implement the strategies and processes to improve the internal environment within an organisation (Cheng, 2003). The assumption is that these strategies, processes, and actions will ultimately lead to the achievement of the institution's objectives or goals. For the purpose of this study, the preferred definition of internal quality assurance is as follows:

> "Internal quality assurance refers to the policies and mechanisms in an institution or programme to ensure that it is fulfilling its own purposes and meeting the standards that apply to higher education in general or to the profession or discipline in particular" (Martin & Stella, 2007:34).

The Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) and Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) propose that internal quality assurance exists within a system. They also propose that effective and efficient management of quality assurance in higher education (both internal and external) are interdependent of factors within the global, national and institutional dimension (Badri & Younies, 2006; Barnett, 1992; Curtin University, 2013; IUCEA & DAAD, 2010; Kettunen, 2008; Zaki & Zaki Rashidi, 2013). IUCEA and DAAD (2010) further suggest three elements comprising internal quality assurance: monitoring instruments, evaluation of instruments, and activities aimed at improvement (or enhancement). However, Sanyal (2013) identified more specific indicators for internal quality assurance, focussing on: the institution's clearly defined mission; effective governance and administration processes and procedures; availability and deployment of competent human resources; a quality tool or mechanism for designing, developing and monitoring effective programmes; a mechanism for maintaining and improving academic standards; the

provisioning of adequate learning opportunities; and a fused development or business plan or design that integrates the use of all the above.

b. External quality assurance

Billing (2004), in his study, did international comparisons and trends on external quality assurance of higher education, and summarised surveys from twenty-four (24) countries. He presented a combination of the purposes and functions of quality assurance. The top five were: quality assurance should be focussed on the improvement of quality; the presentation of publically available information on quality and standards; accreditation (i.e. legitimisation of the certification of students); public accountability for standards achieved and for the use of money; and to contribute to the higher education sector planning process. Most literature concurs that the purpose of quality assurance in higher education includes improvement (or enhancement) and accountability (Luckett, 2006; Selesho, 2010) to ensure the aims of higher education are achieved (CHE, 2013d).

However, in understanding quality assurance, Harvey's (2007) four purposes of quality assurance in higher education are preferred: accountability, control, compliance and improvement (or enhancement). He also presents four approaches to quality assurance, as indicated in Figure 2.1. A discussion on each will follow.

Approach → / Purposes ↓	Accreditation	Audit	Assessment	Standards Checking
Accountability				
Control				
Compliance				
Improvement				

Figure 2.1: Harvey's purposes and approaches to quality assurance

Source: Harvey (2007).

The first purpose of quality assurance is accountability, which has three different aspects. Accountability is about higher education institutions taking responsibility for the service they provide, and has been well matched with the notion of 'value for money'. A second aspect of

accountability refers to accountability to the students. This includes the assurance that the programme is organised and managed in such a way that the promised educational experience and service(s) have in fact been delivered. The focus of accountability is dependent on the definition of quality, as mentioned earlier. When the focus of accountability is on service delivery, the notion of accountability refers to 'fitness for purpose', or 'excellence'. When the focus is on the learning process, then the motivation is rather 'transformation'. A third aspect of accountability points to quality evaluation procedures, which refer to formal evaluation activities such as accreditation, reviews and audits, to name a few (CHE, 2001; CHE, 2004b, 2004c; Harvey, 2007; Mhlangu, 2013).

Corbett (1992 in Vidovick & Slee, 2001) identifies four typologies of accountability: upward accountability, downward accountability, outward accountability and inward accountability. Upward accountability has legal and constitutional obligations where there is institutional managerial accountability to the state. Downward accountability is based on the manager-subordinate relationship, where the manager is accountable to the subordinates as they facilitate employee participation while shaping quality assurance policies and practices within the institution. Outward accountability implies that institutions have to consult with and report to various interest groups and stakeholders, within a network. Lastly, inward or professional accountability gives rise to internal quality assurance practices, where quality assurance initiatives come from the professionals within the institutions, and not necessarily through the academic community. This includes the processes such as the development of quality assurance policies and the setting of standards, performance indicators and benchmarks, which all come from the individuals within the institutions themselves.

The second purpose of quality assurance is control. It is about ensuring the integrity of the higher education sector and, in particular, making it difficult for dubious or illegal providers to continue operating in the higher education sector (Harvey, 2007). In theory, the purpose of control refers to activities that lead to meeting organisational requirements, and that should attain the objectives set under organisational objectives. The activities or functions of control include assessment, the taking of corrective action, supervision and disciplinary measures (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2010).

Compliance has been identified as the third purpose of quality assurance in higher education, and refers to the institution which adopts procedures, practices and policies that are enacted by an external body, such as a regulatory body or council, agency, ministry or state department. It is assumed that the accurate implementation of these procedures, practices and policies will produce desirable and proper conduct that will benefit the sector and the institution alike. While the activities leading to compliance of various external

processes cannot guarantee specific outcomes, the aim is certainly that the outcome of these efforts (activities) produces quality higher education (Cosser, 2002; Harvey, 2007).

The last purpose of quality assurance relates to improvement, also referred to as enhancement. Often literature refers to improvement being less about constraint and more about the encouragement of adjustment and change (Harvey, 2007). Some views suggest that improvement needs to be more discipline specific, which may significantly improve academic engagement and assist in the development of creative approaches to improving student learning (EUA, 2006; Lagrosen *et al.,* 2004; Hénard & Mitterle, 2010). The next set of ideas is focussed on the different approaches to quality assurance.

The literature mentions various forms of external quality assurance, including accreditation (Badat, 2010; CHE, 2001; CHE, 2004a; Daniel *et al*., 2009; audits (Badat, 2010; CHE, 2001; Geda, 2014; Vlãsceanu *et al.*, 2007); national and/or institutional reviews (CHE, 2001; Hernes & Martin, 2008); standards setting (Harvey, 2006, Harvey, 2008; Hernes & Martin, 2008); and ranking (Hazelkorn, 2007).

Similarly, Harvey (2007) in his publication, *Epistemology of quality*, presents four broad types of approach to (or processes of) external quality assurance in higher education. They were considered as most appropriate for this discussion and include accreditation, audits, assessments, and standard checking (see Figure 2.1 above). These are briefly discussed below.

The first broad approach to external quality assurance refers to accreditation (CHE, 2004a; Harvey, 2007). The two concepts that are relevant to the underlying rationale for accreditation are accountability and improvement (Kilfoil, 2005). While accreditation is an instrument of ideological control, it is also an effective form of professional control that can have a positive impact on values and organisational culture (Paccioni, Sicotte & Champagne, 2008; Tang & Hussin, 2013). Accreditation often relates to meeting minimum standards in a higher education setting, accountability and transparency in all its processes, quality enhancement (or improvement), and the facilitation of student mobility, locally and internationally (Mizikaci, 2006; Sanyal, 2013; Van Damme, 2002).

Despite the increased prevalence of external quality assurance systems in many countries, the definition and practice of accreditation, the agency that executes its policies, as well as its relation to funding and other concerns relating to higher education differ greatly from country to country, and from agency to agency (CHE, 2001, Hoecht, 2006). Although most countries follow their own model or framework of accreditation, general trends refer to either

programme, institutional or professional accreditation. Various types of accreditation will be addressed in the next section (3.2 Quality assurance in higher education – a global view).

The second broad approach to external quality assurance refers to 'checking standards' (Harvey, 2007). Standards are not all the same (Lueger & Vettori, 2007; Harvey, 2006). Lueger and Vettori (2007) propose a classification of standards that is dependent on their contribution to an institution's quality assurance. They provide three different types of standards: standards as minimum thresholds; standards as broad objectives; and standards as descriptions of good practice. The more popular view of standards refers to 'flexibilising standards', whereby standards are not rigorous indicators, but may be interpreted in various ways without negotiating on quality (Lueger & Vettori, 2008). However, not all standards are the same. The literature seems to indicate that standards can be mapped within four broad areas (realms) in higher education, where standards are set and assessed. These are academic, competence, service and organisational standards (Gibbons, Camille Limoges, Nowotny, Schwartzman, Scott & Trow, 1994; Harvey, 2006; Hernes & Martin, 2008; Kraak, 2000; Nicholson, 2011).

'Ranking' is also often linked to the notion of 'checking standards'. In order to ensure global excellence and stature, countries have been using various ways in which 'ranking' has been evaluated. The Shanghai Ranking's Global Ranking of Academic Subjects, which lists the top higher education institutions, is probably the most important ranking list internationally. Worldwide, ranking systems of institutions in countries such as Australia (Baldwin & James, 2000), Ireland and many other countries have become the norm (Hazelkorn, 2007). Strict assessment tools are used to quantify their evaluations and decisions. Another form of ranking is discipline-focussed, for instance the Amba accreditation and ranking of business schools.

Benchmarking is often linked to both the notion of 'checking [academic] standards' and ranking. It is also referred to as 'good practice benchmarking'. It is the process used in (strategic) management, whereby HEIs evaluate various aspects of their processes in relation to the 'best practices' or 'good practices' within the higher education community in that particular subject, discipline or field. Thus institutions may develop plans on how to adopt such 'best practices' or 'good practices'. Benchmarking is usually a continuous process in which institutions assess their own practices (Hobson, Rolland, Rotgans, Schoonheim-Klein, Best *et al*., 2008). However, benchmarking can also be done externally, by a regulatory body or council, which is usually coupled with a form of ranking. Benchmarking can therefore be defined as a "method of identifying how well an organisation meets a defined standard and finding ways of making improvements to meet the benchmark

if needed" (Hobson, Rolland, Rotgans, Schoonheim-Klein, Best *et al.*,2008:10). The CHE however, defines benchmarking as "a process of comparing programmes or a course in an institution against similar ones in other institutions, to assess their parity in terms of quality, standards, levels and other specified features" (CHE, 2016d:vi)

The third broad approach to external quality assurance in higher education refers to audits. Power (1994) traced the spread of auditing as a technique that emerged from financial accounting and has found its way into many societal and political applications. However, auditing has increasingly been seen as an instrument to evaluate the 'quality' of higher education institutions and to enforce formal accountability on their stakeholders (CHE, 2004c; Hoecht, 2006). Power (1994) explains that audits have become the 'control of control', where what is being assured is the quality of the control system/systems, rather than the quality of the main focus or operations. In such a context, accountability is honoured by demonstrating the existence of such systems of control, and not by demonstrating good teaching and learning practices, which remains the emphasis in higher education (Power, 1994).

The fourth broad approach to external quality assurance in higher education is evaluation. Countries choose which evaluation type or system of quality assurance to incorporate (Keevy, 2010; Mizikaci, 2006). It may happen at a national, institutional, faculty, department, programme or individual level (Luckett, 2006); however, any form of evaluation needs to be critically analysed and assessed in order to validate its evaluation. According to Billing (2004:115), referencing Vroeijensteijn (1995) in his study, the most important reasons for introducing external evaluation, in descending order, were: "assisting higher education institutions to make improvements; accountability to stakeholders; changes in law (e.g. increased autonomy of universities); informing potential students and employers about standards; and assisting government in making funding decisions".

2.2.3. Management of quality assurance

While management of quality assurance can happen at national or institutional level, the management of quality assurance at institutional level refers to the overall management function that determines and implements the quality policies, including the intentions and directions of the institution. Specific external quality procedures might be imposed on private higher education institutions, as set out by the government; while at institutional or departmental management level, these procedures might be set up and executed within the institution (internally). These procedures might be linked either to external quality assurance procedures or requirements, or be self-generated (new) procedures that are geared towards, for instance, research activities, directed at academic staff development, the enhancement of

service delivery to the students, or general administrative support, to name a few (Martin & Stella, 2007).

The conceptualisation of quality assurance and the way in which it is executed has changed tremendously over the past few decades (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbly, 2009; Cheng, 2003; Harvey, 2007; Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2003; Singh, 2010; Soudien, 2007). Cheng (2003) points out that there has been a world-wide reform of education quality, as expressed through quality assurance methodology. This has been experienced in three moves. The first move focussed mainly on internal quality assurance, which refers to several efforts and activities made to improve internal performances. The second move emphasised interface quality assurance in terms of organisational effectiveness, stakeholders' satisfaction and market competitiveness. Greater focus and attention was given to effort and activities to ensure the satisfaction of and accountability to both internal and external stakeholders. Considerable focus has been placed on the satisfaction of the customer. The third and most recent move strongly emphasised future quality assurance in terms of relevance to the new paradigm of education, which is influenced by 'contextualised multiple intelligence' (CMI), globalisation, 'localisation' and 'individualising' (Cheng, 2003).

Contextualised multiple intelligence (CMI) refers to the new digital era within a 'network society' which has brought several complex layers to both society and the individual in the way it developed. These complex layers call for multiple developments in the fields of technology, economy, social, political, cultural, and education. Society itself has to become a multiple-intelligence society that can provide the necessary knowledge, intelligence base and driving force to support the multiple developments. Consequently, individuals also have to become multiple-intelligence citizens who can contribute to the development of the multiple-intelligence society. In terms of education, localisation therefore recognises the fact that students can learn from multiple sources inside and outside of their institutions and are not limited to their environment. The higher education sector can therefore no longer focus on the traditional view of quality and quality assurance (Ernst & Young, 2012), and Cheng (2003:107) proposes a futurist view, defining 'future quality in education' as:

> "…relevance of education to the future needs of individuals and communities to meet the coming challenges in the new millennium".

'Future quality assurance' can be defined as:

> "…efforts for ensuring the relevance of aims, content, practices and outcomes of education to the future of new generations in a new era" (Cheng, 2003:107).

While no institution exists in isolation, and is impacted on and influenced by various factors, globally, nationally and internally; the management of quality assurance has become both a complex and 'multi-level' function (Erez & Gati, 2004; Klein & Kozlowski, 2000). Consequently, PHEIs are influenced in three different dimensions – global, national and institutional. Often these are also referred to as macro- (global), meso- (national) and micro-level (institutional) environments.

Quality can therefore be achieved through a mechanism or approach of quality assurance, and this is executed (or implemented) through the management of quality assurance (Harvey, 2007; Sanyal, 2013). Theoretically, there is also a difference between the management of quality assurance, quality management, and quality control. Although intertwined, the management of quality assurance refers to the management of the various approaches in which quality assurance is executed to ensure quality by means of accountability, control, compliance and improvement (or enhancement) (Harvey, 2007). Quality management refers to a specific sub-discipline and requires a number of elements of institutional planning and action to address issues of quality. These include institutional arrangements for:

a. "Quality assurance – the policies, systems, strategies and resources used by the institution to satisfy itself that its quality requirements and standards are being met.

b. Quality support – the policies, systems, strategies and resources used by the institution to support and sustain existing levels of quality.

c. Quality development and enhancement – the policies, systems, strategies and resources used by the institution to develop and enhance quality.

d. Quality monitoring – the policies, systems, strategies and resources used by the institution to review, monitor and act on quality issues" (CHE, 2004c).

Quality control (or quality assessment) then refers to "the systematic and regular evaluation to measure or check a product or service against pre-determined standards leading to summative judgments about the quality of the product or service" (Luckett, 2006:14). This is often operationalised through quality management systems such as Total Quality Management (TQM) or ISO 9000 (Becket & Brookes, 2008; NAAC, 2006; SAQA, 2001a).

The next set of ideas will briefly focus on quality assurance, and more specifically accreditation in a global context, while focussing on developing countries.

2.3. QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION – A GLOBAL VIEW OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

This section will first look at several concerns developing countries are facing with regard to quality assurance. Most of this discussion looks briefly at BRICS and African countries. The second part focusses on various models and frameworks for accreditation internationally.

2.3.1. Concerns developing countries face regarding quality assurance in higher education

The literature identifies several global factors influencing the higher education sector. Some of these factors include increased globalisation and its impact on the higher education sector (Carnoy, 2005; CHE, 2016b). Internationalisation (Knight, 2008) and the democratisation of access to knowledge (Altbach *et al.*, 2009; Carnoy, 2005; Ernst & Young, 2012; Sachs, 2008) have also been observed as significant. In recent decades, the higher education sector has also been confronted with 'massification' (Braun, 1999; CHE, 2007; CHE, 2016b; Teichler, 1999) and 'diversification' (Braun, 1999; Huisman, 1995; Van Vught, 2007). In South African higher education, issues related to funding, student protest demonstrations, and riots at public universities (Bosch, 2016) are on the increase. In addition, there seems to be an increased international emphasis on both external and internal quality assurance practices (CHE, 2004a, 2004b; CHE, 2016b, Singh, 2010; Van Damme, 2002).

Some of the results of the abovementioned factors have also been observed in the sector. These include: an increased growth of the private higher education sector (Altbach, 2012; Fuhnel, 2006; Mapesela, 2002); an increase of cross-border provisioning (CHE, 2004a; CHE, 2004b; DHET, 2013b; Hernes & Martin, 2008); an increased demand for programmes being offered in the distance mode of provisioning (Sanyal, 2013); and a stronger digital presence in the higher education sector (CHE, 2014a).

Developing countries, such as South Africa and the other BRICS countries, also face unique developmental and educational barriers and challenges. Consequently, most BRICS countries show an increased growth in their private higher education sector, and although this has been in line with the growth of the demands of the country, the growth of the private higher education sector does seem more drastic than in developed countries (Altbach, 2012; Hayward, 2006). According to Altbach (2012), massification and the inadequacy of the public higher education sector have greatly contributed to this growth. While most of the PHEIs operate as 'for-profit' organisations, only a few remain as non-profit organisations. 'For-profit' PHEIs often range from top 'boutique' PHEIs, to very poor quality higher education providers

offering similar qualifications (Altbach, 2012; Hayward, 2006). Hence, the management of the overall quality of the private higher education sector remains a general concern.

Similar to that of South Africa, Sawyer (2002 in Strydom & Strydom, 2004) identifies several barriers and challenges concerning the state of African higher education. These include: the low literacy levels of students entering higher education and the small number of universities per country (with notable exceptions). Student enrolment has seen a positive growth during the last 30 years, but there are low enrolment ratios at all levels. There seems to be a small, but increasing, number of private universities with high totals of student enrolment. General poverty amongst African countries and low average household incomes [of students] are of general concern to the higher education sector. Sawyer (2002) also mentions that the state provides low tertiary education expenditure per person, but that this is very high relative to the gross national product (GNP).[4] There appears to be an overall weak private sector, and an undeveloped culture of students moving from the private higher education sector to public universities. The higher education sector generally has poor infrastructure and weak links to the global knowledge systems, which is also a concern. Another concern points to an ageing faculty (academic staff) and the migration (brain drain) of highly skilled Africans moving to developed countries (Sawyer, 2002).

It appears as if developing countries in Africa focus predominantly on distance education initiatives. One reason for this is its usefulness to increase access and to reach the traditionally 'unreached'. This seems to be in line with the achievement of the six Education for All (EFA)[5] initiative; and Millennium goals under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Sanyal, 2013).

While accreditation remains the focus for external quality assurance processes within this study, the next discussion will focus on various types or models of accreditation found internationally.

2.3.2. International accreditation models

Accreditation is one form of external quality assurance used in most countries. The ways in which it is executed differ significantly. Different models or frameworks are discussed below.

In some countries, such as the USA (CHEA, 2012; Harvey, 2004; Hernes & Martin, 2008) and Canada (Harvey, 2004), institutional accreditation is favoured over programme accreditation (CHE, 2001). It appears as if one reason for this is to ensure collaboration

[4] Gross National Product represents the total value of all goods and services a nation produces in a particular year (Adapted from InvestorWords, 2016).
[5] "All six Dakar Education for all (EFA) goals place due emphasis on quality. This implies that whatever is done to promote EFA must be imbued with quality" (Sanyal, 2013:7).

amongst institutions and comparability of standards (Hernes & Martin, 2008). Other countries combine both programme and institutional accreditation where, in most cases, a national council prioritises institutional accreditation over programme accreditation as its first step in the quality assurance process. The second step then includes the accreditation of programmes. Another form of institutional accreditation entails self-accreditation. In countries such as Australia and the USA, universities and PHEIs are accredited through their establishment by an act of legislation; thereafter, they can self-accredit their own learning programmes. The latter also follows a complex combination of both institutional and programme accreditation (CHE, 2001; FICCI, 2012). While programme accreditation usually focusses on study programmes, institutional accreditation often judges the overall quality of an institution (Hernes & Martin, 2008).

Professional accreditation, in other words accreditation by professional bodies, is more about perceived control (Tang & Hussin, 2013), as it usually falls outside the mandate of official national councils. However, it has become more popular over the past decade as an additional process of accreditation. Favour is usually granted to institutions obtaining professional accreditation, both locally and internationally. Without professional accreditation, students graduating from such institutions are often prohibited from entering a specific profession because they are unable to register with the relevant professional body. Another form of professional accreditation often refers to subject (or module) accreditation, whereby the focus is placed on specific subject matter (Hernes & Martin, 2008). In other words, a professional body may wish to accredit a subject (or module), regardless of what programme it forms part of. This is often seen in computer-based subjects or modules.

Voluntary accreditation does exist in a few countries such as India and Chile (Hernes & Martin, 2008; FICCI, 2012). It seems to be based mainly on institutional rather than programme accreditation. Chile, for instance, has chosen to make accreditation a voluntary process as it believes that voluntary accreditation is more effective than compulsory regulation (Hernes & Martin, 2008).

Another form of accreditation is influenced by several international higher education stakeholders who have participated in the internal debate on General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and the quality of the educational provision (Verger, 2010). GATS has now become a key component of the ‘supra-national governance of education’ (Verger, 2010:1). In other words, while one of the effects of GATS on higher education can be seen through the increase of distance education programmes, with the main focus on cross-border provision, both have increased with the progressive use of ICT and the erosion of the temporal and spatial restrictions it produces (Verger, 2010; Altbach & Knight, 2007). With the

increase of cross-border provisions, transnational service providers have been amplified. Consequently, transnational accreditation has become more prominent, where specific programmes receive accreditation and therefore recognition by two or more countries. Transnational programmes include twinning programmes, credit transfer programmes, external degree programmes, and distance learning programmes (Lee, 2004). In Malaysia for instance, there is a tendency to favour transnational accreditation for their programmes, as this proves to be more popular with students who wish to migrate to other countries after they graduate.

Many countries or continents have also made attempts to unify higher education systems across borders, taking part in partnerships or intercontinental initiatives to improve the quality of higher education. The Bologna Process (Harvey, 2006) in Europe is one such example to facilitate student and worker mobility.

2.4. QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION – A SOUTH AFRICAN VIEW

2.4.1. Quality assurance in higher education in South Africa

The *Higher Education Act 101 of 1997* created and stipulated the mandate of the CHE and established the HEQC as a permanent standing sub-committee. The second major piece of legislation was the *NQF Act 67 of 2008*, which created three quality councils (QCs) in South Africa, of which the CHE is responsible for higher education. Each sub-framework has a responsible Quality Council. The Council on Higher Education (CHE) is responsible for higher education qualifications (NQF Levels 5–10); Umalusi bears the responsibility for general and further education and training qualifications (NQF Levels 1–4); and trades and occupations qualifications (Levels 1–8) are the responsibility of the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO). In addition, a Sectoral Education and Training Authority (SETA) is merely a 'delegated accrediting authority' of the QCTO. SETAs are therefore no longer responsible for accrediting diploma qualifications (DHET, 2016b).

The CHE's HEQC was established in 2001 to oversee the quality of higher education in South Africa. While the mandate of the HEQC included quality promotion, institutional audits and programme accreditation, it also included capacity development and training as a critical component of its programme of activities, as part of the task of building an effective national quality assurance system (CHE, 2004b). The CHE and its HEQC have done this by means of various quality assurance approaches.

In the period 2004 to 2010, the CHE conducted a series of quality assurance cycles involving institutional audits (CHE, 2005; CHE, 2013a; CHE, 2013c). However, the CHE has since

stopped new cycles of institutional audits and has shifted its focus to the Quality Enhancement Project (QEP) instead (Grayson, 2014). While the focus here has been placed mainly on public higher education institutions (or public universities), private higher education institutions (PHEIs) have been invited to participate voluntarily. The emphasis is on capacity development at institutional level, and focusses on the improvement of teaching and learning holistically (CHE, 2015b).

With regard to accreditation, the framework for programme accreditation is based on a set of criteria, each with its own minimum standards (referring to the 'minimum thresholds'). These criteria were established through a drawn-out inclusive process from 1998 to 2002. Higher education stakeholders participated in formulating the criteria, which were only published in 2004. In addition, the accreditation requirements for all new programmes are intended to ensure that only those programmes that satisfy at least the minimum standards of quality, as stipulated in the HEQC's criteria for programme accreditation (CHE, 2004b), will be allowed to enter the higher education system. Alternatively, it should demonstrate the potential to do so in a stipulated period of time (CHE, 2004a). With reference to programme accreditation, the HEQC chose 'fitness for purpose' as its predominant view on quality in higher education (CHE, 2004a; CHE, 2004b; Mhlanga, 2013; Luckett, 2006; Soudien, 2007).

Re-accreditation is often done within a cyclic period, predetermined by specific criteria set by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and its regulations (DoE, 2002b; DHET, 2016b). The DHET provides a list of institutions that require re-accreditation for their programmes, as listed in the register for PHEIs. Using the criteria for re-accreditation (CHE, 2004b), the process of re-accreditation is determined and administered by the CHE, and places much of its focus on the institution's capacity to offer specific programmes. This requires re-accreditation for a consecutive time.

Although often seen as similar to re-accreditation, where the CHE focusses on specific areas or programmes holistically, national review processes are different. National reviews are initiated by the Minister of Higher Education for a particular sector of higher education programmes. The CHE's national reviews include the MBA, Bachelor of Education (B Ed) and Bachelor of Social Sciences programmes, to name a few. Thereafter, a process of standards settings for that particular area or discipline follows (CHE, 2016b).

The CHE also monitors and evaluates the higher education sector by means of periodic or other research studies. One of the periodic research publications, Vital Stats, is published annually, but two years after the HEMIS data from the public higher education institutions

has been audited. This data is valuable, not only for policy-makers, but also for all other stakeholders in higher education.

2.4.2. The link between external quality assurance approaches (such as programme accreditation) and the management of internal quality assurance – a South African view

While programme accreditation was highlighted as one approach to external quality assurance (Harvey, 2007; CHE, 2004a), according to the HEQC's Framework for Programme Accreditation (CHE, 2004a), programme accreditation refers to:

> "…the evaluation of higher education academic programmes in accordance with the HEQC's programme accreditation criteria, which stipulate the minimum requirements for programme input, process, output and impact, and review" (CHE, 2004a).

The nature of the programme accreditation framework and criteria is developmental. It provides guidelines and broad indicators in the form of minimum standards for institutions to develop and conceptualise their own governance and policy structures (CHE, 2001), while the focus of the HEQC's criteria is to act as a quality guide, to inform 'good practices' and to provide minimum standards for the higher education sector (CHE, 2004a, 2004b). However, Mhlanga (2013) explains that PHEIs that followed inward accountability have been more successful with gaining accreditation during the past decade than those who were only accountable externally.

Furthermore, the HEQC's programme accreditation criteria also require higher education institutions to submit an array of policies as evidence of compliance to the programme accreditation and its minimum standards. This is mostly done through the HEQC-online system (CHE, 2004d), whereby institutions upload their policies and provide further evidence of sound internal quality assurance processes (CHE, 2004a). It also provides a specific list of policies and budgets that need to be submitted, as well as detailed demographics and statistical data of its staff, students, infrastructure and budgets (see Appendix A, Table A.1). Appendix A provides a summary of all the policies and other documents that form part of the evidence considered by the HEQC in order to make a sound judgement on the quality of the programme submitted by an institution, as discussed in Chapter 3.

The majority of PHEIs in South Africa follow a policy-based approach to quality assurance (CHE, 2003a; Mhlanga, 2013; Selesho, 2010; Singh, 2010). However, while the HEQC criteria list the specific policies it requires for the evaluation of programme accreditation; it

does not stipulate detailed requirements for these policies. Institutions are therefore required to develop their own set of policies to support their institutional quality assurance processes and procedures (CHE, 2004b). In addition, the HEQC's notion of 'fitness of purpose' calls for institutions to align their policies, institutional infrastructure and resources to the institution's vision and mission (CHE, 2003b; CHE, 2004b). At the same time, they have to consider the notion of 'fitness of purpose', as this requires institutions to align their vision and mission to the national framework and its regulations ('fitness of purpose') (CHE, 2001; CHE, 2004a). Consequently, according to programme criterion 1, institutions must align their programmes with the *National Plan for Higher Education (2001)* and *Education White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997a).* The *National Plan* has never been recalled or changed, but is aligned with the *Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 (SD Act)* and other human resource development initiatives.

Ultimately, the primary responsibility for quality assurance and the management thereof rests with the higher education institutions themselves (CHE, 2004a).

2.5. THE HISTORY AND LEGACIES OF PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Private higher education in South Africa has been shaped by South African history, its legacies and policy demands from the beginning of the 20th century. The first private provider of higher education in South Africa was called the South African College (affiliated to the University of London), and was founded in Cape Town in 1829. In 1918, this institution received university status and became known as the University of Cape Town (Hayward, 2006; Mabizela, 2002; Ngengebule, 2003).

Many of the earlier PHEIs were started by private individuals or organisations, especially from the United Kingdom, who resided in South Africa during its time of colonialism (and the Gold Rush). The Kimberley School of Mines is one such example, and was established to serve the needs of the rapidly expanding mining industry. The Kimberley School of Mines relocated and was divided into two campuses, which later became the University of the Witwatersrand (1921) in Johannesburg and the University of Pretoria (1930). The legacy of cross-border provisioning in South Africa, as well as skills-based PHEIs, continues to characterise many PHEIs. Even in the new millennium, many private higher education institutions have been established to fulfil a need in a specific industry. One example points to the South African Nursing Council's (SANC's) Nursing Education Institutions (NEIs) that are obliged by legislation to teach out their 'Legacy'-programmes and are encouraged to register with the DHET as PHEIs, with the aim of offering various CHE-accredited higher education programmes in the field of nursing.

Another major influence in the establishment of PHEIs was a result of the religious affairs of the colonials. According to Fuhnel (2006), during the 19th century both the Anglican and Dutch Reformed Churches started several (tertiary) colleges throughout South Africa which later evolved into public institutions in the 20th century (Fuhnel, 2006). Even during the past decade, religious institutions have continued to make up a significant portion of the private higher education sector and offer various niche theological training programmes for various denominations (DHET, 2013b; DHET, 2016b).

From the beginning of the 20th century, most private providers were small and mainly focussed on providing alternative opportunities for students, addressing the need for basic and further adult education, or continuing education and training (Ngengebule, 2003). This was mainly delivered through the distance mode of provisioning. In 1906, INTEC College was one of the very first correspondence colleges established in South Africa, and moved mainly in the area of Further Education and Training (Ngengebule, 2003). Lyceum College (now part of the Educor Group) was founded in 1917 and offered programmes through the distance mode of delivery. Rapid Results College (founded in 1928), Success College (founded in 1940), and Damelin (first known as Damelin Correspondence College and founded in 1948, also now part of the Educor Group) were some of the other forerunners in distance education (Ngengebule, 2003). In the 21st century, South Africa has experienced positive growth in the private FET college sector as well as distance education. The White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013b) states that in 2009 the FET sector constituted 20.5 percent of the national registration figures in the post-school FET sector, while 93 percent of the qualifications obtained in the post-schooling sector were either at or below NQF Level 5 during the twenty years from 1991 to 2010 (DHET, 2013b). Distance education has also seen a steady increase, and where it was traditionally seen in the private sector, more and more public universities are offering programmes through the distance mode of delivery. This increases access for students to higher education.

One of the forerunners was the University of South Africa (UNISA). Established in 1946 as one of the main public distance universities in the country (Ngengubule, 2003), UNISA formed many partnerships and collaborations with numerous PHEIs from the outset. In such partnerships, PHEIs would function as tuition centres for UNISA (CHE, 2016). While UNISA is probably one of the most noticeable players in public-private partnerships, this has become popular at several other public universities, especially since the 2000s (CHE, 2004e; DHET, 2013b; Jansen, 2004). In most cases, public universities would register the students and provide materials, while students would pay the PHEIs for the tuition and the learning support. Students would then have limited access to the facilities of public universities

(Jansen, 2004). In 2000, a study done at six public universities claimed that there were 24 000 full-time equivalent (FTE) students whose primary registration was with private higher education institutions (PHEIs) (Jansen, 2004). According to annual reports submitted to the DHET in 2012 (DHET, 2014b), the number of FTE students enrolled at public universities while registered at a PHEI exceeded 90 000 (CHE, 2016b).

While some institutions offered a handful of their own programmes, some might also offer additional programmes from other universities. Initially, many of these institutions would register with the Department of Education (DoE) (at that time), while also continuing to offer a specific university's qualifications. In time, some private higher education institutions matured, offering only their own accredited programmes. For some, this transition was easy, but not for all, and often deficiencies in the provisioning of quality higher education programmes filtered through. While most of these programmes were linked to distance programmes, poor student support and quality assurance practices were often linked to poor quality provisioning. Without adequate student support, especially in distance programmes, the quality of the higher education programmes is often sub-standard (CHE, 2014a). According to the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013b), this has been highlighted as a concern. Herein it states that institutions should ensure that students pursuing distance education studies are properly engaged in and supported during the learning process, considering the challenges that many of them may experience in coping with their studies (DHET, 2013b). Franchising or outsourcing of educational services has been discouraged since the release of the DHET's amended regulations for private higher education institutions as published on 31 March 2016 (DHET, 2016b).

Generally, the history of the South African higher education sector has also seen many changes (CHE, 2016b). However, during 1998 and 2001, one of the changes included mergers. At the end of 1997, a number of regional and professional/ vocational colleges were either discontinued, or merged with the public higher education sector. In 2001, it was announced that the 36 universities and Technicons would be reduced to 21 (Jansen, Herman, Matentjie, Morake, Pillay *et al*., 2007). Also during this time, there seems to have been an unexpected growth in private higher education in both local and foreign institutions (public and private HEIs) as universities could not absorb the demand for places for students. Many PHEIs strategically positioned themselves to ensure greater access by lowering the costs and standards for admission to their programmes (Altbach, 2012; CHE, 2003a). In addition, many urban and Central Business District (CBD)-based PHEIs emerged, enabling students who would not traditionally have been able to get admission into public universities to gain access to higher education (CHE, 2003a). There was very little control or regulation

of these private providers and learners were demanding acknowledgement of their qualifications and articulation into public universities.

This rapid expansion of private higher education constituted over 300 private providers (pre-1994) (CHE, 2016a), especially of foreign institutions in the 1990s, also became a concern to the Ministry of Education. In 2001, the government became more pro-active and protective, especially against the foreign institutions in South Africa (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Bitzer, 2002; CHE, 2004e; DoE, 2002a; Jansen *et al*., 2007). One of these interventions was executed by the CHE through the demanding programme accreditation processes, the institutional audits and the 2003 MBA national review. Another intervention from the state included the rigorous registration process administered by the Department of Education (DoE), as released in the Regulations for Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) (DoE; 2002b). Bitzer (2002) indicates that while the rigorous South African legislation is protecting the public against poor operators, it has also limited private and foreign higher education, and is therefore possibly ignoring the forces of globalisation. During this time, most foreign PHEIs decided not to continue offering programmes in South Africa. The first register for PHEIs (published 14 January 2002) indicated that fifteen (15) foreign institutions (all universities and mostly from the United Kingdom) had withdrawn their registration from the Department of Education. By the beginning of 2016 only five foreign private higher education institutions (FPHEIs) (4%) out of the possible 125 were registered in South Africa as PHEIs (DHET, 2016a). Most of these are business school of theological PHEIs.

The next decade saw a major restructuring of the institutional landscape in higher education in South Africa, and when the new *NQF Act 67 of 2008* was promulgated, it meant that SETAs were no longer able to fulfil an accreditation role as this was taken over by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTOs).

However, the prestige of higher education, together with the saturation of the market's demand for skills development and lower-level NQF qualifications, appears to have been the driving force for several Further Education and Training (FET) and Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET) colleges as well as SETA-accredited training providers to transform themselves into the higher education sector (DHET, 2013b). Some have been successful, but many struggle to adapt their curriculum design to higher education standards. Poor curriculum design and lack of relevant and sufficient higher education resources (libraries) seem to be common in these types of institution (CHE, 2003a; Cele, 2005).

Notwithstanding many policy and political changes, the current state of the private higher education sector in South Africa is a combination of different sectors and types of institution

that have moved into the higher education sphere. However, it continues to be characterised by both unequal and inequitable access and output of education and research across the higher education system (Badroodien, 2002:140; DHET, 2013b; DoE, 1997b; Fuhnel, 2006; Mabizela, 2000; Mabizela, 2002; Jansen *et al.*, 2007; Ngengebule, 2003). Consequently, regardless of the increasing number of PHEIs in South Africa, there remains a small but influential and increasingly stable private higher education sector in South Africa that is dominated by local institutions (DHET, 2013b; DHET, 2016a).

In South Africa, the increase in private higher education institutions was examined and has typically been summarised in terms of a demand for "different", "better" or "more" education (Kruss, 2002). A demand for "more" education is usually said to operate when "private providers absorb [the] excess demand that public providers cannot satisfy". The second speaks to the demand for "better" education, where PHEIs are seen to "provide for an elite demand in the face of a failure of public institutions". The third demand looks to "different" education, when PHEIs meet "specific demands, typically religious or cultural" (Kruss, 2002:16). The majority of the South African private providers meet a demand for "different" education, which takes the "form of specialised provision of vocational higher training in niche areas at the intermediate level, aiming to extend access to job opportunities" (Kruss, 2002). A small but influential sub-sector meets a demand for "better" education, which takes the form of exclusive, high-status, university-like provision oriented to global mobility. A minority of providers display elements of responding to a demand for "more" education" (Kruss, 2002:15).

While limited quantitative data on the private higher education sector (DHET, 2013b) exists, it was confirmed in 2002 (the first register published) that there were 101 registered PHEIs in South Africa (no statistics on the student enrolment available) (DoE, 2002). At the beginning of 2016, there were 125 registered PHEIs in South Africa (DHET, 2016a).

However, the latest audited data published by the DHET states that 2013 ended with 123 institutions with 119 941 students enrolled. The predominant racial group of students enrolled in private HEIs in 2013 was the African group, with 65 000 students, and second to that, almost 27 000 White students (DHET, 2014b).

The private higher education sector also plays an important part in the higher education sector (DoE, 1997b; DHET, 2013b; Essack, 2015). While the private higher education sector functions in a complementary role to the public sector, other areas of strengths include its ability to respond to the specific demands in the market. Not being bound by bureaucratic restrictions, PHEIs have much more flexibility to move between the Technical Vocational and

Training skills development sectors and higher education sectors and therefore have strong links with the industry, being able to provide possible employment. While well-established institutions have been found to be sturdy in their respective fields, the majority of PHEIs focus more on information technology (IT), business, nursing, theology, beauty, film and drama, sound engineering, graphic design and fashion design. Furthermore, most of its programmes are being offered at levels 5 and 6 (DHET, 2013b; Essack, 2015).

The next discussion focusses on governance and management of quality assurance.

2.6. GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESSES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.6.1. Governance of quality assurance

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), governance comprises a "complex web including the legislative framework, the characteristics of the institutions and how they relate to the whole system" (Hénard & Mitterle, 2010:26). It also includes funding structures and their accountability, and often defines less formal structures and relationships that steer and influence behaviour. Governance can be executed at national (or meso) level, which is often referred to as 'external governance' (De Boer, 2009:10), as well as institutional level (micro level), also referred to as 'internal governance' (De Boer, Enders & Schimank, 2006; De Boer, 2009; Hénard & Mitterle, 2010; Luckett, 2006).

In South Africa, the *Higher Education Act 101 of 1997* determines governance. The implementation and management of quality assurance of education is mainly executed through three different quality councils in education (CHE, QCTO and Umalusi), each with its own mandate and functions. In addition, the threefold role of higher education as stipulated in the *Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education,* includes human resource development, high-level skills training, and the production, acquisition and application of new knowledge (DoE, 1997a; DoE, 2001). The CHE is the responsible quality council for the higher education sector. Moreover, the DHET, CHE and SAQA are considered the three main stakeholders in the higher education of the state.

Ultimately, the state's intention is to see that both public and PHEIs are able to govern themselves, including the implementation of efficient and effective internal quality assurance processes and strategies (CHE, 2004a, 2004b; DoE, 2001). Therefore, governance at institutional level seems to be focussed on autonomy (self-governance).

Management is also not the same as governance. A brief discussion on management follows below.

2.6.2. Management of quality assurance processes

Management at national level, through national higher education policies, seems to be permeated with concepts, models and approaches associated with 'New Managerialism' (Ntshoe, 2004), 'marketisation' (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2010) and globalisation.

'New Managerialism' (from government steering, to government interfering with more regulations and reporting duties on HEI) seems to be focused on managerial reforms such as the creation of a greater cost consciousness and the provision of better customer service. It also relates to budgeting performance, human resource management and performance control. Information technology and the evaluation of 'results' are other reforms (Barnett, 2003; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2002; Parsons, 1995; Hénard & Mitterle, 2010). One example can be seen in the evaluation process of programme accreditation, which considers not only educational requirements, but also institutional capacity to offer a programme. The latter includes the evaluation of staff curriculum vitae, checking health and safety reports, examining budgets, and governance and management structures (CHE, 2004b). 'Marketisation' refers to the concept where universities must increase their own sources of income and be less dependent on state subsidies (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2010). In South Africa, this has had an influence on issues related to funding, student protest demonstrations, and riots at public universities (Bosch, 2016). The third concept, globalisation, is important because of the emphasis on international rankings and competitiveness between HEIs (Carnoy, 2005; Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2010).

According to Van Deventer and Kruger (2010), management at institutional level is about the combination of effective task execution and people management. Subsequently, the main management functions (often referred to as tasks) in a (higher) education setting include focussing on the management of learning and teaching, planning, problem solving, decision making, policy making, organising, coordinating, delegating, leading and the control of education events (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2010). While Van Deventer and Kruger (2010) present a more generic view of education, they suggest the following areas of management: management of the curriculum, students, staff, administration matters, physical facilities, finances and community. In contrast, Kast and Rosenzweig (1985 in Mainardes, Alves & Raposo, 2011) placed their emphasis on higher education and have identified four major areas of management in a higher education institution: academic management, educational service management, business management and public relations.

While policy-based approaches to the management of quality assurance are mostly favoured by PHEIs, these are usually driven externally as indicated and prescribed by external stakeholders (CHE, 2003a; Cele, 2005; Hayward, 2006; Mhlanga, 2013; Singh, 2010). However, the literature also indicates that some higher education institutions do follow formal and standardised higher education quality assurance management models (often referred to as models of quality assessment). These models are mostly process-orientated and emphasise the development of a system of quality assurance (NAAC, 2006:42). Although not all specifically designed to reflect on quality in higher education, some of these models include: the European Foundation for Quality Management Framework (EFQM, Higher Education Version); the European Quality Management Award; the Baldridge Criteria / Malcolm Baldridge (National) Quality Award; ISO 9000:2000 and ISO 9001:2008; Six Sigma; Total Quality Management (TQM); Total Quality Care and the Balanced scorecard, to name a few (Becket & Brookes, 2008; Davis, 2004; Mizikaci, 2006; NAAC, 2006; SAQA, 2001a; SHU, 2003; Sudha, 2013; Tenner & Detoro, 1992).

However, formal and standardised models have often been developed for commercial and industrial enterprises and are therefore not entirely applicable to higher education (Vroeijenstijn, 2000; Luckett, 2006). International literature further suggests that a singular quality assurance model will not suffice. Consequently, institutions are encouraged to develop their own management models for quality assurance that will not only address their own needs, but also those of their stakeholders (Cheng, 2003; Cheng & Tam, 1997; Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2003).

2.7. BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS FACE RELATING TO THE MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE – A LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies have been conducted within the private higher education sector in South Africa over the past few decades (Badroodien, 2002; Baumgardt, 2013; Cosser, 2002; Cloete, Fehnel, Maasen, Moja, Perold & Gibbon, 2002; DHET, 2013b; Ellis & Steyn, 2014; Fuhnel, 2006; Hayward, 2006; Mapesela, 2002; Sehoole, 2012; Varghese, 2006). Only a few speak to the barriers and challenges PHEIs face with regard to the management of quality assurance, and more specifically to programme accreditation in South Africa.

The HEQC conducted an initial study in 2003 to understand the private higher education sector. It concluded that various quality inadequacies were prevalent in the majority of PHEIs (CHE, 2003a; Cele, 2005). The study established that in the majority of these institutions, there is a lack of knowledge and an absence of the implementation of a series of national policies and regulations that inform quality imperatives in higher education. It also identified

that most of the institutions had insufficient infrastructural resources (including libraries) to support meaningful teaching and learning, and a conspicuous absence of internal quality assurance mechanisms.

More recent studies have indicated similar findings, but added the complexity of the quality assurance legislative framework (Altbach, 2012; Baumgardt, 2013; DHET, 2013b; Ellis & Steyn, 2014). The accreditation process, its framework and criteria also seem to hold complex challenges for many PHEIs. Some of the challenges in relation to the technicality of the programme accreditation process include the process itself (the timeframes), the criteria (interpretation and implementation thereof), and the evaluation process (peer-review system) (Ellis & Steyn, 2014; Cosser, 2002; Cele, 2005; CHE, 2003a; Gouws & Waghid, 2006; Selesho, 2010; Soudien, 2007).

Another challenge seems to point to the increase of stakeholder involvement in quality assurance in higher education. There appears to be an escalation in various regulatory bodies (including professional bodies) and councils and, in some cases, compliance with all the various regulations and legislation does appear to be complex and problematic (Baumgardt, 2013; CHE, 2004a; CHE, 2004b; DoE, 2002b; Ellis & Steyn, 2014).

In its publication *South African Higher Education in the first decade of democracy*, the CHE (2004e) lists a few major concerns. These include the uncertain correlation between labour market requirements and private programme provisioning, and the recognition of the lack of science, engineering and technology (SET) in the PHE sector. It also refers to the inequality of teaching and learning experiences, mostly because of a lack of sufficiently qualified staff, weak planning in terms of experiential learning, and inadequate academic infrastructure and support. Another concern relates to a general lack of internal quality assurance measures and indicates that institutions have little knowledge of national policies and regulations. It further highlights a concern that some of the degrees offered by some of the private providers are more suited to fit into the FET band of the NQF than the higher education band (CHE, 2004e). While some argue that higher education should respond to labour market requirements and create the knowledge, skills, abilities, competencies, and attitudes that the country's economy and society require (Badat, 2010; MoE, 2001), others suggest shifting this responsibility to industry, or to a different educational band (CHE, 2004e).

In a more recent study, Mouton, Louw and Strydom (2013) list some of the challenges facing tertiary education in South Africa. Although focussed mainly on public higher education, some of the relevant challenges they mention relate to first-year admissions to tertiary education and the responsibility of the higher education institutions to provide quality

education for the diverse purposes of higher education. The authors also mention the general management of HEIs, improvement of pass rates, the shifting roles of academics, and the foreign students enrolled at South African HEIs. The challenges in relation to distance education as it is widening and facilitating access for more South African students have also been identified.

Planning seems to be another barrier for PHEIs (Badat, 2010). According to Van Deventer and Kruger (2010), planning includes not only the setting of a vision, mission, aims and outcomes but also identifying possible solutions to problems, decision making and policy formation. For instance, the process of programme accreditation requires that private providers deliver detailed planning on how they plan to implement their programme if it is to be accredited. They should provide evidence of infrastructure, staffing, and other resources years before programmes are accredited (CHE, 2004a; DHET, 2013b).

Private providers do not receive any funding from the state and have to generate their own income. Without an accredited programme, an institution cannot market or enrol any students and therefore receives no funds. Subsequently, the cost of compliance (Harvey, 2007) continues to put negative pressure on many providers (Baumgardt, 2013; CHE, 2003a; CHE, 2015b; Fielden, 2008).

While some large PHEIs (or groups of companies in the PHE sector) are represented on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE), or large enterprises, most are not. It therefore appears as if funding and monetary requirements for PHEIs are one of the major barriers for most PHEIs in the sector. With the exception of some theological colleges funded by donors, the larger PHEIs seem driven mainly by the profit imperative, and not by patriotism or any other higher duty (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Funding in terms of private higher education therefore mainly refers to self-generated funding. Consequently, the management of financial resources, or financial management, is an important dimension within a PHEI. It includes the preparation of a budget, projecting revenues and monitoring cash flows, controlling and managing funds, monitoring finances and reports, and controlling and comparing costs (Potgieter, Basson & Coetzee, 2011). While financial management focusses mainly on the management of financial resources, resource management may also include financial resources, management information systems and information communication technologies (ICTs), and human resources (Baumgardt, 2013).

In terms of resource management and infrastructure, it appears as if the PHE sector refrains from attempting to offer programmes that require high-end, advanced knowledge and skills, or complicated and expensive infrastructures, such as engineering and medicine. Instead, it

focusses on programmes that require lower infrastructural investments, such as programmes in the economy, business and management fields (Altbach, 2012; CHE, 2004e; Hénard & Mitterle, 2010; Varghese, 2006). Programme design is consequently greatly influenced by this (CHE, 2004b; CHE, 2014a; Welch, Reed & NADEOSA, 2004; Zaki & Zaki Rashidi, 2013).

In addition, with the increased focus on programmes being offered in distance mode, resourcing in terms of information systems and ICTs in higher education seems to pose another challenge for private providers who wish to assert themselves in the higher education sector. This not only relates to the financial implications, but also to the management thereof. There appear to be increased demands on PHEIs to invest in trend-setting information and communication technology (ICT) projects. These include different e-learning opportunities, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), online student-support initiatives (such as online student forums or platforms), and developing comprehensive campus information systems to assist PHEIs to achieve their strategic objectives, to name but a few (CHE, 2014a; Ismail, 2010; Naidoo, 2011).

However, the challenge does not necessarily lie in the way in which it is delivered, but often in the pedagogy and, specifically, in the teaching and learning strategy that underpin it. Most PHEIs are not started by curriculum developers or educationists, but by subject experts (often from the industry) desiring to equip students for the world of work. Often these individual have little knowledge or understanding of higher education and programme design principles applicable to higher education. In addition, Mouton *et al.* (2013) explain that in expanding higher education through distance education learning, the academic staff and learner are typically separated by time and space (UNESCO, 2002). Distance education therefore creates opportunities for access to higher education and provides other options for effective teaching, while having to focus on managing knowledge and not merely diffusing information into a course, especially in the 21st century. The learning situation should reflect the complex environment in which students are expected to function, and allow them to take ownership of the learning process (Naidoo, 2011). Hence, it is a learner-centred approach and not so much a teacher-centred approach. From the student this requires self-discipline and meta-cognitive processes (Freire, 1985). The medium of instruction, and not the academic staff, becomes the means for teaching and learning. However, as knowledge is passed on to students through various mediums of instruction (such as printed study material, computers, videos, audiotapes, cell phones), the literature indicates that even distance education students need some form of interaction with their teachers and peers (CHE, 2014a; Makoe, 2012).

In terms of human resources, PHEIs often employ part-time staff and consultants to decrease the financial strain. While this practice seems to be favourable as it brings skilled expertise and other positive contributions to the institutions in the short term, over the long term it opposes academic sustainability (Altbach, 2012). Also, this places added roles and responsibilities on academic staff (faculty) that would normally fall outside the scope and demands expected from faculty within a traditional public university setting. Core functions for academic staff should be centred on teaching, research and community engagement (CHE, 2015b).

Research also poses a concern, since private providers do not have access to grants or other funding structures allocated for research. The fact that most PHEIs do not get funding for research projects has a huge impact on the sector. Subsequently, research output in the private higher education sector appears to be limited. Although research indicates that relevant and current research is being done within the sector (CHE, 2014a), it appears that the PHE sector is not properly represented (Baumgardt, 2013).

According to Essack (2015), some of the challenges for quality assurance for PHEIs in South Africa include security issues, especially around the admission procedures of students, as well as certification. Several issues surrounding sites of delivery, tuition centres and campuses are identified. These include the definitions thereof, the regulatory changes as well as the registration and the equity of provisioning across the different sites. These concerns have been considered in the amendments of the regulations for private higher education institutions, as published on 31 March 2016 (DHET, 2016b). The practices of dubious or illegal operators in terms of advertising and the offering of programmes before they are accredited continue to characterise a portion of the private higher education sector (DHET, 2013b). Another concern highlights the issue of maintaining quality in the midst of weak governance and management structures. Curriculum and programme design is also a major concern as well as the credibility of qualifications, articulation and the lack of recognition by some public universities. Institutional capacity has therefore been identified as another overarching major barrier (CHE, 2003b; CHE, 2013b; CHE, 2014a; CHE, 2015a; Strydom & Strydom, 2004; Singh, 2010). The credibility of student data, which is usually not audited, does pose a concern for the sector (CHE, 2016b; DHET, 2013b).

2.8. GAPS IN RESEARCH AND THE AVAILABLE DATA ON PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

It has been observed that since the promulgation of the *Higher Education Act 101 of 1997*, most research on ‘quality assurance studies’ in South Africa seems to focus predominantly on the discourse of quality, quality assurance and quality management. Being a ‘new field’ of

interest, its efficiency, efficacy, purpose and necessity in higher education in South Africa have been both praised and criticised extensively. Extensive studies have been done on distance higher education, and some on foreign private higher education, as well as cross-border provisioning (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Bitzer, 2002; Kruss, 2002). However, the literature review reveals significant gaps in understanding of the management of quality assurance in the private higher education sector; and the topic of programme accreditation in relation to PHEIs has received scant attention. While South African literature does indicate some barriers to the management of quality assurance, it seems dated and the voice of the PHEIs remains virtually silent.

Studies that do exist have been contextualised in terms of a sector or band, such as higher education, or FET, or combined within the post-schooling sector; or else form part of a study on PHEIs in an African context (Altbach, 2012; Baumgardt, 2013; Geda, 2014; Ntshoe, Higgs, Wolhuter & Higgs, 2010; Varghese, 2006). Very few studies have explicitly targeted the challenges of PHEIs in South Africa – the same goes for programme accreditation, and its link with both external and internal quality assurance. This foregrounds the importance of this study.

While limited studies have voiced the concerns of the private higher education sector, there have been several attempts to understand the nature and challenges of the private higher education sector in South Africa. However, much speculation still exists (CHE, 2016b, DHET, 2013b; Subotzky, 2002; Tladi, 2010).

One reason for this is the lack of viable and reliable audited quantitative data available on the private higher education sector, in order to fully understand its nature, complexities and challenges. The public higher education sector is required to enter audited statistics via the Higher Education Information Management Information System (HEMIS) database. This forms the foundation for several research initiatives, such as the CHE publications of Vital Stats, as mentioned earlier. With the absence of such qualitative data available on the private higher education sector, various sources could be triangulated to formulate basic statistics. However speculative, one of these includes the Higher Education Quality Council Information System (HEQCIS), which is designed to capture and report on private higher education sector data. However, this data is not audited, and although it is encouraged, it is not compulsory for PHEIs to update their data regularly. Another concern here is the fact that the HEMIS database is managed and governed by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), while HEQCIS is funded by the CHE but managed and administered by SAQA. Other statistics which could be used for triangulation of data in the sector include the CHE Annual Reports, the DHET Annual Statistics reports as well as the Registers for PHEIs,

as published by the Department of Higher Education and Training. The DHET seems to be aware of the problem, as it states in the *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training of 2013:*

> "[The] available data on private post-school institutions is often inaccurate, incomplete and scattered among various data sets in various institutions, including the DHET, SAQA, the Quality Councils and the SETAs. In order for the government – and indeed society at large – to understand the contribution and role of private post-school educational institutions, accurate and comprehensive information on the profile of these institutions, their qualifications and programme offerings is needed" (DHET, 2013b:43-44).

2.9. CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided the literature review of this study. Quality and quality assurance in higher education were discussed. The discussion focussed mainly on Harvey's (2007) broad approach to quality assurance in higher education: accreditation, audits, assessment evaluations, and the four purposes of quality assurance in higher education, which are accountability, control, compliance and improvement.

Quality assurance was contextualised internationally and locally. The historical development and legacy of private higher education in South Africa was discussed as it identified quality concerns within the sector. Governance and management within the private higher education sector also continues to hold many challenges. Other barriers and challenges include a lack of knowledge and an absence of implementation of a series of national policies and regulations that inform quality imperatives in higher education, insufficient infrastructural resources (including libraries) to support meaningful teaching and learning, and an absence of internal quality assurance mechanisms. The complexity of the quality assurance legislative framework and the uncertain correlation between labour market requirements and private programme provisioning seem to be major challenges. Planning, funding and the management of quality assurance are identified as another set of challenges and barriers. Curriculum and programme design is also a major concern as well as the credibility of qualifications, articulation and the lack of recognition by some public universities. Institutional capacity has therefore been identified as another overarching major barrier.

The review focussed on identifying specific gaps in research and indicated that the topic of accreditation has not been exhausted in the literature. Moreover, it seems as if the private higher education sector is not represented sufficiently. Furthermore, the credibility of data

has been identified as a major gap in an attempt to provide just and updated research on the sector.

Chapter 3 will present the policy context of this study.

CHAPTER 3
POLICY CONTEXT OF PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the policy context for programme accreditation for PHEIs in South Africa. The regulatory environment is briefly explained and the most relevant and important legislation connected to the private higher education sector is reviewed. The chapter presents a short overview of the process of programme accreditation and highlights the expectation of the state to assure the quality of higher education provisioning in South Africa. The programme criteria and minimum standards for both programme accreditation and re-accreditation are briefly presented, and how these are affected by the contact and distance mode of provisioning. The difference between the requirements for programme accreditation for public universities (public higher education institutions) and PHEIs is also highlighted.

3.2. THE REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT – AN OVERVIEW

In 1995, the newly elected presidency established the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE), which first released its NCHE Report, *A Framework for Transformation* (NCHE, 1996) and then the *Green Paper on Higher Education* (DoE, 1996). This led to the *Draft White Paper on Higher Education* released in 1997, which in turn led to the release of *White Paper 3: A programme for the transformation of Higher Education* (DoE, 1997a), that outlined the framework for change in the higher education system. This White Paper further indicated the comprehensive set of initiatives for the transformation of higher education through the development of a single co-ordinated system with new planning, governing and funding arrangements. The *National Plan for Higher Education*, released only in 2001 (MoE, 2001), later gave effect to the vision for the transforming of the higher education sector. It also provided the framework and mechanism for implementing and realising the policy goals articulated in the *Education White Paper 3* (DoE, 1997a), which focusses on the overall quality and quantity of graduate and research outputs (MoE, 2001).

In addition, the release of *White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997a)* led to the release of the *Higher Education Act 101 of 1997,* after which the South African higher education legislative environment was like an ever-changing landscape. This situation made it difficult for providers to keep abreast with changes introduced by different regulatory documents and policy (as discussed here) in order to enact and support the *Higher Education Act 101 of 1997.* Many policy documents emanated from the implementation of the *Higher Education Act 101 of 1997* that have framed the regulatory environment within the higher education

sector. Some of these include the *New Academic Policy of 2001* and the report titled *The restructuring of the higher education system in South Africa* of 2001 (National Working Group to the Minister of Education regarding the consolidation of the South African higher education system). This has also led to other changes, including the release of the CHE's *Programme accreditation framework and criteria* (CHE, 20014a, CHE, 2004b); the CHE's *Institutional audit framework;* the *Minimum admission requirements for Higher Certificate, Diploma and Bachelor's Degree Programmes requiring a National Senior Certificate (NSC)* (DoE, 2005); the *Higher Education Qualifications Framework* (CHE, 2007), which was later replaced by the *Higher Education Qualifications Sub framework* (HEQSF) (CHE, 2009); the *Classification of Educational Subject Matter* (CESMs) (DoE, 2007; DoE, 2009); *Framework for Development of the Qualification Standards in Higher Education* (DHET, 2013a); the *SAQA Level Descriptors for the South African National Qualifications Framework* (2010); *Policy on Credit Articulation and Transfer* (CAT) (SAQA, 2013a); and the *National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning* (RPL) (SAQA, 2013a); to name only a few. Each of these documents has changed part of the landscape and in essence posed serious challenges to PHEIs.

While the *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training* (DHET, 2013b) has set out strategies to improve the capacity of the post-school education and training system to meet South Africa's needs, it highlights various important points for the PHE sector. These include the roles and focus of the college system, universities and private higher education sector as part of the post-schooling system, the opening of learning through diverse modes of provisioning, linking education and the workplace, and the NQF, the Quality Councils and an articulated system (DHET, 2013b).

It should also be noted that higher education in South Africa is divided into public higher education institutions (universities) and PHEIs. Traditionally speaking, South African public universities are all predominantly contact-based universities, except for one distance-based university, the University of South Africa (UNISA), although this scenario is changing. Public higher education institutions are further classified as traditional, comprehensive, Universities of Technologies (UoT) and UNISA (CHE, 2013). Although the White Paper for Post School Education and Training (DHET, 2013b) advises that a typology of different private institutions be developed, all PHEIs are labelled the same; to date, legislation has not provided any classification for PHEIs.

According to the *Higher Education Act 101 of 1997* and its regulations (DoE, 2002b) and amendments (DHET, 2016b), all legally operating PHEIs in South Africa require registration as private higher education institutions and registration of all programmes by the Department

of Higher Education and Training (DHET). In order to do so, all PHEIs need to accredit all their higher education learning programmes by the CHE's HEQC. In addition, all these programmes (qualifications) need to be recorded on the NQF with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

According to this study, the state's three main stakeholders in higher education include the DHET, CHE and SAQA (see Figure 3.1), and the Higher Education Qualifications Framework remains the focus for mapping all its qualifications in higher education. While not all programmes require professional body approval, these have been included for noting as an important part in this process. In order to understand the importance and relevance of the different aspects in the legislative framework in higher education, a brief discussion on these is presented below.

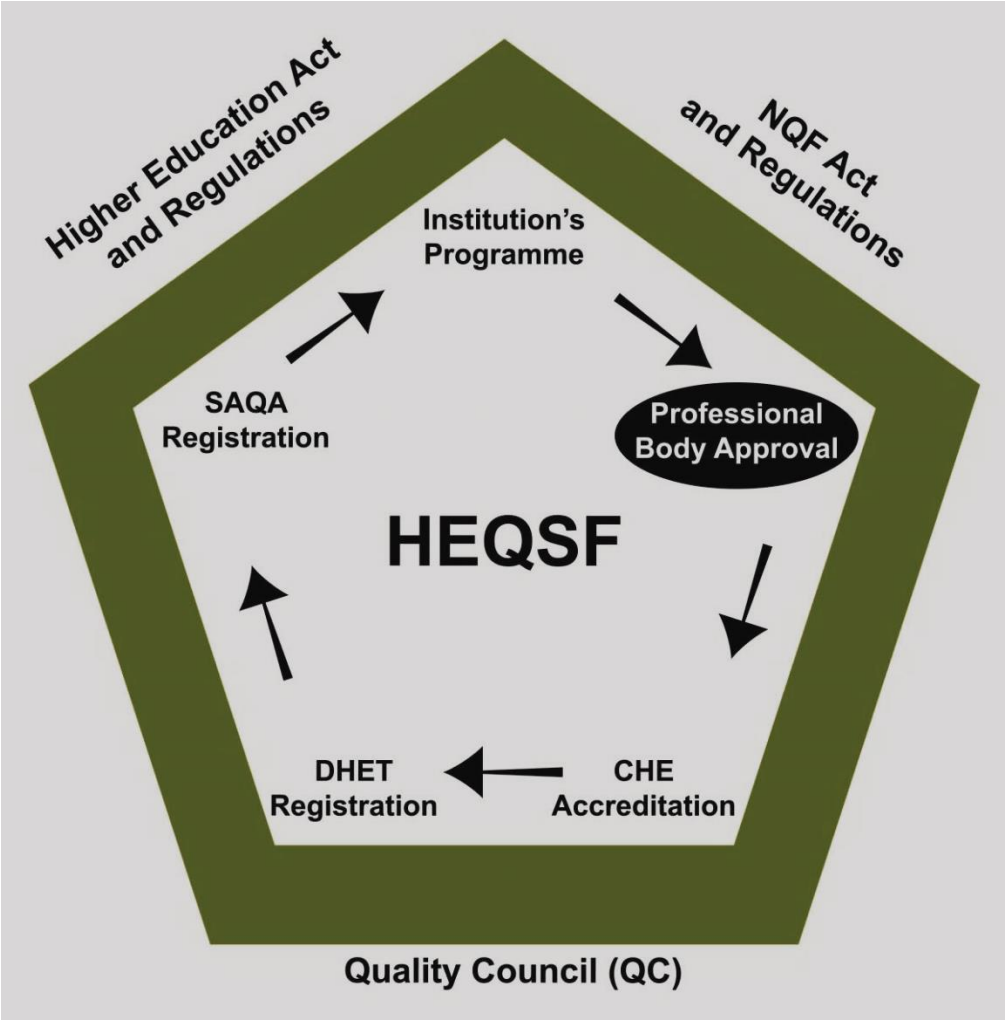


Figure 3.1: Primary legislative framework for private higher education institutions in South Africa

The South African Qualifications Act 58 of 1995 was the founding document for the establishment of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). One of the functions of SAQA was to develop a National Qualifications Framework (NQF). In South Africa, the NQF fulfils the role of standardising qualifications and bringing them into a measurable framework. Pre-2008, the NQF had eight levels, from NQF level 1 up to doctoral degree (NQF level 8). The Joint Policy Statement (MoE & MoL, 2007), titled *"Enhancing the efficacy and efficiency of the National Qualifications Framework"* announced that the NQF levels would change and range from NQF level 1 to NQF level 10 (doctoral degrees) (post-2008). This was followed by the *NQF Act 67 of 2008*, which mostly provides for the responsibility of the Minister of Higher Education and Training; the South African Qualifications Authority; and the Quality Councils.

The *Higher Education Act 101 of 1997* (DoE, 1997b) and its regulations for the registration of Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) (DoE, 2002b) provide the legal framework in which these institutions may operate. Since 2002, the Department of Education (DoE), and later the DHET, has published a *Register of Private Higher Education Institutions* (DoE, 2002; DHET, 2016a). This register lists all the registered and provisionally registered institutions, any cancelled registration of institutions, and institutions for which cancellation or lapse of registration had already come into effect. According to the DHET (2016), "registration" means the following:

> "In the case of an applicant that has fulfilled all the requirements for registration, the Registrar grants registration in terms of section 54(1) (c) of the Act. In terms of section 60 of the Act, the registrar has the right to attach conditions to the registration" (DHET, 2016b).

In 2004, the CHE's HEQC published the Framework (CHE, 2004a) and Criteria for Programme Accreditation (CHE, 2004b). While many forms of accreditation models exist, such as institutional, professional or a combination of both programme and institutional accreditation, the South African accreditation framework is based on programme accreditation. The framework requires all programmes to comply with nineteen criteria. While criteria 1-8 focus on all undergraduate programmes, criteria 1-9 are relevant for postgraduate programmes. This relates to both public universities (of HEIs) and PHEIs. Private higher education institutions that are required to submit their programmes for re-accreditation are requested to provide evidence that they comply with all criteria (1-19), while the focus is mainly on criteria 10 to 19. In addition to criteria 1 to 19, there are 126 minimum standards combined. After 2014, the CHE added an additional section (section C, no 10), with seven added focus areas that relate only to programmes being offered through the distance mode of provisioning. While the CHE's publication called *"Distance Higher Education programmes*

in a digital era: Good practice guide" (CHE, 2014c) provides an additional layer of 81 specialised minimum standards accompanying the existing nineteen criteria, it has not been formally included.

It should be noted, that from the onset, there were institutions who offered qualification that fall into the FET sector, managed by Umalusi, while their higher education programmes resorted under the CHE. These institutions had to apply at two different quality councils (QCs) for their different programmes. Each quality council had its own requirements.

Institutions offering vocational-type qualifications have various routes for accrediting their qualifications. Prior to 2011, private providers were expected to register with, and be accredited by, at least two different bodies or councils (Baumgardt, 2013). Depending on their specific programme offering and NQF-level, various routes could be followed:

a) some private providers were required to register with the Department of Education and needed accreditation by SETA; or

b) registration with the Department of Education, and accreditation by Umalusi (NQF 1–4) or the HEQC (NQF level 5–8 (prior to 2008) or NQF (5–10); and/or

c) a SETA.

However, since 2011 providers are required to register with the HDTE, either as a private Further Education and Training College, or as a Private Higher Education Institution (PHEI). Providers therefore have to be accredited by only one (or two, depending on their programme-type offerings) of the three quality councils: Umalusi, the CHE or the Quality Council for Trade and Occupations (QCTO).

Private providers offering qualifications that fall within the sub-framework of the QCTO (the OQSF) are not required to register with the DHET. However, according to the Skills Development Act, under which they are regulated, they must be accredited by the QCTO as an accredited provider only (DHET, 2014a).

However, for PHEIs that wish to offer higher education programmes, the following refers.

3.3. PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION: A SOUTH AFRICAN VIEW

3.3.1. The role of the CHE and programme accreditation

While the NCHE Report highlighted the inequalities and inequities that existed prior to the *Higher Education Act 101 of 1997*, White Paper 3 provides the context of higher education. In addition, prior to the *Higher Education Act 101 of 1997*, the higher education sector was

unregulated, with no specific concerns about students or quality of provisioning. The *Higher Education Act 101 of 1997* therefore provided the context, rationale, purpose and functions of the CHE to "regulate higher education" (DoE, 1997b).

It gives the responsibility of the quality assurance of the higher education sector to the Council on Higher Education (CHE), as well as the responsibility to manage its sub-framework of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), i.e. the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF). Another responsibility includes the accreditation of programmes. While the Council on Higher Education (CHE) only became completely functional in 2001 (after the establishment of its permanent sub-committee, the Higher Education Quality Committee) as the custodian for the administration of the programme accreditation process, SAQA was responsible for the accreditation of qualifications in South Africa prior to 2001.

Consequently, this Act not only assigned the responsibility for quality assurance in higher education in South Africa to the Council on Higher Education (CHE), but also gave the mandate to the Department of Higher Education and Training for the regulation of both the public and PHEIs. The regulations for PHEIs have also been set out in the *Higher Education Act 101 of 1997* (DoE, 1997b).

It should be noted that, while all public universities (public HEIs) are state subsidised, in the period of 1998 and 2002 all public universities had to submit all their programmes to the Department of Education (DoE) in order to be registered on the Programme and Qualifications Mix (PQM) of the DoE. With the introduction of the accreditation process in 2004, all public universities' programmes on the PQM were deemed accredited. This was done to enable the HEQC to focus firstly on the PHEIs to get their programmes accredited. At the same time, as part of the DoE's merger process (CHE, 2016a) and as a spin-off, universities had to reconfigure some of their programmes. The CHE was faced with a steady inflow of these programmes that were submitted to the same accreditation process as PHEIs. It was therefore decided that, prior to 2009, only PHEIs had to be registered with the DHET, and had to submit their programmes to the HEQC for programme accreditation. Programmes of public universities were therefore automatically deemed accredited (Nieuwenhuis, 2016).

Several developments led to the publication of the *Joint Communique 1 on the Implementation of the Higher Education Qualifications Framework* (2009) which informed the South African higher education community of the steps taken to prepare the higher education system for the implementation of the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF)

(later to be changed to HEQSF (CHE, 2013)). Since its publication, all higher education institutions, both public and private, have had to submit all new programmes to the HEQC for accreditation approval. In addition, the CHE commenced its HEQSF-alignment process in 2010, where it classified programmes into three different categories. Category A meant that programmes were already aligned to the HEQSF and required only minor changes, such as a title change. Category B meant its programme was aligned but required minor changes, possibly to the curriculum. Both Category A and B programmes were evaluated and aligned and were deemed accredited. Non-HEQSF aligned programmes were classified as Category C programmes that would be phased out or replaced as soon as the Minister of Higher Education and Training would release the official teach-out date. This was later Gazetted on 7 July 2016, determining 31 December 2019 as the last acceptance date of students into non-aligned programmes. Subsequently, public universities that submitted non-HEQSF aligned programmes (category C) that had to be replaced applied for accreditation of new HEQSF-aligned programmes.

However, any PHEI that wishes to market a programme, enrol students, or offer a programme must adhere to the following three conditions: it should obtain programme accreditation from the CHE, be registered as a private higher education Institution, including its programmes, with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), and have its qualifications registered with the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) on the NQF.

Prior to 2014, in terms of programme offering, three modes of delivery were accepted: contact mode, distance mode and mixed mode of provision. However, since 2014 South African higher education legislation (DHET funding structure for public universities) has only made provision for either the contact or the distance mode of delivery (also referred to as modes of provisioning). This was also supported by the CHE because many providers applied for ‘mixed mode’ but often slipped in offerings that were intended for distance education. The strict dichotomy was an attempt to close the loophole between the different offerings (CHE, 2014a; CHE 2016a; Nieuwenhuis, 2015).

3.3.2. The programme accreditation process

Figure 3.2 presents a process flow for private higher education institutions (PHEIs) that apply for programme accreditation (CHE, 2009). A brief discussion follows below.

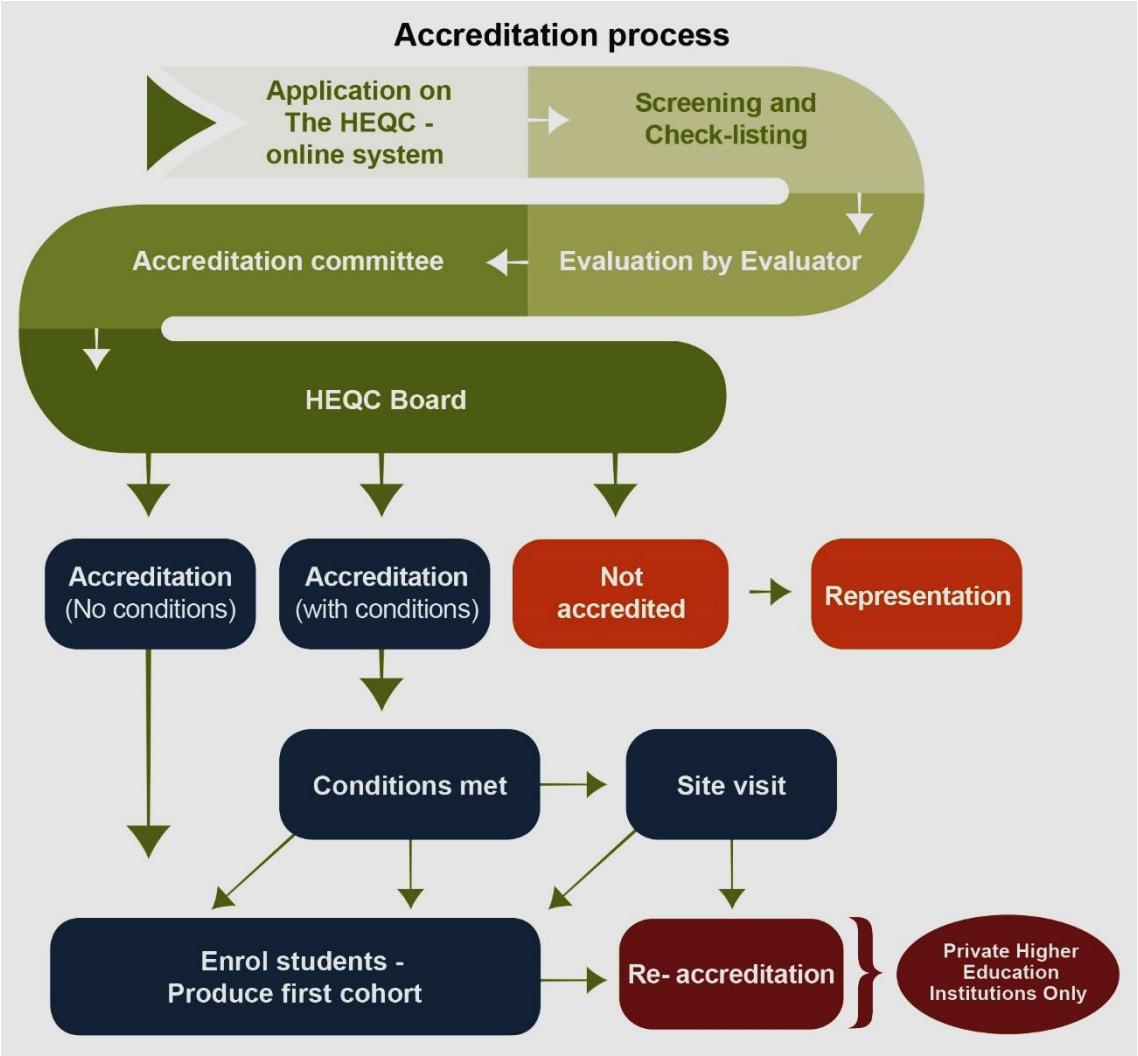


Figure 3.2: Process flow of the accreditation process

Source: Adapted from CHE (2009:2).

Private higher education institutions (PHEIs) that wish to commence the process of programme accreditation should register with the Council on Higher Education (CHE), gaining access to its HEQC-online application.

The HEQC-online system was introduced in 2005 (Lange, 2005) and became fully functional only in 2007. Prior to 2005, and even in the interim between 2005 to 2007, it was a completely manual system. After an institution receives access to the HEQC-online system, it completes the online application and sends it through for evaluation, facilitated by the CHE's Accreditation Directorate (Swanepoel, 2015).

The programme application will be check-listed and screened, and then an evaluator will be appointed to ensure that the specific programme meets the minimum requirements. While the entire higher system is based on peer evaluation, an evaluator would be regarded as a

subject expert in the specific field. Moreover, the entire quality assurance higher education system is based on peer evaluation (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). With regard to the evaluation process, the CHE's Guide for evaluators: Accreditation and Re-accreditation of programmes submitted to the HEQC (of May 2009) states:

> "The HEQC evaluation process is an evidence-based process within which peers (either individually or as a group) assess the programmes submitted by higher education institutions to ensure that prescribed minimum standards have been met so that quality in higher education offerings can be maintained" (CHE, 2009:1).

Additional checks and balances are added to the process, before it is tabled at the Accreditation Committee, which is the working committee of the HEQC with regard to programme accreditation. The Accreditation Directorate may recommend one of three types of outcomes. Consequently, an institution's programme may receive: "Deferral", "Accredited (with or without conditions)" or "Not Accredited". While a "Deferral" was not part of the original accreditation process, its inclusion was prompted by the CHE's experiences with the national reviews where such a recommendation was made (Niewenhuis, 2016). A "Deferred" programme suggests that the Accreditation Committee cannot make a decision because it needs more information. This programme is returned to the institution, listing the reasons for the decision. "Deferred applications" are only noted at the HEQC Board meeting. Those institutions concerned may re-submit the application with new, additional evidence (CHE, 2009).

Once accreditation is successful, institutions are granted accreditation (previously called "provisional accreditation" until the Institution goes through its first cycle of re-accreditation, or until all its conditions have been met.)

If a programme has been "accredited with conditions" (also referred to as "conditional accreditation"), conditions are classified as either "prior to commencement", "short-term condition" or a "long-term condition".

Each "condition" is also administered and processed through the HEQC-online system, and has to be served again at both the Accreditation Committee and the HEQC Board meeting. If a condition is stated "prior to commencement", it means that an institution may not market the programme, enrol any student or offer the programme unless the conditions have been met. SAQA will also not register such a programme on the NQF, or allow its students to be registered on the National Learner Records Database (NLRD), and the DHET will not issue a registration certificate for the qualification unless these conditions have been met. A short-

term condition normally suggests amendments that need to be made, and in some cases, requests for a site visit. This should be done within a period of six months. A long-term condition normally has an expiry date of twelve months, and a “site visit” is often linked to such a condition, especially with all new institutions (CHE, 2009).

The accreditation process, in most cases, requires that a “site visit” be conducted. This is funded by the private higher education institution itself. A site visit panel comprises both subject and quality assurance experts. During such a site visit the CHE establishes whether the institution has the capacity to offer the particular higher education programme for which accreditation is sought. Such a site visit report is compiled and processed, and also tabled at both the Accreditation Committee and HEQC Board meeting (CHE, 2008). Site visits play an important role in quality assurance as they validate the paper-based evaluation submitted by the institution.

The HEQC is considered the highest authority of peers whose mandate includes overseeing the quality of higher education in South Africa. It reviews the recommendations of the Accreditation Committee, and either approves, notes or opposes them. In relation to the latter, the HEQC has the right to overturn a recommendation of the Accreditation Committee.

A similar process is also followed for programme re-accreditation in relation to the requirements for the renewal of the registration of private providers with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) (CHE, 2004a, 2004b). The DHET sends a list to the CHE annually, in which it requests that the CHE re-accredit specific programmes offered by specific institutions.

The process of programme accreditation (and re-accreditation) is based on compliance with specific criteria and minimum criteria. The requirements have been instrumental in the development of the HEQC-online application. Table 3.1 represents the CHE’s criteria linked to programme accreditation and re-accreditation (CHE, 2004a; 2004b):

Table 3.1: CHE’s criteria linked to programme accreditation and re-accreditation

Criteria linked to Programme Accreditation (New Programmes, previously called “Candidacy Phase”) (Section B and C)	Criteria linked to Re-accreditation of Existing Accredited Programmes (Linked to registration process at the DHET)
1. Programme design (Criterion 1)	1. Programme coordination (Criterion 10)
2. Student recruitment, admission and selection (Criterion 2)	2. Academic development for student success (Criterion 11)
3. Staffing (Criterion 3 and 4)	3. Teaching and learning interactions (Criterion 12)

Criteria linked to Programme Accreditation (New Programmes, previously called "Candidacy Phase") (Section B and C)	Criteria linked to Re-accreditation of Existing Accredited Programmes (Linked to registration process at the DHET)
4. Teaching and learning strategy (Criterion 5)	4. Student assessment practices (Criterion 13 and 14)
5. Student assessment policies and procedures (Criterion 6)	5. Coordination or work-based learning (Criterion 15)
6. Infrastructure and library resources (Criterion 7)	6. Delivery of postgraduate programmes (Criterion 16)
7. Programme administrative services (Criterion 8)	7. Student retention and throughput rates (Criterion 17)
8. Postgraduate policies, regulations and procedures (Criterion 9)	8. Programme impact (employability, external acknowledgment) and review (Criterion 18 and 19)
Section C (No 10) Distance Mode of Delivery	

Source: CHE (2004a); CHE (2004b).

The HEQC-online application has three sections – Section A refers to the institutional profile; Section B refers to the Application for Programme Accreditation (CHE, 2004a, 2004b, 2004d; Lange, 2005); and Section C: The offering of a programme through the distance mode of delivery (CHE, 2014a).

With reference to sections B and C, two sets of criteria refer:

- Section B: It can be divided into criterions one to nine, which are linked to the accreditation of new programmes (the 2004-version referred to these as the criteria linked to the "Candidacy Phase"); and criterions ten to nineteen (linked to re-accreditation).
- Section C (no 10): In recent years the HEQC-online system has incorporated it as part of the first set of criteria linked to programme accreditation and it is only relevant to institutions offering programmes in distance mode.

It should be noted that institutions offering the same programme, via contact and distance mode of delivery (or provisioning), are required to submit two separate applications, even though it is the same programme in terms of curriculum design and output.

The programme accreditation criteria (one to nine) focus mainly on the foundational or minimum requirements needed for institutions to enter into higher education, whereas the re-

accreditation criteria focus mainly on the requirements needed for a sustainable quality higher education institution.

3.3.3. Criteria and minimum standards

The HEQC framework for programme accreditation is based on four principles (CHE, 2004a:9), and the two relevant to this study state the following:

- The primary responsibility for programme quality rests with the higher education institutions themselves. Institutions should seek to establish and sustain effective mechanisms that facilitate programme quality and yield reliable information for internal programme related planning and self-evaluation, external evaluation, and public reporting.
- The HEQC's responsibility is to establish a value-adding external system of programme accreditation that can validate institutional information on the effectiveness of arrangements for ensuring the quality of academic programmes.

The HEQC has developed a set of programme accreditation criteria which specify the minimum standards for academic programmes. The criteria were developed according to national policies and regulatory frameworks, the institutional quality landscape, and international trends with respect to quality and standards in higher education as they serve as a quality indicator for institutions (CHE, 2004a). While the HEQC formulates the criteria in a generic manner to be applicable to all academic programmes, the members of the peer-review system are responsible for using their discipline and subject knowledge to make appropriate judgements within the context of the programmes being evaluated. Hence, the HEQC recognises the need for flexibility in the interpretation of the criteria (CHE, 2004a).

In addition to the information required for the actual HEQC-online application, each programme requires many sets of policies and other supporting documents that are guided by the minimum standards listed under each criterion. Consequently, these documents all form part of the "paper-based application" for programme accreditation, and which provides evidence of compliance with the HEQC's criteria and its minimum standards. In crafting these policies and supporting documents, institutions are required to have knowledge of an array of higher education and quality assurance legislation.

In relation to Section C, "Programmes offered through distance education", the CHE's *Distance higher education programmes in a digital era: good practice guide* is used as it accompanies the Criteria for Programme Accreditation, and the criteria and minimum standards in this guide are set out accordingly.

While the revised funding policy for higher education in public universities continues to provide a strict distinction between the contact and the distance mode of provision, there does seem to be a more blended or mixed approach (mode) in offering higher education programmes. Subsequently, the CHE acknowledges that

> "[In] reality most institutions now offer a blend of lectures, tutorials, practical sessions, field work and/or work-integrated learning/work-based education, and ICT-supported learning experiences, as well as more independent self-learning and peer collaborative learning opportunities (which may be mediated in face-to-face sessions, or online, or a mix of both)" (CHE, 2014b:1).

Institutions offering programmes through the distance mode should consider the following three factors when designing programmes. A brief discussion on each is provided below (more detailed information has been provided in Appendix B).

The first factor refers to the mode of education provisioning, which can therefore be viewed on a continuum (see Figure 3.3) ranging from purely face-to-face tuition, through to education focussed purely on distance education, also traditionally referred to as correspondence tuition. With the increased use of supporting education technologies, there is a tendency for an institution to move its mode of education provisioning more to the centre (CHE, 2014c).

The second factor focusses on the extent to which supporting ICTs are used (as illustrated in Figure B.2 in Appendix B). Another continuum is used to plot the use of ICTs ranging from being 'fully online', to the complete traditional correspondence provisioning of a programme. The latter provides no digital support. Consequently, it is necessary that the physical location of students and their access to appropriate resources and technology remain important considerations when institutions design their programmes.

A third factor to consider points to the group size of cohort student enrolment. Therefore, the nature and extent of the interactions between the (possible) lecturer-student, and student-student; the need for a network of tutors; the level of interaction between the lecturers and tutors; the level of support available to the students; and the nature of the assessment also hinge on the group size of the student cohort enrolment. These all influence the overall pedagogical approach (CHE, 2014a).

Conceptualising the previous two continua in relation to each other as horizontal and vertical axes, the various programmes can be mapped out according to group size on the resulting

grid as illustrated in Figure B.3 (Appendix B). The circles positioned on the grid represent examples of various programmes at various higher education institutions. Institutions are therefore able to plan their progression through the grid as their student enrolments increase or decrease. For instance, an institution offering programmes to larger group sizes might choose to follow a fully online education delivery, with contact and online tutor support.

Although not officially incorporated into the programme accreditation processes, criteria and/or standards for distance education in South Africa have been provided in the following tools and/or publications: *Distance higher education programmes in a digital era: good practice guide* (CHE, 2014b). This has been prepared by the South African Institute of Distance Education (SAIDE) in consultation with the CHE Programme Accreditation Directorate. The National Association of Distance Education and Open Learning in South Africa (NADEOSA) has developed criteria for distance education programmes (Welch & Reed, 2004) and UNISA developed the DETC standards and criteria (Kilfoil, 2005). *The policy for the provisioning of distance education in South African universities in the context of an integrated post-school system* (DHET, 2014b) may also be consulted.

In addition, with regard to the institution itself, all PHEIs are bound by the Companies Act 61 of 1973 (RSA, 1973), and the Companies Act 71 of 2008 (RSA, 2009). It includes all regulations from the Department of Labour (including health and safety), the Department of Trade and Industry (financial regulation) and the Department of Education (regulation related to teaching and learning) (CHE, 2004a; CHE, 2004b; DoE, 2002b; Ellis & Steyn, 2014).

3.4. THE DIFFERENCES IN PROCESSES FOR PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION FOR PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES (HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS)

Although the *Higher Education Act 101 of 1997* seeks equality in both the public and private higher education sectors, certain differences do exist. For the sake of this study, only two will be mentioned.

The first refers to funding. While public universities have become more entrepreneurial during the past few decades, they do receive substantial amounts of funding through various channels, such as the programme qualification mix (PQM), research grants and other streams. This is not the case for the private higher education sector. PHEIs receive no funding.

Only PHEIs are required to pay for programme applications, including programme conditions; extension of programmes to new or existing sites, or relocation of sites; deferrals;

representations and site visits, all of which are billed for in full. New providers are expected to pay an additional amount whenever they submit their first application for programme accreditation. However, this works on a cost recovery basis. There are numerous costs involved that the CHE must recover, such as the payment of evaluators, travel costs and subsistence for site visits. Public universities are funded from the same source as the CHE and do not pay for any of these processes.

The second difference refers to the perceived over-regulation of the private higher education sector. Public universities are not required to comply with Criterion 3 and 4 relating to staff, Criterion 7 relating to infrastructure or to Criterion 8 relating to the administrative services rendered by the institution. Public universities are also not required to register each of their learning support centres (or tuition centres or satellite campuses), which has been the case for all private higher education institutions since the release of the amended regulations in 2016 (DHET, 2016b).

However, since the establishment of the CHE public universities have experienced an audit process, going through a fine comb that scrutinised these institutions and made recommendations. They have also had three national reviews, in which most PHEIs were not involved. The original accreditation framework (CHE, 2004a) intended to move in the direction of self-accreditation. By 2007 the CHE realised that through the processes referred to above, public universities were ready to receive greater self-regulation status in areas such as staff, facilities and administrative systems, where they had already been scrutinised and evaluated. In addition, the mergers earlier created a significant well of resources for these institutions. They were presented with well-resources libraries, IT facilities and leading academics. It therefore did not make sense for public universities to continually submit the curricula vitae (CVs) of hundreds of academics that would simply clog the HEQC online system. At that stage the success rate of new academic programmes submitted by public universities was already high (above 80%). The major concerns pointed to programme design issues. The CHE therefore decided that public universities had to adhere to the accreditation process in certain areas only. In contrast, a large percentage of PHEIs were mostly failing in their first attempts at programme accreditation application, and mainly because of issues related to staff, programmes and facilities. The CHE withdrew the proposed process for self-accreditation and decided that it would not delegate any of its accreditation functions (Nieuwenhuis, 2016).

3.5. CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided an overview of the regulatory environment for PHEIs who wish to establish themselves as legal PHEIs in South Africa.

While it seems as if most PHEIs are registered as 'for-profit' companies, predominantly following a business model, it appears as if the South African legislative environment remains silent on many policy-related challenges the 'for-profit' and business-oriented approach of proprietary limited companies in higher education are facing in South Africa (Baumgardt, 2013; Ellis & Steyn, 2014). This seems to present a barrier to "entrepreneurial endeavours and management's opportunities to acquire capital, because [of] the regulatory framework [which does not make it] clear that higher education private institutions [are] businesses that [have] to meet the requirements of appropriate Acts while also turning a profit" (Ellis & Steyn, 2014: 456).

In addition, the lack of knowledge and the ability to implement the series of national policies and regulations remain critical imperatives in the higher education sector (Baumgardt, 2013; CHE, 2003a).

While public universities receive funding from the state and are also exempt from compliance with programme accreditation criteria 3, 4, 7 and 8 for many reasons, PHEIs are mainly self-funded and have to comply with all criteria.

The criteria for programme accreditation and its minimum standards require an array of policies and other supporting documentation as evidence supporting the application for and processes linked to programme accreditation or re-accreditation. A summary is given in Appendix A, Table A.1.

The next chapter presents the conceptual framework of this study.

CHAPTER 4
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the conceptual framework. The aim of the conceptual framework is to understand the parameters (or key areas) responsible for the effective management of quality assurance in higher education institutions both externally and internally. The Octet of Quality in Higher Education (framework for quality) by Zaki and Zaki Rashidi (2013) was deemed most appropriate.

Zaki and Zaki Rashidi's (2013) model (framework) proposes eight core parameters responsible for driving and/or impacting on quality assurance within an institution, namely: higher education policies and practices; resources; learners' profile; curriculum; faculty knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA); institutional design and strategy; institutional leadership; and open-system thinking and change. The adapted model of Zaki and Zaki Rashidi (2013) also proposes eight core parameters, namely: institutional design; faculty knowledge, skills and abilities; leadership and ownership; institutional policies and practices; resources; student profile; programme design, and stakeholder relationships. A few parameters remain the same, as proposed by Zaki and Zaki Rashidi (2013). In a few cases, minor variations in the titles of some parameters are preferred. For instance, 'programme design' is preferred above 'curriculum design'; while 'learner's profile' is replaced with 'student profile'; and so is 'institutional leadership', with 'leadership and ownership.' Reasons for each change are explained under each parameter. In addition, 'open-system thinking and change'' (Zaki and Zaki Rashidi (2013) was replaced with a different concept, namely 'stakeholder relationships', which changed the dynamics of the model. The first seven parameters refer to the internal environment; while the eighth parameter (stakeholder relationships) refers to the external environment.

Zaki and Zaki Rasidi's model (framework) also presents a single-layered framework and is mainly focussed on the internal factors (micro-level environment) influencing the management of quality assurance. The adapted model is multi-layered. It places PHEIs within three separate, but interdependent environments, referred to as a micro-level (the PHEI), meso-level (the PHEI in its national setting), and macro-level environment (the PHEI in a global setting).

4.2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALITY ASSURANCE MANAGEMENT

The conceptual framework of this study – a model for the management of quality assurance in PHEIs in South Africa – recognises the following eight parameters:

i. Institutional design
ii. Faculty knowledge, skills and abilities
iii. Leadership and ownership
iv. Institutional policies and practices
v. Resources
vi. Student profile
vii. Programme design
viii. Stakeholder relationships.

This adapted conceptual framework incorporates a nested approach to quality assurance management. Within a nested approach (or "multi-level" model), quality assurance management requires a movement from the generic to the specific. In other words, PHEIs do not operate in isolation and the management of their quality assurance practices happens within, and is influenced by, the global, national and institutional dimension – also referred to macro-, meso- and micro-level environments (CHE, 2004a; Erez & Gati, 2004; Klein & Kozlowski, 2000).

Figure 4.1 illustrates the nested approach to quality assurance, as it presents the conceptual framework for this study, called a model for the management of quality assurance in PHEIs in South Africa. A discussion follows below.

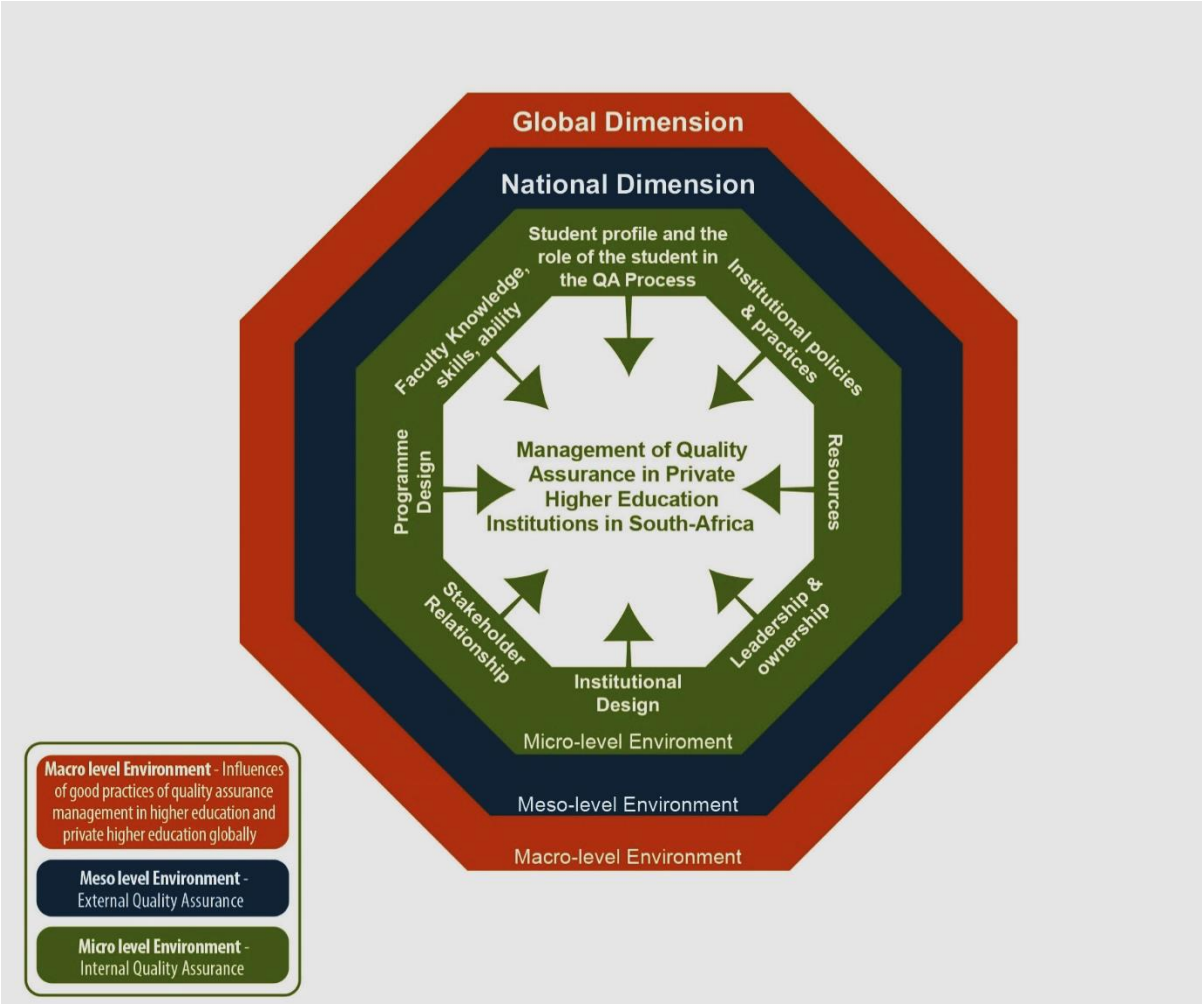


Figure 4.1: Conceptual framework

Source: Adapted from Zaki and Zaki Rashidi (2013).

4.2.1. Global dimension

Quality in higher education is a global concern, and globalisation, internationalisation and the democratisation of knowledge are three of the many important factors that have had a profound influence on higher education internationally, especially in the past decade (Altbach *et al.*, 2009; Carnoy, 2005; Ernst & Young, 2012; Sachs, 2008).

Globalisation can broadly be defined as a phenomenon where national borders, time and space are no longer barriers, specifically because of newly developed and increasingly available information and communication technology (ICT). It therefore focusses on worldwide conditions that characterise and influence perceptions of space, mobility of actions, the nature of communication, and orientation to social interaction (Carnoy, 2005; Mitchel & Nielsen, 2012). One way in which globalisation affects higher education is that it challenges the integrity of a state in focussing on global political, social and economic

advancement, by putting pressure on national legislation to be benchmarked with that of good practices globally.

Internationalisation then becomes the “engine of globalisation” (Mitchell & Nielsen, 2012:10) as it focusses on the intentional actions of an individual, group(s), and institutions as they actively collaborate and seek to cross national borders in persuit of social, economic, political or cultural benefits (Mitchel & Nielsen, 2012; Knight, 1999; Shaw, 1999). Its influence in higher education can be seen when higher education institutions are internationalising their behaviour when they reshape their purposes, function or mode of provisioning to attract international students, to provide cross-border programme offerings, restructure the programme to accommodate flexible contact time with academic staff, or restructure roles or remuneration packages to recruit, retain or manage employees (Mitchel & Nielsen, 2012).

Democratisation of access to knowledge refers to the change in the traditional role of the universities, which are no longer considered as the “originator and keepers of knowledge” (Ernst & Young, 2012:4). With the increased organisation of ICTs, access to knowledge has become available to the majority of users, is driving a ‘global education revolution’ on a large scale, and is shaping the socio-economic stance of many societies. This then functions as a spur for the creation of further innovative models and approaches for teaching and learning, new market creations, new global partnerships, and innovative ways of distributing higher education products (Ernst & Young, 2012).

Internationally, these factors have partly driven an increased demand for distance educaton programmes’ cross-border provisioning and the increased use of ICTs to become the norm; while locally, institutions face increasing demands with the benchmarking of global practices associated with quality assurance in higher education (Ernst & Young, 2012; Knight, 1999; Luckett, 2006; Mitchel & Nielsen, 2012; Hénard & Mitterle, 2010; Shaw, 1999; Zaki & Zaki Rashidi, 2013).

4.2.2. National dimension

The proliferation in the provisioning of private higher education has led to the increased need for quality assurance. As established in Chapter 3, for any private higher education institution to operate legally in South Africa, it has to comply with the following external quality assurance requirements:

a. Accreditation of all higher education learning programmes by the HEQC.

b. Registration as a private higher education institution and registration of all programmes by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

c. Registration of all qualifications with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) on the NQF.

Consequently, the state has three main stakeholders in private higher education: the DHET, CHE and SAQA.

In the South African context, the *Higher Education Act 101 of 1997*; the *NQF Act 67 of 2008* (RSA, 2008); the *Regulations for Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs)* (DoE, 2002b) and its most recent amendment (DHET, 2016); the *HEQSF* (CHE, 2013c) and the *HEQC's programme accreditation criteria* (CHE, 2004a) and *framework* (CHE, 2004b) remain the most relevant pieces of legislation within the PHE sector. While programme accreditation in South Africa was chosen as a focus area as one of the external quality assurance processes within higher education, it is recognised that this process happens within the national dimension (meso-level). It is further acknowledged that even though the development of the framework for programme accreditation in South Africa has been influenced by various models and research internationally (CHE, 2001; Luckett, 2006), it has a direct influence on the quality management of PHEIs in South Africa.

The full policy context for programme accreditation has been discussed in Chapter 3.

4.2.3. Eight parameters for effective functioning and management of quality assurance in private higher education institutions in South Africa

The adapted framework recognises the following eight parameters that form part of the micro-level environment (institutional dimension) in which the management of internal quality assurance policies, processes and practices are deployed. As mentioned earlier, these parameters include institutional design; faculty knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA); leadership and ownership; institutional policies and practices; resources; student profile; programme design; and stakeholder relationships. These parameters have been considered fundamental in the effective functioning and management of quality assurance in PHEIs in South Africa. While the first seven refer to the internal environment, the last refers to the external environment.

A discussion on each follows.

4.2.3.1. Institutional design (or institutional organisation or organisational structure)

The institutional design of a higher education institution forms the basis for the successful implementation of institutional policies and practices. While institutional policies and practices have been designed in order to achieve institutional goals, in principle, they should also address the need for quality higher education (Zaki & Zaki Rashidi, 2013).

Zaki and Zaki Rashidi (2013) point to two significant yet broad institutional designs: a structural dimension and a contextual dimension. The structural dimension refers to the internal organisation and characteristics of the institution, which create a basis for the measuring and comparison of institutions. It also includes the institutional formalisation, specialisation, hierarchy or authority, centralisation and professionalism.

The contextual dimension characterises the organisation as a whole, considering its size, organisational technology, the environment, goals and strategy, and its culture (Zaki & Zaki Rashidi, 2013). Consequently, this dimension describes the settings that influence and shape the structural dimension.

To conclude, Zaki and Zaki Rashidi (2013) explain that institutional design interacts with various factors, such as faculty knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) and the programme design; and that an effective design enhances the quality and assists in achieving it continuously. Higher education policies and institutional structure are also interdependent, as policy cannot work in a vacuum where all other essentials are absent.

4.2.3.2. Faculty knowledge, skills and abilities

Globally, the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) required for the higher education faculty have changed dramatically over the past few decades. Relevant competency in this field is seen as vital to the effective quality management of a higher education institution; and remains a principal agent within the quality assurance management processes (Carnoy, 2005; Gibbons *et al.,* 1994; Sachs, 2008).

However, for the purpose of this study, the following areas of specialised knowledge production were identified:

a. Knowledge of the legislative environment (Cele, 2005; Mhlanga, 2013); knowledge of quality assurance management (Mhlanga, 2013; CHE, 2004a; Ellis & Steyn, 2014; Baumgardt, 2013).

b. Knowledge of teaching and learning strategies, further divided into subject-specific knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (Van der Merwe, Parekh, Gravett, Ryan, De Kadt *et al*., 2008; Weinstein & Meyer, 1983; CHE, 2003b; CHE, 2013a; CHE, 2015a; Niewenhuis, 2016).

c. Knowledge of financial and physical resource management (Baumgardt, 2013; Ellis & Steyn, 2014; Halloway, 2006; Zaki & Zaki Rashidi, 2013).

4.2.3.3. Leadership and ownership

While leadership refers to both academic leadership and leadership within the function of management of quality assurance, ownership refers to the creation of a quality culture by encouraging and influencing all stakeholders (through leadership) to take up full ownership of the quality of higher education.

Sound academic leadership hinges on the successful implementation of quality assurance practices in higher education. It requires a mixture of both leadership capabilities, as well as superior academic knowledge. The latter not only refers to the primary discipline, but also to academic global practices within a higher education sector (Scott, Coates & Anderson, 2008). According to Engelbrecht (2015), academic leaders are defined as "individuals who are considered instrumental in advancing the core business of the university - teaching and learning, research and social engagement. They are responsible for strategic decision making with regard to the academic project/agenda of the university – knowledge development, knowledge production, knowledge dissemination – in creating a sustainable and equitable higher education sector through innovation, promoting academic excellence and the collaborative pursuit of knowledge."

The roles and responsibilities of leadership, in theory and practice, mainly point to the provision of guidance and direction to implement the set policies and to optimise the organisational resources. It also suggests the motivation of staff, and the provision of a clear vision and competitive strategies to achieve ambitious goals (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2010; Zaki & Zaki Rashidi, 2013).

In relation to leadership within the management of quality assurance in higher education functions, a more formal and permanent quality assurance organisational structure is suggested (Curtin, 2013; Srikanthan, 2003; Sheffield Hallam University (SHU), 2003). However, leadership roles and responsibilities should move away from a structured 'tick-box'-activities approach, to meaningful engagement with quality assurance tools and processes, and to creating a 'buy-in culture' to ensure sustainability and consistency of the quality goals within the higher education institution (Curtin University, 2013; Vettori, 2012).

4.2.3.4. Institutional policies and practices

Quality assurance remains a fundamental component in the policies and practices of higher education institutions. Policy formation should therefore consider thorough research and development as a crucial part of its processes (Luckett, 2006). It further requires that both national and institutional policies and practices in higher education be in accordance with

global standards. Policies and frameworks should also be benchmarked against institutions, their programmes and relevant policies within higher education (Zaki & Zaki Rashidi, 2013).

Furthermore, Zaki and Zaki Rashidi (2013) list three focus areas for the development of quality assurance policies, suggesting institutional policies to address the:

i. physical aspect of the institution (policies focussing on the infrastructure);
ii. aspects relating to human capital (policies towards faculty, administration and staff development); and
iii. aspects relating to the intellectual policies of the institution (policies for improving research, curriculum, and the like).

In the South African context, PHEIs are required to develop and submit over thirty different policies for programme accreditation (CHE, 2004b). Some of these include an admission policy for the programme; recognition of prior learning (RPL) policy; staff development policy; staff recruitment policy; staff equity policy and a teaching and learning policy. In addition, for PHEIs to be legal operators in South Africa, institutional policies should comply with national legislation and its imperatives (CHE, 2004a, 2004b). Appendix A provides a summary of evidence (documents) requested by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) to prove compliance with the criteria for programme accreditation of a new programme.

4.2.3.5. Resources

The management and availability of adequate and relevant resources is often neglected. However, it is fundamental to the management of quality assurance in higher education. It further appears that without adequate resourcing, it is often a struggle to maintain quality; and that the availability of adequate resources is therefore assumed to be essential in achieving quality objectively. This is done through the implementation of various policies (Badat, 2010; CHE, 2003a; Daniel *et al*., 2009; Hénard & Mitterle, 2010; NAAC, 2006; Van Deventer & Kruger, 2010; Zaki & Zaki Rashidi, 2013).

Resources can include physical resources, human resources, financial resources (CHE, 2004a; CHE, 2004b; Halloway, 2006) and ICTs.

4.2.3.6. Programme design

For the purpose of this study, the concept of programme design is preferred rather than curriculum design. Programme design relates mainly to the institution's mission and planning, the identification of the needs of students and other stakeholders, programme coherence, articulation possibilities, and the development of learning materials (CHE,

2004a). Curriculum design refers to the content of the coursework and is seen as “the road map which identifies the direction in which the journey has to be made and also ensures the manner in which it has to be completed” (Zaki & Zaki Rashidi, 2013:1101).

In South Africa, institutions have to align their programme design to all relevant legislation, including the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework (HEQSF) and the CHE’s HEQC criteria for programme accreditation. With regard to programme accreditation in South Africa, a flawed programme design has often been the reason for non-accreditation by the HEQC (CHE, 2003a; CHE, 2013c; CHE, 2014a; CHE, 2015a).

4.2.3.7. Student profile and the role of the student in the quality assurance process

Although the institutional and programme design determines the outcomes for each programme and module, the teaching and learning strategies become the vehicle by which education takes place.

Programme design is not focussed on the subject discipline only, but also calls for the involvement of all aspects of a student, including the affective, spiritual, societal, psychological and cognitive personality, which is applied in diverse pedagogical settings. These could include application within the class (student group); through administrative and academic support in programmes being offered in either contact or distance modes of provisioning; and/or the workplace, through appropriate pedagogical actions (Zaki & Zaki Rashidi, 2013). In this context, policies on student support, assessment, available resources, access to higher education and equity in provisioning become vital (CHE, 2015a).

Given the South African history and the legacy of its higher education transformation, the HEQC focusses on the role and importance of the student, its profile and equity in provisioning, specifically with regard to access (with success) into higher education; student support; and through-put rates (or ‘pass rates’) (CHE, 2016a; DoE, 1997b; Griesel & Parker, 2009; Jansen *et al.*, 2007; SAIA & The Kregse Foundation, 2014).

The impact of students as valuable stakeholders and contributors to and within the quality management in higher education institutions remains a major focus for policy-makers in the South African higher education sector (CHE, 2004a, 2004b; CHE, 2014b; DoE, 1997a; DHET, 2014a). Consequently, this has a direct impact on the PHEIs and the student is considered an important stakeholder in the management of quality assurance in higher education in South Africa.

4.2.3.8. Stakeholder relationships

Freeman, Jeffrey, Harrison, Wicks, Bidhan *et al.* (2010:26) define stakeholders as "individuals or institutions that stand to gain or lose from the success or failure of a system, and include everyone who affects and is affected by policies, decisions or actions within that system".

In determining the different stakeholders in higher education, Lagrosen *et al.* (2004 in Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2002:127) list four main stakeholders, namely: the "providers (funding bodies and community at large), the users of products (e.g. current and prospective students), users of outputs (e.g. the employers), [and] the employees of the sector (academics and administrators)". Referring to the post-schooling sector (as a whole), Baumgardt (2013) suggests a more specific dominant stakeholder model, as it applies more specifically to the SA context. This would consist of the government, which includes the DHET, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Department of Labour (DoL) at the centre surrounded by the other stakeholders, such as other government departments, the private providers, employers, trade unions, public providers, political parties, managers and staff (within the institutions), and the community and the environment. However, Baumgardt (2013) fails to mention other stakeholders, such as the various quality councils (CHE, Umalusi and the Quality Council for Occupations and Trades (QCTO)); nor does she identify the presence of the professional bodies, and the student, as three very important stakeholders in the sector. The latter was specifically evident in the 'Fees must fall'-campaigns affecting almost all the public universities in South Africa, in 2015 and 2016.

Consequently, this study recognises and proposes the following stakeholders in higher education in South Africa: DHET, CHE and SAQA as the three main stakeholders in higher education of the state in South Africa; public higher education institutions (or public universities) (and placed in the centre); PHEIs; other quality councils (Umalusi and the QCTO); professional bodies; other government departments (including the DBE and the DoL); the industry (employers); students; political parties; community and the environment.

Figure 4.2 illustrates the proposed private higher educational stakeholder model in the South African context.

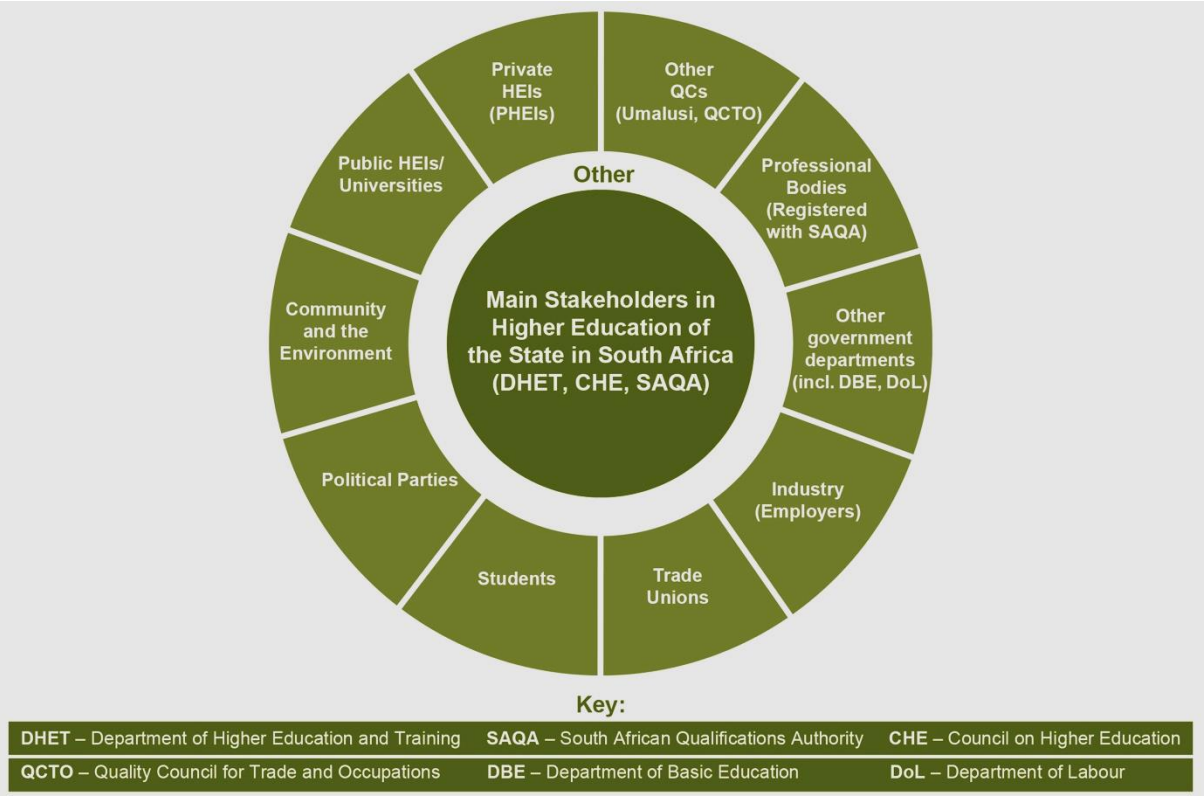


Figure 4.2: South African Higher Education stakeholder model

Source: Adapted from Baumgardt (2013:30).

4.3. THE APPLICATION OF THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework provided a base for understanding and framing the concept of quality assurance in PHEIs within the study and clarifying the findings based on the empirical investigation. It also informed the development of the interview schedule. Moreover, it was used as a framework for the initial coding in the data-analysis process, using Atlas.ti; and used to map the findings of this study.

4.4. CONCLUSION

Quality in higher education is not a vague concept, and can be achieved when education output conforms to the planned goals, specification and requirements (Crosby, 1979; Zaki & Zaki Rashidi, 2013).

This chapter has provided the conceptual framework for this study, which includes a South African view on the framework adapted from Zaki and Zaki Rashidi's (2013) Octet of Quality in Higher Education. Special focus has been placed on the process of programme accreditation.

The eight parameters (or components) were presented, namely: institutional design; faculty knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA); leadership and ownership; institutional policies and practices; resources; student profile; programme design; and stakeholder relationships.

These parameters point to certain outputs which can be expected as an institution engages with the management of quality assurance in private higher education.

In my next chapter, I present and defend my research methodology and the research design used in order to answer the research question of how PHEIs manage quality assurance as they engage in the process of programme accreditation in South Africa.

CHAPTER 5
METHODOLOGY

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of the study was to explore and identify the challenges and barriers private higher education providers in South Africa face in the management of quality assurance as they engage in the process of programme accreditation.

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed for this study. It describes the research design, methods, instruments and processes undertaken to collect and analyse the data. It also provides an overview of the ethical considerations of the study.

5.2. RESEARCH PARADIGM

A qualitative exploratory enquiry was chosen for this study. Interpretive research was deemed most appropriate because of the powerful way in which it captures and analyses people's perceptions, challenges, barriers and experiences (Bryman & Bell, 2003; Garrick, 1999; Van Manen, 1990; Walsham, 2006). The interpretive researcher's assumptions adopt the philosophy that 'reality' is only seen through or set in 'social constructions' such as language, consciousness and shared meanings (Andrade, 2009; Cohen *et al.,* 2002). It was regarded as most appropriate for the current study as it aims to examine relevant stakeholders' understanding and subjective experiences of quality assurance processes.

The philosophical base is that of hermeneutics (Cohen *et al.*, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Myers, 1997; Patton, 2015; Shaw & DeForge, 2014). Patton (2015) explains that hermeneutics complements a qualitative inquiry as it provides a theoretical (or conceptual) framework for interpretive understanding or meaning. Semi-structured interviews were therefore most suited, and the analysis was used to revisit and refine the conceptual framework and define the findings from which the recommendation emerged. Furthermore, hermeneutics also focusses on interaction and language because it emanates from the perception of the participants.

Within hermeneutics, the Verstehen-approach of Weber was deemed most appropriate as it focusses on a socially constructed reality (Cohen *et al.*, 2002). The concept of Verstehen involves the capacity to see things from another perspective, metaphorically speaking "to walk in another person's shoes" (Patton, 2015:56). According to Weber (in Patton, 2015), Verstehen emerged from the need for social sciences to study meaningful social action and its purpose. The concept of Verstehen argues that personal reasons or motivation that

shapes a person's internal feelings and guides decisions to act in particular ways should be studied (Neuman, 1997). Subsequently, its findings could be used to foresee future action and guide strategic decision-making.

The ontological approach is social constructivism, as it assumes that 'truth' is a matter of "consensus among informed and sophisticated constructors" (Patton, 2015:122). In such 'social constructs', 'truth' does not exist in any absolute sense. 'Truth' is merely perceptions, of either more or less 'informed' or 'sophisticated constructors' (Andrade, 2009; Cohen *et al.*, 2002; Patton, 2015).

5.3. RESEARCH APPROACH

A qualitative research approach was chosen for this study. Qualitative research is usually conducted in its natural setting. It also embraces a comprehensive view, considering making sense of, or interpreting that which is said, including the situation and milieu in which the participants find themselves (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:3).

The practice of qualitative research can be conceptualised more usefully as a form of "bricolage," as coined by Mottier (2005:2), where it is explained as "a putting-together of a set of research practices" and aims to provide possible understanding and 'solutions' to a concrete problem. The qualitative research techniques will therefore be 'problem-driven'' rather than 'method-driven' (Mottier, 2005).

Qualitative research calls for a holistic view which includes the environment in which the research is entrenched, and the data has to be interpreted and understood in a broader educational, social and historical context (Morrison, 2012). The assumption is that data does not exist on its own but is seen within its social context (Patton, 2015).

5.4. SAMPLING

A purposive sampling method was chosen. According to Patton (2015:265), purposive sampling means to strategically select an "information-rich case to study, cases that by nature and substance will illuminate the inquiry question being investigated".

Patton (2015) states that a qualitative inquiry normally makes use of various sources of data. It may contain a document analysis, which may include any written source of data for qualitative analysis. In order to choose the research participants in this study, three sets of documents were used to determine which institutions would form part of the population. The first was the Register for Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs), as published on 24

February 2015[6] and the second was the Council on Higher Education's Annual Reports of the past five years (from 2009/2010 to 2013/2014) (CHE, 2010; CHE, 2011; CHE, 2012b; CHE, 2013b; CHE, 2014b). A third included the Classification of Subject Matter (CESMs) (DoE, 2007; DoE, 2009).

By examining these documents, it was established that for five consecutive years (between 2009 and 2014) the CHE received the largest number of new applications for programme accreditation in the subject field of Business, Economics and Management Studies (CESM 4), as indicated in Table 5.1. The choice was made to focus on institutions offering qualifications within CESM 4 (which was the first criterion in choosing the sample) in order to ensure that participants would have enough information, including historical data such as student enrolments and through-put rates of cohorts, quality of student performances, profile of academic and support staff, and existing challenges about the quality assurance processes, to mention a few.

Table 5.1 represents the three largest groups of new applications the CHE received in each financial year.

Table 5.1: The three largest groups of new applications the CHE received in each financial year

CHE Annual Report[7]	Most New Applications received for Programme Accreditation (CESM and Amount)	Second-Most Applications (CESM and Amount)	Third-Most Applications (CESM and Amount)
2013/2014	Business, Economics and Management Studies (93 applications)	Education (44 applications)	Health Professions and Related Clinical Sciences (44 applications)
2012/2013	Business, Economics and Management Studies (97 applications)	Health Professions and Related Clinical Sciences (39 applications)	Visual and Performing Arts (28 applications)
2011/2012	Business, Economics and Management Studies (120 applications)	Health Professions and Related Clinical Sciences (48 applications)	Visual and Performing Arts (40 applications)

[6] It should be noted that the Register for PHEIs, published 24 February 2015 (DHET, 2015a) was used initially for the proposal and first interview. Thereafter the Register for PHEIs of 4 April 2014 (DHET, 2014b) was used.
[7] Each financial year commences in April and ends each consecutive year in March.

CHE Annual Report[8]	Most New Applications received for Programme Accreditation (CESM and Amount)	Second-Most Applications (CESM and Amount)	Third-Most Applications (CESM and Amount)
2010/2011	Business, Economics and Management Studies (86 applications)	Visual and Performing Arts (28 applications)	Computer and Information Science (24 applications)
2009/2010	Business, Commerce and Management Studies (86 applications)	Healthcare and Health Services (33 applications)	Computer Studies (25 applications)

After establishing the specific number of institutions offering programmes in CESM 4, the second criterion was used, which stipulated that all institutions had to be based in Gauteng (criterion 2). This was due to feasibility and convenient sampling. This further reduced the population. Subsequently 27 institutions were identified.

A third criterion was to include all types of institutions in terms of size and shape, using the following classification as indicated below.

Table 5.2 represents all types of institutions, as classified in terms of size and shape.

Table 5.2: All types of institutions, as classified in terms of size and shape

Classification	Total[9] student enrolments
Very Small	Institution with fewer than 99 students enrolled
Small	Institution with 100 – 499 students enrolled
Medium	Institutions with 500 – 1499 students enrolled
Large	Institutions with 1500 – 4999 students enrolled
Very large	Institutions with 5000 and more students enrolled

The aim was to conduct twelve to eighteen semi-structured interviews. The criterion for choosing participants for this study was that all persons had to be directly responsible for quality assurance within their institution, including the administration or management of the programme accreditation processes (criterion 4).

[8] Each financial year commences in April and ends each consecutive year in March.
[9] The total count of all the students enrolled across all the Higher Education qualifications within the institution. In the case of a multi-site institution, the count included students at all the different sites.

Of the 27 institutions, ten were selected, ensuring that they varied in size and shape as indicated in Table 5.3.

Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted at ten PHEIs in Gauteng. All were individual interviews except for one which was a combined interview with two participants. There were therefore thirteen participants in total. The size of the institutions included a combination of small to very large PHEIs as indicated in Table 5.3. The participants of this study were mostly senior operational and academic staff, and included an equal spread of male and female, also indicated in Table 5.3.

By using these criteria, a very stable and well-represented population and sample was identified. Furthermore, although limited, the sample chosen was still representative of institutions that are accredited to offer CESM 4 programmes in South Africa. According to the Register of PHEIs[10] (as published on 23 February 2015), there are 125 institutions offering programmes classified as CESM 4. Sixty-three (63) of those institutions are based in Gauteng (50.4% of all the institutions in the country). Forty-eight (48) institutions are accredited to offer CESM 4 programmes in the country and twenty-seven (27) are based in Gauteng. The population of twenty-seven (27) institutions is 56 percent of all the institutions that are accredited to offer CESM 4 programmes in the country. This is a relatively high percentage and therefore considered to be representative.

Table 5.3 represents the profile of the participants, in relation to their designation within the institution. The size-classification of the institutions has been added and the dates of the interviews have also been provided.

Table 5.3: Profile of the participants

Date of Interview	Institution No	Classification	Interview	Participant No	Gender	Designation within the Company/ PHEIs
29/01/2015	Institution 1	Small	Interview 1	Participant 1	Male	Registrar
30/01/2015	Institution 2	Medium	Interview 2	Participant 2	Female	Registrar
02/02/2015	Institution 3	Large	Interview 3	Participant 3	Female	Quality Assurance Director
02/03/2015	Institution 4	Very Large	Interview 4	Participant 4	Female	CEO and Head of Quality Assurance

[10] Only section 1 and 2 of the register was used, i.e. Accredited PHEIs, and Provisionally Accredited PHEIs.

Date of Interview	Institution No	Classification	Interview	Participant No	Gender	Designation within the Company/ PHEIs
05/03/2015	Institution 5	Small	Interview 5	Participant 5	Male	Principal
05/03/2015			Interview 6	Participant 6	Female	Registrar
24/02/2015	Institution 6	Large	Interview 7	Participant 7	Male	Academic Head
				Participant 8	Male	Institutional Head
10/03/2015	Institution 7	Very Large	Interview 8	Participant 9	Female	Institutional Head and Executive Director
26/03/2015	Institution 8	Medium	Interview 9	Participant 10	Male	Head of Faculty
31/03/2015			Interview 10	Participant 11	Female	Registrar
22/04/2015	Institution 9	Large	Interview 11	Participant 12	Female	Faculty Head/ Academic Head and Quality Assurance Manager
28/04/2015	Institution 10	Medium	Interview 12	Participant 13	Male	Dean and Quality Assurance Manager

All the interviews were conducted within a period of thirty minutes to an hour and fifteen minutes. An attempt was made to keep focussed and stay within the timeframes discussed with each interviewee. All but one interview, the last, was done in a stress-free environment. The last had to be very focussed and shortened, in order to respect the interviewee's time. All interviews were face-to-face, except for one, which was conducted via Skype at the interviewee's request.

It should be noted that the original research design was to explore the challenges and barriers of PHEIs with regard to programme accreditation of Bachelor of Commerce. Due to the fact that a PHEI has a smaller staff compliment than a public higher education institution and that staff members perform additional and combined traditional roles and responsibilities than in public universities, the data was very generic. The responses of the participants included general comments about quality assurance in private higher education and less on issues pertaining specifically to the offering of Bachelor of Commerce programmes. Based on the available data it was necessary to shift the focus from a specific focus on commerce to a more general look at the management of quality assurance and its processes.

5.5. RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The research instrument (interview schedule, Appendix C) was developed based on the literature review and conceptual framework. Although the questions were semi-structured and responses were open to respondents' own interpretation there, questions were mainly focussed on specific parameters within the conceptual framework. For instance, interview questions 1, 5 and 12 were open-ended questions, inviting the respondent to explain its institutional design. Question 2 was mainly focussed on student profile; and question 3 programme design. Questions 4 and 6 were developed around the theory on faculty knowledge, skills and abilities; and questions 7, 8, 13, and 16 around the theory on leadership and ownership, as explained in the conceptual framework. Questions 9, 14, and 15 were about stakeholder relationships (management); while questions 10, 11 and 17 were mainly focussed on institutional policies and practices. Question 18 was open-ended; accordingly, respondents could contribute anything that was relevant to the topic. It should also be noted that the parameters are interdependent, as explained in Chapter 4, and therefore responses of respondents were often a combination of various factors within the eight key parameters (See Appendix D).

Questions were asked in a sequential order, from objective facts to subjective attitudes and opinions through justification and then to sensitive, personalised data (Cohen *et al.,* 2002). Probing questions were used in order to gain more in-depth data.

The first interview was used as a pilot study, in which the research instrument was evaluated. Minor changes were made before the rest of the interviews were conducted.

5.6. RESEARCH PROCESS

The research process commenced with the literature review. Here the focus was to explore the different challenges and barriers of various stakeholders and what they experienced in connection with the quality assurance legislative frameworks. A special focus was placed on PHEIs as well as issues regarding accreditation, both in South Africa and internationally.

Once ethical approval was received, all institutions were initially contacted telephonically. Electronic correspondence followed with all the necessary documents. These documents included the interview schedule (Appendix C), the letter of invitation to participate in the research (Appendix E), and the consent form (Appendix F), prior to the interview. The purpose and procedure of the research were explained, including the fact that none of the participants would receive any financial benefit from their participation in the research. Specific criteria were stated (as mentioned above), and after participants were identified,

appointments for the interviews were confirmed and the same documents were resent to the consenting participant, prior to the interview.

The reason for sending the interview schedule prior to the interview was mainly because of the participants' requests. Most institutions were sceptical and wanted clarity on what would be asked during the interviews. In two cases, the interview schedule and other documents were sent to the institution's legal team for advice. With one institution, the researcher had to sign an additional confidentiality agreement apart from the one presented.

Signed copies of the consent form were obtained prior to each interview. Each participant also gave verbal consent at the beginning of the interview, which was recorded with their permission.

Interview questions were specific, yet semi-structured and open-ended. The purpose was to allow the interviewees to explain, in detail, their challenges as they engage in quality assurance practices, both externally and internally. Questions also referred to the participants' different views on quality and quality assurance in a private higher education setting. These included questions about various institutional approaches to governance and management of internal and other quality assurance processes; identifying factors that either hinder or support PHEIs as they engage in the quality assurance procedures and processes (both internally and externally). Although a standardised interview schedule was used, many probing questions followed as each conversation unfolded in response to the participants' replies.

Examples of questions of the standardised interview schedule are listed below (the full interview schedule is presented in Appendix C):

1. Explain the procedure or process that you follow in your institution in preparing an application for programme accreditation.
2. Who else is involved in this process and what are their roles?
3. In your experience, what are some of the challenges you have encountered in the programme accreditation process, and how does this affect the management of quality assurance within your institution?
4. How does the programme accreditation process fit into your quality assurance functions, i.e. your policies, practices and procedures, within your entire institution?
5. In hindsight, going through this process, what have you learned? And what was the most remarkable change that happened during this time?

Boardrooms and offices, as well as Skype, were mostly used for conducting interviews. One interview was conducted, at the participant's request, at a coffee shop with very limited distractions in close proximity to the institution's campus. The aim was to interview more than one respondent, but in most cases only the registrar or quality assurance manager/ director could be interviewed. The reason was that PHEIs often have one person fulfilling the portfolio of a registrar, quality manager, academic head, and sometimes even the managing director. Participating institutions seldom had a quality unit or team.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim by an independent Dictaphone typist. After the verbatim-transcripts were received, they were edited to facilitate reading. The edited transcripts were emailed to each participant for member checking. Ample time was given for this – in some cases up to four months. In most cases, participants sent the transcript back within two to four weeks. Where there were felt to be discrepancies in the edited transcripts, the voice (audio) recordings and original transcripts were revisited and re-edited and again emailed to the participants. In some cases, the original transcripts and the edited transcripts were sent together, for the participants to compare and to ensure that nothing was misunderstood.

5.7. DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews was subjected to a thematic analysis (Babbie, 2007; Neuman, 1997), which involved identifying units of meaning which emerged from the data and integrating them into themes, using a grouping procedure based on both similarities and differences. The data analysis allowed for the identification of theme cores and nodes (higher order themes) that emerged from the data, allowing the researcher to proceed from the particular to the general. The software package ATLAS.Ti 7.5.6 was used to facilitate the analysis of the interview protocols (Creswell, 2005). The use of Atlas.ti 7.5.6 in the coding processes allowed the analysis to be standardised and unbiased towards any idea or set of ideas. The coding of the data and the clustering of code families[11] (table 5.5) for the development of themes that flowed into the analysis were carried out manually. Thematic analysis was based on analytical induction.

Analytical induction (Patton, 2015) was used to analyse set relations, in which different relations/ themes were identified throughout all ten institutions. Each theme identified captured something important about data in relation to the research question and represented some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The categorisation and identification of these themes involved three phases:

[11] Initially over 200 codes were used, which were clustered into twenty-one families. Later this was manually reduced to four themes.

i. **Phase 1:** The data was considered to be thematic (what does it relate to) and contextual (what was said and in what way) and through the use of inductive coding procedures, various themes were first identified by the researcher which were seen to tell the story of how participants viewed the challenges linked to the management of quality assurance within their institutions.

ii. **Phase 2**: This phase involved examining the data in a more specific and focussed manner by identifying sub-themes within the broader categories that were considered of importance in the first phase.

iii. **Phase 3:** The last phase involved generating data categories and themes through the input of data in the statistical programme ATLAS TI and analysing the results.

Four key higher order themes (nodes) that emerged from the data, which corresponded with the four sub-research questions for this study (as listed in Chapter 1), were:

i. participants' knowledge and understanding of both quality assurance and quality in higher education (linked to sub-research question 1);

ii. participants' views and perceptions on the requirements of the quality assurance legislative environment in higher education (linked to sub-research question 2);

iii. participants' views on the management of quality assurance within the institutions (linked to sub-research question 3); and

iv. institutional barriers and challenges linked to the management of quality assurance and the legislative environment (linked to sub-research question 4).

5.8. VALIDITY

Interpretive validity refers to "the ability of the researcher to catch the meaning, interpretations, terms, intentions" of the respondents (Cohen *et al.,* 2002:107). This was executed using four approaches.

The first refers to member checking. Each participant was provided with a transcript in order to confirm its accuracy and to ensure stability in the study (Rambaree, 2007). All the participants agreed that the interview transcripts were accurate and approved the contents.

Secondly, in order to ensure that the findings were trustworthy and credible, focus was placed on "reflexivity" (Ortlipp, 2008). This was done by keeping a reflective journal (Etherington, 2004) in order to reflect on biases, as well as any pre-conceived ideas. These were jotted down sporadically, mostly before and after interviews. The purpose was to reflect on the researcher's own expectations, and compare them to what was found. The

circumstances in which each interview took place were considered in order to ensure stability throughout the research and to replicate similar scenarios for each interview.

Thirdly, peer debriefing was used to review the research process holistically, and to ensure that credibility and trustworthiness of the study were maintained (Cohen *et al.,* 2002; Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2015). Furthermore, the supervisor was consulted throughout the process and also received the initial transcripts to ensure that the findings were aligned and justified.

Lastly, triangulation, through the use of multiple sources, enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the study (Cohen *et al.,* 2002; Patton, 2015). According to Patton (2015), borrowing and combining distinct elements from traditional methodological strategies can generate creative and mixed inquiry strategies that are also considered a variation of triangulation. Triangulation was done through attempting to interview stakeholders who represented different types of PHEIs; and also through triangulation of sources and methods, using document analysis and interviews (Cohen *et al.,* 2002; Patton, 2015).

5.9. RESEARCH ETHICS

With regard to the ethical considerations, Babbie (2007:62) explains that “anyone involved in social scientific research needs to be aware of the general agreement shared by researchers about what is proper and improper in the conduct of scientific enquiry”. Hence, written and verbal consent was obtained from the individuals and institutions.

Full anonymity was promised to all ten institutions and their representatives (participants in this study) in order to get more accurate and honest responses. With regard to confidentiality, each institution and also participant was allocated a number and did not divulge any information in such a way that anyone could relate it to any institution or person (Cohen *et al.*, 2002).

Each participant understood that they had the right not to participate in this study and could withdraw at any time if they felt uncomfortable. They were also not obliged to answer a question if they were not comfortable with it. Planning was done in such a way that if faced with a scenario where an institution declined to participate in the study, an alternative institution would be chosen according to the set criteria mentioned above.

A Dictaphone typist was used to type the transcripts and signed a privacy clause before typing the interviews.

All data was password protected and data will be stored as per the policy and procedures of the University of Pretoria.

5.10. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although small, the sample was still representative of institutions that are accredited to offer CESM 4 programmes in South Africa (see sampling). However, there are twenty CESMs (DoE, 2007; DoE, 2009), which automatically excluded institutions from offering programmes in other CESMs. Here it should be noted that not all the participating institutions offered CESM 4 programmes exclusively. In some cases, they offered programmes from four or more CESMs. Furthermore, only institutions based in high-density areas in Gauteng were considered. Subsequently, no participants from any rural PHEIs were interviewed.

The nature and purpose of a (full) master's dissertation provides limited scope. The research focussed on what challenges and barriers participants experience with regard to internal quality assurance in relation to the programme accreditation processes. Twelve semi-structured interviews were considered as the basis for its findings and the actual conduct, activities and performance of participants within their institutions was not evaluated or observed. Furthermore, limited documentation was provided by the institution in confirming its statements made during the interviews. The institutions' documentation which is available in the public domain was consulted in order to gain comprehensive information on each institution.

5.11. CONCLUSION

This chapter has dealt with the methodology of this study. Clear descriptions and explanations of the design and processes followed were provided. The research question and its objectives provided the framework for this study, and were also used in the final analysis of the data. Furthermore, ethical considerations and limitations have been highlighted.

The next chapter presents the data analysis of this study.

CHAPTER 6
ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

6.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the qualitative findings obtained during the study. Four key themes emerged from the data (see Figure 6.1 below), which corresponded with the four sub-research questions for this study, which were:

i. participants' knowledge and understanding of both quality and quality assurance in higher education (linked to sub-research question 1);

ii. participants' views and perceptions on the requirements of the quality assurance legislative environment in higher education (linked to sub-research question 2);

iii. participants' views on the management of quality assurance within the institutions (linked to sub-research question 3); and

iv. institutional barriers and challenges linked to the management of quality assurance and the legislative environment (linked to sub-research question 4).

Figure 6.1 represents a conceptual illustration, providing an overview of the grouping of data categories (key themes).

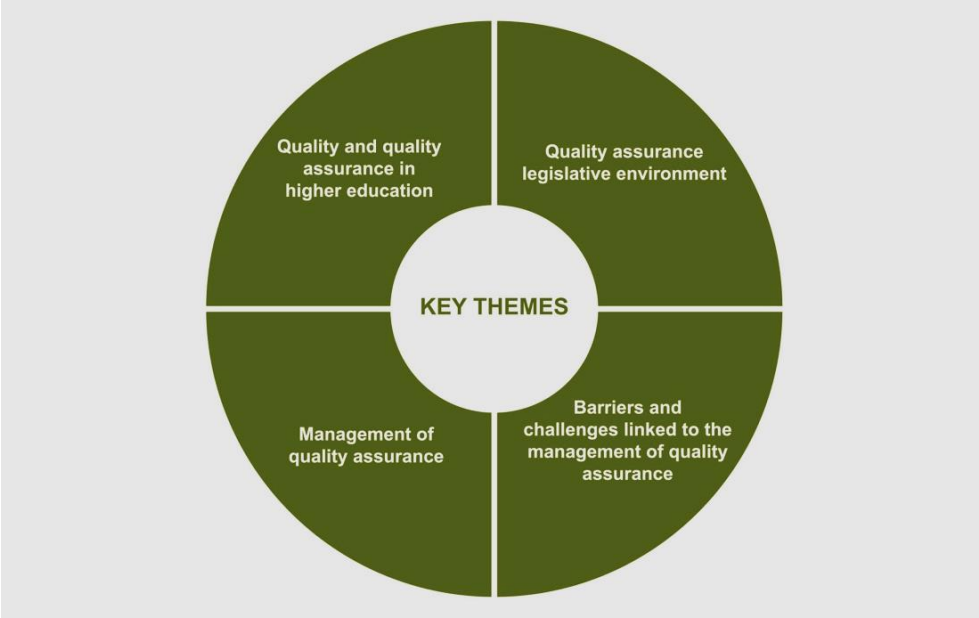


Figure 6.1: Conceptual illustration providing an overview of the grouping of data categories (key themes)

The qualitative findings are discussed according to the abovementioned key themes. In each case, examples of interviews are presented in italics.

6.2. PARTICIPANTS' UNDERSTANDING AND PERCEPTIONS OF BOTH QUALITY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

During the data analysis phase, two lower-order themes emerged. The first refers to the understanding and perceptions of quality in higher education and the second refers to the knowledge and understanding of quality assurance in higher education.

Even though the HEQC views quality predominantly in terms of 'fitness for purpose' (CHE, 2004a; Mhlanga, 2013; Lukett, 2006), the data revealed that PHEIs view (or define) quality in higher education differently, and identified the following notions: quality is viewed as 'exceptional'; 'value-for-money'; 'fitness for purpose' (but more specifically 'fitting-the-customer's satisfaction'); 'fitness of purpose', and lastly 'transformation'. Such views or definitions have a significant impact on the way in which quality is assured.

i. "Quality as 'exceptional'

The data indicated that often smaller and more focussed institutions view quality in higher education in terms of achieving exceptional standards, and more particularly in their niche disciplines, often referred to as single-purposed institutions. It has been noted that in some instances the smaller, more niche institutions appear to have become a benchmark in their industries, and do not intend to expand to other disciplines. A few even regard themselves as probably the best in the country, or in Africa. Larger 'university-type' PHEIs often focus on several disciplines and/or subject fields, but usually do not have more than four faculties. These institutions are often referred to as multi-purposed institutions.

> *"There [are these] amazing places that offer very niche or specialist programmes […] [Those] times when you looked down at other institutions and what they offer are now also basically over. I think they all play a role, and some of them are absolutely niche institutions…"* (Participant 11:14).

> *"We are the leading organisation in this country, in Africa, in what we do"* (Participant 1:6).

One of the reasons why PHEIs remain focussed on one or only a few specialised disciplines or subject fields might also point to the financial implications related to offering various subject fields and/or elective modules. Instead of offering programmes with various electives,

specialising across subject fields, some institutions opt to rather specialise in one field, with further sub-specialisation within one particular discipline.

> *"[We're] not going to have a [general] BA for instance, […] it's too expensive in a small institution… We don't have the luxury of cross subsidisation […] I've got to work with focussed degrees. I can't have the luxury of carrying something that is wonderful, but [with] no students or funds […] [It's] not cost effective at the moment"* (Participant 5:18).

In summary, the fact that many PHEIs offer focussed degrees in their niche specialised areas (maybe because of the financial implications) is possibly driving the private sector in becoming sub-field subject experts. These institutions view quality in higher education as being exceptional.

ii. Quality as 'value-for-money'

During the data analysis process, perceptions of viewing quality in terms of 'value-for-money' were mainly understood within the focus on providing products and services according to specific needs of their customers (companies or students), which is beneficial (financially) to both the PHEIs and their customers. For many PHEIs, the 'customer' is both the companies (large enterprises and even in some cases government departments) to which they render educational services as training providers as well as individual students, who wish to obtain higher education qualifications. In terms of this view on quality, customers consider their own investments in terms of 'value-for-money' or return of investment (RoI). In response, PHEIs develop and offer their educational products or services in such a way that they provide more 'value-for-money' than their competitors. However, the way in which PHEIs develop and offer their educational products or services in order to enhance 'value-for-money' varies. The majority of PHEIs that view quality in this light offer 'applied' higher education qualifications for companies by designing and incorporating research projects that are focussed on the institution; while others will require impact studies to see what influence the staff with their newly obtained qualifications have had in their companies:

> *"[We] also force our students to do research within their own company. It is a work-context dissertation, in order to create new knowledge for their institution"* (Participant 1:4).

Many of the PHEIs have contracts with companies to offer higher education programmes in the form of learnerships or staff development initiatives.

"*[We've] participated and been involved in [learnerships]"* (Participant 3:3).

For the student, the increased prospects of employability appear to be one of the biggest benefits in the PHE sector.

"*Our focus should be to produce work-ready graduates"* (Participant 10:10).

"[We have] a work readiness programme, which is obviously an important part of what we do" (Participant 8:8).

"[We] agree that the essence of delivery is good, and, […] good classroom practice […] produce good quality outputs and a good quality of graduate". (Participant 7:8).

To conclude, it appears as if many private higher education institutions view quality in higher education in terms of 'value-for-money', offering custom-designed, often referred to as 'applied', qualifications to both companies (their staff) and students. 'Applied' qualifications are usually designed to train staff for specific tasks within the company or to increase knowledge within a specific field related to the company's industry.

iii. Quality as 'fitness for purpose'

The predominant view of the HEQC is that quality is 'fitness for purpose', requiring institutions to align all facets (linked to the programme criteria) to the vision, mission and objectives of their institution (CHE, 2004a; CHE, 2004b). However, this view on quality is inward looking. The data revealed that a small group of participants also prefer such a view on quality. Participants explained that often institutions have deficiencies in the quality of the offering of a programme because they do not address those things that do not speak to their mission, vision and objectives (Participant 7:11). Still, the majority opposed the notion of viewing quality in terms of a mission-based 'fitness for purpose'.

"Does everything meet the mission and vision and values of the Institution – that's a lot of nonsense… […] I can […] change my vision and mission to meet [any] programme. It's philosophical jargon – it doesn't tell you anything about the programme structure" (Participant 5:18).

The data indicated that private providers who view quality as fitness for purpose, in terms of 'fitting-the-customer's satisfaction', spend much of their focus (and therefore also resources) on customer satisfaction.

> *"We find that good customer service leads to repeat business. But we also do have specific people finding new business [...] We rely on repeat business, it's much cheaper to retain a client than finding a new client. With a new client everything has to be done right from start, from start"* (Participant 9:14-5).

> *"[We] have such a great name in the market"* (Participant 1:4).

Participants from PHEIs who view quality as fitness for purpose, in terms of 'fitting-the-customer's satisfaction', focus on the students and the majority of the infrastructure and resources are allocated to student support.

> *"[The] main [goal] for me is, 'How do you support the students?' […] [We] communicate with our students almost daily. […] [On] our student satisfaction survey [in 2014] we got a hundred percent from our students"* (Participant 5:20)

> *"To start with, we've got a [Key Accounts Managers (KAMs)] and […] each manages their client cohorts assigned to him/her. Each one of them has an administrator. The administrator does the administrative work and they work closely with the IT (Information Technology) manager. The KAMs have to attend monthly meetings with their client coordinators where they look at the progress of each of their cohorts. […] Customer service is priority"* (Participant 9:14).

In summary, the data revealed that most PHEIs view quality as 'fitness for purpose' in terms of 'fitting-the-customer's satisfaction', where the educational services and products are focussed on and developed around meeting the customer's needs and requirements.

iv. Quality as 'fitness of purpose'

Institutions that view quality in terms of 'fitness of purpose' look outwardly and assume that 'quality' means their learning programmes and supportive policies address and are aligned to the legislative framework requirements. This view also considers the transformation agendas of South Africa, and look for further cross-border and international alignment to legislation to increase recognition. The majority of institutions also seemed keen to ensure that their programmes are accredited and regulated by the diverse regulatory bodies and councils (including professional bodies and SETAs). In producing employable students from accredited qualifications that are called for in the industry, a good institutional reputation may lead to increased student enrolments. Interestingly, it was found that most participating institutions were also accredited by various bodies and quality councils, both locally and

internationally. When probed for a reason, it appears as if institutions that wish to keep their competitive advantage above their competitors seek additional local and internationally-renowned accrediting bodies and councils to increase the legitimacy and recognition of their programmes.

> *"[All] our qualifications […] are accredited and appear on the SAQA website. […] So [students] can verify that…"* (Participant 7:10)

> *"With business schools, we apply for other accreditation [and] that becomes our marketing tool – our branding – so we get Amba-accreditation,[12] like some of the other established business schools; it's a big deal…"* (Participant 12:6)

In light of the increased pressures of globalisation and internationalisation, many South African PHEIs would actively market and recruit students from mostly developing countries, the majority of which are from Africa.

> *"So we probably got about close on fifty percent of our student body that are non-South African […] So from other parts in Africa. We have a whole section in our sales division that is primarily focussed on student recruitment in Africa"* (Participant 2: 2).

The few private providers that were focussed on cross-border provisioning, specifically from developing countries in Africa and Asia, explained that most quality councils or departments of education, or ministries of education, accept programmes being offered in their countries, as long as the programmes are accredited with their local quality council, department or ministry. However, they are more open to certificate and diplomas programme offerings, while degree programmes are often discouraged. To ensure their programmes are alignable, they have to liaise quite extensively with other countries' quality councils, departments of education or ministries of education.

> *"[Internationally] if [a regulatory body knows that] our programmes are accredited by the CHE, they're quite comfortable to consider your programmes"* (Participant 12:6).

> *"[As] soon as you go into another country, […] they don't really want us to run our degrees there, because it's in conflict with their universities, but our diplomas are quite strong in Zimbabwe"* (Participant 11:6).

[12] The Association of MBAs (AMBA) is an international independent authority on postgraduate business education. Its accreditation service is the international benchmark for all MBA, DBA and MBM programmes at "over 200 business schools in more than 70 different countries" (www.mbaworld.com/en/About-us.aspx).

To conclude, the most prominent view on or definition of quality for the private higher education sector seemed to point to quality seen in terms of 'fitness for purpose', mostly due to the HEQC's view on quality, and more specifically the process of programme accreditation. However, in practice 'fitting-the-customer's satisfaction', where the educational services and products are mainly developed around meeting the customer's needs and their requirements, is favoured above a mission-based 'fitness for purpose'. In doing so, PHEIs feel they are achieving quality in higher education. The data revealed that this 'customer-focus' seems to be driven by the perception of the PHE sector that public universities are unable to adequately address this because of massification. This makes the private higher education sector the preferred choice for specific customers that desire a more open or direct relationship with their higher education provider.

v. Quality as 'transformation'

While quality viewed as 'transformation' constitutes the enrichment of participants, adding value to participants, and empowering the participants, the data indicated that the majority of PHEIs do view quality as 'transformation'. When probed, several explanations surfaced.

A few of the participants in this study explained that they were part of several focus groups, where various PHEIs would come together and contribute to or comment on each other's work, such as evaluating each other's programmes before these are submitted to the CHE. More advanced focus groups would also do advocacy on behalf of the private higher education sector.

> *"I work together with [other private higher education institutions], and we support one another. We also do a lot of advocacy, like when the Minister has put forth his amendments to the act, we comment on the amendments to the act, we commented on the regulations"* (Participant 3:10).

At institutional level, as established earlier, the majority of participants mentioned that they liaise with large companies (enterprises), negotiating contracts to offer 'custom-designed' or 'applied' qualifications according to the company's needs. These are often done at the premises of the company, and mostly supported through a student-focussed distance model, as part of their learnership or internship programmes or initiatives that form part of their staff development plans. In following such a model, new knowledge is created for the particular company and PHEIs therefore become instrumental in the transformation of many companies. In turn, PHEIs feel they are contributing towards transformation in South Africa.

> *"[We] contribute a lot of research [for companies] […] by creating new knowledge"* (Participant 1:4).

The views on or definitions of quality determine the purpose for which quality assurance is done and therefore also the way in which quality is assured within their institutions.

The second lower-order theme refers to the knowledge and understanding of quality assurance in higher education.

There seems to be a significant relationship between the knowledge of both quality assurance and 'good practices' in higher education, and the manner in which quality assurance is executed. The data indicated that some participants admitted to having limited knowledge about quality assurance while many others interpreted quality assurance within their own quality assurance frameworks. While some saw the problem in their own background, e.g. coming from a business background and not education, others perceived it as bureaucratic processes that create confusion.

> *"[There] are many things we don't understand. We are not educationalists… We all come from the business sector"* (Participant 1:14*).*

> *"There is just too much uncertainty […] And I think it's a typical bureaucratic exercise also, to a large extent, not to diminish any of our skills or capacities but there is a bureaucratic process and that automatically creates uncertainty"* (Participant 7:8).

With private higher education being a business enterprise, it seems as if most participants are more focussed on a business approach to quality assurance in higher education. One participant explained why:

> *"[If] we don't make money, we actually go under. It may sound very short-sighted when you think of educating people, but that's a simple business concept…"* (Participant 11:4)

While the participants emphasised the necessity of sound internal quality assurance practices for obtaining their institutional goals, the link between internal and external quality assurance was evident. The data indicated that the context of internal quality assurance often hinged on compliance with programme accreditation criteria and other external quality assurance policies and procedures.

> *"What is positive about this whole process [of programme accreditation], is that you do this in line with your QMS (Quality Management System). [At] the completion of the application [for programme accreditation it] shows whether your QMS is in line with CHE requirements and ensures that your programme design stays within regulatory requirements. This also shows weak spots in your QMS which is then amended"* (Participant 9:18).

Others indicated that any quality assurance framework (and its processes) may also be a developmental tool. When probed for clarity, one participant explained the following:

> *"[Our] coherent policy framework is in a way a tool of development. It has both the expression of what you want to be and what you are becoming. And I think when people generally craft policy, they craft their narrative around the ideal set of circumstances, […] and if you have to go through that process of thinking and articulating this, then it has to trickle down into your psyche. Hopefully this manifests in your practices over time"* (Participant 7:12).

> *"I'm seeing the value of the accreditation framework, its criteria and process, and how it forces academics to think through all of that when they conceptualise a programme"* (Participant 4:6).

To conclude, it appears as if there is a general lack of knowledge of quality assurance and higher education good practices in the private higher education sector. More experienced participants viewed quality assurance in terms of their own quality assurance framework – whether a business or higher education model – which is mainly linked to institutional goals. Less experienced participants from smaller private higher education institutions seemed to have built their internal quality assurance models around the expectancies from regulatory bodies, councils and departments. A few participants saw quality assurance processes and practices as a developmental tool that can guide the institution to a stage where it can assure its stakeholders of the quality of its systems, processes, products and outcomes and of its ability to manage the maintenance and enhancement of quality (Luckett, 2006).

6.3. PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS AND PERCEPTIONS ON THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN QUALITY ASSURANCE LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Two lower-order themes were identified during the data analysis process. The first refers to the understanding of the requirements of the South African higher education and quality assurance legislative environment, with special focus on programme accreditation. The

second theme concerns participants' views on programme accreditation as a form of external quality assurance, as well as their recommendations for alternative accreditation models in South African higher education. A discussion on each follows below.

The first lower-order theme identified was that the participants' understanding of the requirements of the South African higher education and quality assurance legislative environment seemed limited. All the participants held senior positions in their institutions, such as quality assurance managers, directors, deans, heads of faculty and registrars, which require high levels of understanding of both the higher education and quality assurance legislative context. It was clear that several participants felt uncertain about such key matters. They indicated that there is much uncertainty about what is required of PHEIs in terms of the South African higher education and quality assurance legislative environment. Several suggestions indicated the need for more 'good practice guides' for the South African (private) higher education sector that could assist them as they navigate through the complexity of the policy and regulations. For many, experience has been their training ground. It has been suggested that the private higher education sector should be better equipped before they enter (or attempt to enter) the higher education sphere, specifically with regard to the processes related to programme accreditation:

> *"…you know, for me, the split [is between] people who've been doing this for years, and people who haven't been doing it for years. I think there needs to be far better induction for new providers"* (Participant 7:4).

> *"I think there needs to be a guide for programme accreditation, you know, really explaining how you need to fill in the application, or how you need to go about things when starting with programme accreditation. […] You know a guide or something that is made very, very simple, from logging in instructions, right up to the time you send the documents"* (Participant 10:13).

More experienced participants mentioned that accreditation is only a controlling mechanism, deficit-driven and too technocratic, and doubted its effectiveness as a quality assurance mechanism.

> *"Because of the stakes associated with accreditation, people need the technical kind of details […] The issue is that accreditation is a compliance-activity, it's not a quality assurance mechanism"* (Participant 8:3).

> *"[The] entire framework [for programme accreditation] [has] become very formulaic and artificial to the extent that, it's a very constructed performance*

> *you put on, or whether it's in […] the written performance or in the actual performance. [...] The entire framework is deficit driven. It's driven toward looking for deficiencies rather than looking for a more balanced view, holistic view. It is very punitive…"* (Participant 7:11).

Some participants were very involved in quality assurance advocacy in the private higher education sector, even nationally. These participants felt that individuals or institutions that frequently request more guidance on quality assurance matters, point to a general lack of understanding; rather than an issue of the 'complexity of legislation'. Consequently, there is a view that institutions need to become more proactive in engaging in both higher education and quality assurance legislation, in order to understand its processes.

> *"At some stage, you must make that decision as an Institution to cross the hurdles. The lights should come on at some stage…"* (Participant 6:12).

There is a general perception that PHEIs do want to comply with legislation as indicated by regulatory bodies and councils. However, the fact that the status of successful programme accreditation is linked to your registration at the DHET, which equates to your license to practice as a legal provider, makes it a very onerous process. Most participants experienced their engagement in these processes very negatively:

> *"I mean the negative experience totally overrules any positive experience…"* (Participant 1:17).

Interestingly, it seems to be the opinion of most participants from the larger and more reputable institutions, that the "time of the 'fly-by-nights' is over"; they feel that even though most of the providers do comply, the government continues to treat all the private providers the same.

> *"The problem is, the time of the fly-by-nights is over, dealt with… so don't punish the legitimate businesses by making it too difficult for us who wants to be legal and legitimate. […] [Take] those [institutions] that you see are fly-by-nights, […] hand them over to the police and let them deal with them legally. […] It is like punishing the whole class, because one little boy is unruly… Focus on the institutions that are dodgy, and deal with them… Don't make it difficult for the institutions that aren't dodgy"* (Participant 5:16).

Another perception points to the fact that often PHEIs feel that the policies and regulation are mostly in favour of the public universities, and that the private higher education sector is over-regulated.

> *"[Of] course there's far higher vigilance on the private sector than in the public sector…" (Participant 8:2) […] "[The programme accreditation criteria] were written very much from a public provider perspective…"* (Participant 8:5).

In conclusion, most private providers see compliance with external quality assurance processes, such as programme accreditation, as a necessity in order to operate legally within South Africa. However, the legal implications of the processes of programme accreditation, and other external quality assurance processes, and a general lack of knowledge on these legislative matters, seem to cast a dark shadow over the PHE sector.

The second lower-order theme refers to participants' views on accreditation in South Africa. Firstly, it presents the views of participants on programme accreditation as a form of external quality assurance in South Africa, as it existed in 2015. Both positive and negative views are given. Secondly, it presents the recommendations for alternative forms of accreditation models within a South African Higher Education context.

The data revealed that most participants were in favour of some form of accreditation by an external body and the majority of participants agreed that external quality assurance needs to be compulsory.

> *"Oh yes, accreditation is fantastic…" (Participant 1:7)* "*We support accreditation"* (Participant 1:10).

However, the prevalent view was that accredited institutions do not necessarily offer 'quality' higher educational programmes, that accreditation is merely a 'tick-box' activity, and that the insight or input from programme accreditation adds very little to the quality of the educational products and services private higher education institution (PHEIs) offer.

> *"I don't think being accredited means you've got good quality education…"* (Participant 5:15).

> *"[Accreditation] is just a "tick box"-activity. [There] is a "business-value-added" and a "consumer-value-added" factor, but I don't think it's much more than that" (Participant 7:10).*

Often the integrity and effectiveness of the quality assurance systems set up by various state-regulated bodies, departments and councils in South Africa were in question. Most participants held the perception that the purpose of external quality assurance processes such as programme accreditation is mainly to protect the student against illegal operations or dubious private providers.

> *"[Accreditation] is ultimately about protecting the consumer"* (Participant 7:11).

When probed for alternative ways in which accreditation could be done, different types or models of accreditation were suggested because institutional capacity is not really reflective in the programme accreditation process. Most agreed that a combination of programme accreditation and institutional accreditation might be most suitable. Private higher education institutions often have several campuses across the country. Some PHEIs may offer the same higher education qualifications, for instance, to very small groups of perhaps fewer than thirty at ill-equipped City Business District (CBD) campuses; while another campus has modern and luxurious large sites with a few hundred students in urban areas. In order to address the issue of equity and equality in the quality of provision of the programmes, especially at different campuses or across brands, participants suggested that the process of accreditation look at both programme and institutional accreditation instead of programme accreditation only. It was also suggested that the processes linked to DHET registration, which consider sites of delivery, facilities, budgets/ financial statements and business plans, do not suffice.

> *"[The Council on Higher Education] have to do both, [programme accreditation and institutional accreditation]. You cannot divorce the programme from the institution, because you can have a good department, with a good programme, but there can also be a very bad department in that same institution, especially with multi-campuses"* (Participant 4:8).

One participant presented another option – voluntary accreditation – explaining the rationale as follows:

> *"A very prime example: if you take an elite institution such as Harvard University… Accreditation in the first instance is voluntary. They don't have to be accredited at programmatic level. It's voluntary and the only reason for it is to get access to the public purse for bursaries and scholarships"* (Participant 7:10).

However, the notion of voluntary accreditation did not receive much support from other participants and the majority agreed that some form of accreditation is needed as a control measure to oversee and regulate the higher education sector in South Africa. In probing for an explanation, the most prominent concern raised indicated that the PHE sector is perceived as not being "mature enough" (Participant 5:17) to handle the responsibility that lies within a framework such as voluntary accreditation; and that a formal (compulsory) form of accreditation is needed. It appears as if 'accreditation status' for programmes not only concerns the quality of the programme, but further functions as a 'public good':

> *"There are a lot of students coming from the rural environments that don't know about this. They just want an education because they want to be employed, and they want to earn money. To them [a student], they just see an institution and it looks good, so they walk in and register"* (Participant 6:8).

The most popular alternative type of accreditation pointed to self-accreditation, within a strict framework of accountability. Another suggestion pointed to having a first layer of compulsory accreditation (either programme or institutional, or both), with a second layer of self-accreditation if an institution has proved itself by means of some form of criteria.

> *"I think compulsory [accreditation] to a point, and then a form of self-accreditation – that can work. Once an institution has proven that that they have the capacity, you've got the expertise to run an institution, to be able to submit, and then the CHE must leave them a while"* (Participant 5:17).

On the topic of ranking as a form of quality assurance, there seemed to be a split. While one group was in favour of ranking, others felt that the criteria or tool which would define the ranking system might be problematic. Those participants in favour of it suggested a less stringent ranking system (or tools) should be used (as is the case in some countries). A few individuals remained indecisive:

> *"Ranking is probably not bad… […] I think [by adding] levels […] [where] your track record determines your level, in terms of your performance […] But, on the other hand, it is going to be difficult, because whoever is going [be ranking] is going to have quite a task […]. I can imagine that every institution can maybe feel different about this […] [It] will have to be a solid kind of "criteria" in terms of "how" and I think performance maybe on that side…"* (Participant 6:7-8).

For the PHE sector to have fair and valid rating, it was suggested that ranking might need to be discipline-specific, as some institutions are small niche providers, while others are large 'university-type' institutions. Another view supported institutional ranking, looking at its size, infrastructure, and output rather than focussing on disciplines or programmes:

> *"At the moment, all hundred and something private institutions, are all evaluated and treated the same. We are seen and treated the same as the "Aroma Therapy College" in someone's backyard"* (Participant 4:11).

> *"I think, we are in [a specialised field], […] it would be nice to be rated as one of the best in South Africa in [our specialised field]"* (Participant 11:15).

Capacity development within the PHE sector was mentioned extensively, and more experienced participants recommended that the responsibility should lie within the Council on Higher Education's (CHE) Quality Enhancement Project (QEP):

> *"[The] Quality Enhancement Project (QEP), through the Audit Directorate, is the ones that are meant to be doing the kind of Quality Assurance on a developmental basis"* (Participant 8:3).

To conclude, small institutions seem more affected by a lack of knowledge on legislative matters, while the larger institutions mostly appear to have sufficient internal expertise that is quite fluent in the quality assurance legislation. On the topic of programme accreditation, the majority of PHEIs acknowledged that some form of accreditation is important and should be compulsory. However, other forms of accreditation should be explored. Most popular recommendations suggested a combination of both programme and institutional accreditation, and some form of self-accreditation at a later stage. Some ideas on ranking as a form of quality assurance were raised.

6.4. PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON THE MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE WITHIN THE INSTITUTIONS

The next section presents a discussion on various topics related to management functions, structures and personnel that determine and implement the quality assurance policy, processes and procedures with the aim of safeguarding the quality of both the institution and its qualifications. Programme accreditation remained the focus and reference for most external processes, and presents a private higher education perspective.

Management functions and structures differ from institution to institution. The data showed that the majority of PHEIs are small (in terms of student enrolments). While the few larger

PHEIs have dedicated staff responsible for quality assurance, smaller institutions do not. Several participants referred to the fact that the roles and responsibilities within PHEIs are not clearly defined and that the person in charge of quality assurance within the institution will also take up the other key roles and responsibilities, which would not be the norm in a public university, for instance. To some, this is a cause for concern:

> *"I would definitely say there needs to be someone, whether it's the registrar you know or quality assurance person, but there needs to be someone who engages in this. The difficulty with "privates" is, is that some of them aren't even big enough to have a registrar, and that is a bit worrying that the academic head is the registrar, is the librarian… That is problematic"* (Participant 4:13).

However, justified by a profit-driven business model, many participants felt that they are able to handle diverse roles and responsibilities and did not see the fusion of roles and responsibilities as a barrier.

> *"So, coming here it wasn't […] a complete culture shock, but previously I didn't do these things [like administration the processes of programme accreditation]. As a Dean at [a public university], we had a team doing it with my oversight and leadership. Here I had to get my hands dirty, because we are small, and I had to kind of provide the leadership here as well, because they didn't have the expertise"* (Participant 12:12).

This fusion of roles and responsibilities makes effective management of quality assurance in some institutions a difficult task.

The prevalent view seems to point to the belief that good governance is imperative for the management of quality assurance in the private higher education sector. Institutions should develop their own institutional governance structures, such as an executive board, academic board, and a quality assurance board, to name a few. In this regard, governance structure values such as peer-accountability and collegiality seem to be the norm. In addition, the majority of the participants interviewed came from key management positions within the public higher education sectors. Subsequently, these participants used many of the public governance structures and processes and implemented these at (private higher education) institutional level. Senate-like executive boards were developed, whereby the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) did not have sole mandate over all academic matters anymore. However, one participant did state that often PHEIs, specifically the smaller institutions, do not understand how to implement such governance structures without losing 'control' as directors in their company, which is driven by profit:

> *"[Many] institutions don't understand the function of the senate. They don't understand how they can make it work in their business structures" (Participant 3:8). "And [in] most private providers, I think, there is a top down approach"* (Participant 3:17).

As mentioned, the general lack of knowledge distribution on quality assurance and 'good practices' in higher education in the majority of private higher education institutions meant that only one or a few individuals handled all the quality assurance processes in the institutions. However, in the larger institutions, it varied. In order to create an atmosphere in which staff can 'buy into' quality assurance practices. Participants explained that when staff understood the reasoning behind the requirements for quality assurance, they were generally more willing to participate in quality assurance initiatives and had a positive impact on the overall quality of the institution's higher education offerings.

> *"I drew the entire faculty and team into the process [of reaccreditation] […] [The] majority of the faculty had a reasonable appreciation for the reaccreditation framework, the value drivers, the policy positions, and [the fact that they were] able to participate as faculty in the faculty-specific aspects of that exercise"* (Participant 7:6).

The majority of participants mentioned that creating a quality culture is a proactive strategy and approach to the management of quality assurance and requires scheduled time, and allocated resources as well as monetary investment. Some institutions chose to use verbal feedback sessions to quality assurance processes and practices, instead of time-consuming written reports. The rationale is that management wishes rather to allow staff to engage in more positive and open discussions than to be bogged down with the compliance activities that are not owned by the institution and its staff. Participants explained that all the staff should 'buy into' the quality culture. Then the management of quality assurance becomes a lot easier.

> *"[We] spend a lot of time on training and on getting people to understand why things work, rather than simply instruct them to follow. And then we employ people who are committed to quality education. So if you've got good staff who believes in quality education, then Quality Assurance is very easy. It's not complicated at all"* (Participant 8:4).

The data presented different approaches to the management of assurance. In the communication of their policies and other quality assurance expectations, the majority of institutions seem to follow informal models, sharing expectations mainly in meetings, through

emails or an intranet, workshops, or during ad hoc training initiatives. One small group of PHEIs were ISO-certified,[13] while the larger, more mature private higher education institutions had developed their own (formal or informal) models of quality assurance.

> *"Very often in education you would find that there isn't really use [formal or standardised quality assurance models], and I'm even a very passionate quality assurance practitioner, and I don't believe in it because it isn't in the right context [of higher education]. In my institution, we use [a] quality cycle as the basis of our approach [that presents key focus areas within our quality process]"* (Participant 4:14).

A policy-based internal quality assurance model seemed to be favoured within most of the participants' institutions. When probed for an explanation surrounding the institutions' approach to their policy-based internal quality assurance model, a link was made between the policies that are required to be drafted by the institutions for their programme accreditation application and the institution's own policies. Most participants seemed to have understood the importance of and even appreciated workable and integrated policies.

> *"We have a policy for pretty much everything we do"* (Participant 3:17).

> *"[We] adapt our policies and standard operating procedures regularly. In a sense, practice informs policy. We wrote all the policies and we implement the policies. But if practice proves to us that the policy needs to be adjusted, we adjust the policy immediately. So it works and that is why I say that the policies become better, and better, and better, and more encompassing in the long run"* (Participant 5:8).

The management of quality assurance at larger private higher education institutions with multiple sites usually involves a combination of strategies and approaches. They often make use of national and regional conferences, various communication methods, and have an integrated web of responsible persons in key positions that ensure their quality assurance policies and practices are executed accordingly. These persons and their responsibilities may be centralised or decentralised. The prevalent view of participants from such institutions seemed to favour a combination of centralised and decentralised management responsibilities.

[13] The ISO 9000 series of documents was created by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) to set international requirements for quality management systems; and is a set of international quality management system standards and guidelines (Omnex, 2016).

> *"[We've] got a centralised curriculum system, and a centralised student administration system, we provide all the assessments here. It is actually quite easy, because you can very quickly pick up if there's an outlier in terms of the results on a particular test, and then also with the students' feedback on their lecturers. Then we also have annual audits with the sites; comparisons with graduation rates, etc."* (Participant 8:4).

To summarise, it was found that smaller institutions also make use of fewer staff members, which gives them significantly more responsibilities in terms of taking up key roles within the institution than would be the case in larger PHEIs or public universities. In relation to the management and implementation of quality assurance policy, processes and procedures, it seems that many of the smaller PHEIs prefer a traditional and formal business model; while larger PHEIs make use of senate-like peer-reviewed governance structures, particularly for the management of academic matters. It further appears as if the majority of institutions have developed their own formal or informal quality assurance models, with fully integrated policies and procedures; and have invested sufficient time, money and resources in the development of a quality culture.

6.5. INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES LINKED TO QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ITS PROCESSES

As mentioned earlier, the conceptual framework for this study was used to guide this discussion on the analysis of the barriers and challenges PHEIs face with regard the management of quality assurance in South Africa. The eight parameters include: institutional design; faculty knowledge, skills and abilities; leadership and ownership; institutional policies and practices; resources; programme design; student profile and the role of the student in the quality assurance process; and stakeholder relationships (see Figure 4.1). While the first seven refer to the internal environment, the last refers to the external environment. Special focus was placed on programme accreditation as a form of external quality assurance. A discussion on each parameter follows below.

6.5.1. Institutional design (or institutional organisation or organisational structure)

The theory from the conceptual framework identified two dimensions within the institutional design: a structural dimension and a contextual dimension.

In relation to the structural dimension (Zaki & Zaki Rashidi, 2013), the most prominent barrier included the absence of sound governance and management structures of quality assurance within the institution. More experienced participants explained that an institution needs to have a good executive management team with excellent academics that both develop and

manage its programmes (or qualifications). Absence of such structures has a negative effect on the institution's quality of provisioning and compliance with external quality assurance processes, such as programme accreditation (Participant 3:7). However, the persons participating in the governance structures have to have the right knowledge mix to contribute effectively.

> *"[In] governance, it is important that the right people sit there, in terms of [their] reference [that] needs to be right. [We] review these committees, [asking:] ["Is] this committee working?" […] [If] a committee is not working and people are not taking things forward, we stop it. […] You cannot just have committees and think you have governance"* (Participant 4:17).

Consequently, sufficiently qualified and experience staff are necessary for the successful execution of quality assurance policies and practices. The staff profile at PHEIs, in terms of the percentage of part-time and full-time staff including academic and support staff, varies greatly. Generally, it appears as if most PHEIs do make use of part-time staff, especially in the beginning, until a programme proves itself viable. Thereafter there seems to be a combination of both part-time and full-time staff. However, most agreed that full-time staff should be the norm.

> *"[We] are trying to get them to recruit more full-time people. It just makes it … just makes everything easier"* (Participant 2:14).

When probed for more clarity, the majority of the participants explained that, although part-time staff may bring industry-specific skills and new expertise to the academic knowledge of the institution, academic ownership is mainly vested in full-time academics.

> *"[We] do have some part-time lecturers working in industry, and that's great. You know, we don't want to lose them, because they bring in other relevant working experiences for the industries in"* (Participant 2:14).

> *"[The] ownership of the programme has to lie with full-time staff – permanent employees […] All [the] key expertise, and subject matter expert knowledge has to lie within the full-time permanent staff"* (Participant 7:7).

Only a very small group of institutions chose to make use of senior academic staff, especially retired senior lecturers and professors. In these cases, the institutions were mainly focussed on offering postgraduate programmes such as postgraduate diplomas, master's and doctoral degrees.

> *"[Ninety] percent of our lecturers are ex-[university] lecturers, senior lecturers and professors who left for various reasons"* (Participant 1:1-2).

However, other participants explained that institutions should rather employ full-time staff, and that part-time staff, including retired staff (looking for part-time employment), tend to lose momentum as the year progresses, which is not beneficial for the institution. A change in academic staff in the middle of the academic year may have a chain of negative outcomes in terms of the consistency of the output of quality higher education offerings, and the effects on the quality assurance processes holistically.

> *"The problem with retired staff [such as retired professors] is that they tend to lose momentum. They are all fired up. They just retired now and they just don't know what to do, and you bring them in now on a part-time basis and half way through the year they say, "Ah, no, I want to go away, my wife said we must go to Hermanus for two months, and the income here isn't that great, and it's actually uncomfortable […] So, then, it's not a career"* (Participant 5:7-8).

Another concern is that often programmes and the dynamics in which they are offered have been shaped around persons – their personalities or availability to lecture a programme. Often it might project negatively on the quality of the higher education offering, and *"then you ask: "Why has the programme taken on the shape it has? What are the teaching outputs? Why are they what they are?"* (Participant 7:7). Most frequently, remedial actions for such programmes seem fruitless, even to a point where institutions are required to submit new programmes for programme accreditation in order to replace the previous ones.

It has also been found that outsourcing or the use of consultants to assist with external quality assurance processes such as programme accreditation seem to be the norm, especially in the interim, before institutions are certain of their programme accreditation status. Financially, it seems more cost-effective. However, the data further revealed that consultants are often contracted to assist with the accreditation processes only. While some consultants have become experts in completing the programme accreditation submission, the institutions in many cases have little or often no capacity to execute the policies and practices as described in their submissions. Overall, it may have a negative effect on the quality of the institution's higher education offering, as well as its accreditation status, especially with re-accreditation a few years later.

> *"[Consultants] learned how to check those boxes, and they all were compliant because it became a science of just how to do window dress…"* (Participant 4:15).

In relation to the contextual dimension (Zaki & Zaki Rashidi, 2013) that characterises the organisation as a whole, the data identified that there exists a significant relationship between the size of the institution and some of the prominent barriers.

In relation to the size of institutions, it has been established that most of the PHEIs are small and therefore have limited funds. Such a barrier creates many other challenges in the management of quality assurance, especially in terms of academic and support staff; the availability of resources; and the goals, strategy and culture of the institution. In a profit-driven private higher education sector, tension between academics, quality assurance practitioners, and management is often present.

> *"I think one of the tensions in the privates is that compliance is a pain, you know, and it's kind of draining the resources. And I think top management in general, just sees the "bottom line" (Participant 12:13).*

When probed for clarity, most participants from small to large institutions directed their responses to the criteria for programme accreditation. For instance, PHEIs are expected to present curricula vitae[14] of specific staff members who are already employed before the programme is accredited. This is a major challenge for most PHEIs as it fails to make business sense.

> *"[The CHE's HEQC] would defer a programme, for instance, that you don't have staff, but who's going to employ staff until the programme is accredited and you keep on having to say the same thing over and over again: 'Of course I don't have staff. I have somebody who can coordinate the programme, but I'm not employing lecturers until I got the programme [accredited]"* (Participant 8:7).

Another challenge in relation to staff is focused on diversity and equity within the staff complement, which is also a requirement for programme accreditation. When probed for more clarity, one participant explained:

> *"[We] will still need to pay a lot more attention to transformation. Our transformation at the level of staff is a little bit more difficult, because, as*

[14] This is only required from private higher education institutions. Public universities are exempt from it.

> *difficult as it is to find an auditor who wants to teach, it's even more difficult to find [an African] auditor who wants to teach"* (Participant 3:4).

To conclude, it appears as if the institutional design, in terms of staff composition, roles and responsibilities of staff, as well as the size of the institution have an impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of the management of quality assurance within the institution.

6.5.2. Faculty knowledge, skills and abilities

As established earlier, often the roles and responsibilities within PHEIs are not clearly defined.

> *"[In] most institutions, you have the CEO, who's also the registrar, who's also a lecturer, and also the manager"* (Participant 3:7).

This relates not only to the persons involved in quality assurance, but also to the academics themselves, and the challenges with finding appropriately qualified and suitable academic staff in PHEIs seem to be a continuous struggle. The PHE sector is maybe even struggling more than the public universities, because of the fact that PHEIs cannot pay the salaries public universities can, and there is much more prestige involved in lecturing at public universities than at private higher education institutions. Another reason points to the PHE sector that offers programmes in such niche fields of specialisation.

> *"[There's] a shortage of academic staff generally, and I tell you, all the institutions are battling with it. […] It is especially difficult, […] in our niche sectors. […] [An] academic is not just anybody. An academic has to actually care about teaching the stuff that they love. […] there's always a toss-up between, do you want somebody with more committed with being a teacher, or more committed to [their field or discipline]?"* (Participant 3:4).

It has been noted that the majority of PHEIs choose to employ younger, yet qualified staff. While a lower pay-scale is a big reason for this, another reason seems to be linked to the enthusiasm and energy that young academics bring to an institution. This appears to have a positive influence on the quality of the higher education product and its services holistically.

> *"We get staff that still has stars in their eyes, and they are enthusiastic about building something which they feel part of"* (Participant 5:7).

The negative side to this is that younger faculty often lacks academic leadership within their institutions.

In conclusion, it appears as if the staff composition and their faculty knowledge, skills and abilities have an impact on the proficiency of the management of quality assurance.

6.5.3. Leadership and ownership

As already established, the nature and size of PHEIs lends itself to a preference for part-time, rather than full-time time academic staff. In addition, institutions that wish to offer quality higher education offerings do need committed experts with strong ethical considerations to invest in the PHEIs for the long run. Participants explained that a lack of academic ownership can cause great harm to an institution's reputation.

Most senior academic staff – although adequately qualified with one level higher than the programme it is offering – merely hold a bachelor's degree (mapped at NQF Level 7) with some postgraduate certificates or diplomas or an honours degree. Those that do have higher qualifications often seemed inexperienced, especially when it comes to leading a team of academics on high-level pedagogical paths. The lack of deeper knowledge about curriculum design and assessment practices aimed at higher education tuition, and a lack of knowledge of the higher education frameworks appear to be the most recurring themes and have a significant impact on the quality of higher education provisioning:

> *"[We had to] appoint more qualified people, especially managers. And then we needed to have research and publication, so the Institution made several senior academic appointments. And because of all these changes, we have increased the number of doctorates in our programmes […] appointing us, as senior people, top management feels that their quality has improved, [and the] students are happy…"* (Participant 12:13).

The lack of academic leadership within the field of research has also been identified as a major challenge. Participants explained that their institutions do not have the capacity to produce research outputs. Instead, they encourage their staff to pursue post-graduate studies. Some institutions offer free or discounted tuition to their staff, while others fund their academic staff's studies at reputable public higher education institutions. The concern here points to the lack of academic research capacity and leadership within the institutions to guide the development of younger researchers.

> *"[A] lot of private providers battle with research, and the reason they are battling with research is that their people in academic leadership positions are not researchers […] how do they build their younger researchers? Most just go off and do their PhD's, but that's your own research. It's not institutional*

> *research. It's supposed to build student research. It's about enabling junior staff to publish and assist them and support them in that process"* (Participant 3:7).

To conclude, while academic ownership with a majority of part-time staff may be difficult to obtain and maintain, a lack of academic leadership has been identified as a major challenge. Both appear to be instrumental in the successful implementation and management of quality assurance in private higher education institutions.

6.5.4. Institutional policies and practices

While the majority of participants acknowledged the importance of workable and integrated policies in their institutions, a small group of participants reported that they were, for instance, obliged to submit policies for programme accreditation that were neither necessary nor implemented in their institution. Others chose to combine some of the policies that were required for programme accreditation.

> *"[We] decided to split the policies into institutional policies for our institutional management, and then programme accreditation policies so that each qualification has its own set of policies"* (Participant 1:14).

> *"[Some] of the policies that they [the CHE] request, you can actually put into one policy, or there might be one policy that they request, which is in two policies at our institution"* (Participant 11:10).

With regard to policy formation, there appears to be a general lack of skills and expertise at many PHEIs. While it appears as if many institutions make use of "policy-borrowing" in order to formulate their policies, a small group of participants did explain a rigorous process they follow when developing their policies. Often the use of legal counsel would form part of this process. Consultants would also frequently be used to assist with the policy formation and the development of other quality assurance tools. One of the participants, who was quite involved in consultancy work, explained the rationale:

> *"[Many PHEIs] use my policy {laughing}. I give them the policies and tell them that they should just customise it, because the policies work. They should just customise it for the nature of your organisation, and according to your own mission and vision of your organisation. But, I think it's, it's also based on experience. I've been a sitting in a [public university's] senate having to deal with policies and policy formulation"* (Participant 5:9).

While the programme accreditation process requires institutions to submit over thirty policies, a lack of relevant skills in policy-formation has been identified as a major concern for the private higher education sector. It appears as if operative, workable and integrated policies and processes are considered fundamental for the effective management of quality assurance.

Another concern here points to benchmarking. Generally, it seems as if institutions do not do high-level benchmarking of good practices in higher education. Some private higher education institutions did indicate that they do benchmark themselves against other institutions (both public and private higher education institutions, and both locally and internationally) within their industry, but were mostly restricted in terms of curriculum design. Even though this is a requirement for the SAQA submission (often called for under the heading related to 'comparability') that forms part of the programme accreditation process in 2016, it is often misunderstood or just a basic desktop comparability to national and international curricula. More experienced participants mentioned that benchmarking would be a valuable activity.

> *"We have a lot to learn from the public [higher education] institutions, and they might have also things to learn from us […] [and often] what is happening in the public [higher education institutions] is seen as the benchmark, and we must all talk to that benchmark, or work towards that benchmark"* (Participant 10:4).

6.5.5. Resources

The financial outlay in relation to infrastructure seemed to hold many challenges for all PHEIs, regardless of their size. The cost of compliance to quality assurance regulations and related processes seems to be a huge barrier for most participants:

> *"[The] cost of compliance is so high, the stronger people are going to survive […] it is just too expensive […] I don't know how [the small providers] survive"* (Participant 8:6).

However, one participant maintained that if PHEIs do not have the funds to pay for things like programme accreditation and site visits, which form part of external quality assurance processes, they do not belong in the higher education arena:

> *"And a lot of private providers moan about the money […] I just say, that if you can't afford to pay for a site visit [which forms part of the programme accreditation process], the chances that you having the resources to introduce a new program is zero"* (Participant 3:24).

It appears as if private higher education institutions that have made that initial financial and infrastructural layout testified to increasing student enrolments. Moreover, it appears as if many of the modern, more 'cutting-edge' institutions are experimenting with non-traditional physical layouts of their premises or furniture. For instance, one participant in this study mentioned the following:

> *"[I was once at] a design college that said they don't have furniture […], but if you go there, […] you see […] creative open spaces with the couches and "poeffes"*[15] *and that's all they need. [I just say,] don't judge them because they don't have furniture. It's supposed to be that way"* (Participant 4:20).

It further appears as if efficient student support hinges on the development and investment in current and updated information and communication technologies (ICTs):

> *"At some stage we are always exposed to the limitations of technology, but we expand our technology at this point, faster than we expand the student numbers […] [We] are well in advance of technology provision for the current student numbers. We can take more without any issues. So, we upgrade our levels of technology annually"* (Participant 5:2).

The challenges related to ICTs are very much linked to the requirement of programme accreditation that all PHEIs should have ample higher education reference material and a budget or list of library holdings, which form part of criterion seven of programme accreditation. Out of all the participants, only two institutions made use of a full library, in its traditional sense, and even had permanent and professionally trained librarians on different campuses. The majority, however, had very small libraries (if at all) and mainly made use of various electronic databases such as J-store, Sabinet and Ebscohost. Most also made use of free 'Open Resources' that are downloaded and saved in their electronic library holdings and/or put onto learner support management systems such as Moodle or Blackboard.

Many participants admitted having discussed but decided against the use of tablets, for instance. Others provide tablets for all their registered students.

> *"[Every] student gets issued with a tablet computer on registration, and that's the tool that the student uses to communicate with us"* (Participant 5:1).

A small number of institutions offered tablets with a list of stored electronic resources for their students in order to justify the fact that they did not have any hardcopy books. It was

[15] Pouffes: a cushioned footstool or low seat with no back, usually round in shape and can be covered with various types material (fabrics).

observed that most participants supported the idea of using electronic or online library resources rather than an actual 'traditional' library set-up. One participant explained that the students had asked for a bigger library, but upon further investigation, their rationale was to have more space to work and that they required better Wi-Fi coverage while they were on campus, and very seldom made use of the actual library resources.

To conclude, it seems as if the availability of relevant and sufficient resourcing is essential for the successful and efficient management of quality assurance.

6.5.6. Student profile and the role of the student

The student profile in the PHE sector has changed drastically, and the influence of technology and demands of the economy seem to be contributing factors. A few participants admitted that, in some instances, they almost never engaged with their students face-to-face, and had to re-think the ways in which they should engage with them, using technology.

> *"[The] profile of the student changed over the years. Previously, maybe twenty years back, you will get somebody arriving with the whole family to register at the institution. Nowadays they do it online and you probably won't see anybody at the institution. So, there's a different angle and a different approach to being a student. […] [The] whole education system is exposed to technology"* (Participant 6:9).

Within institutions offering mainly Business, Commerce and Management Studies, it appears that the larger university-type PHEIs cater more for the school-leaving student, through contact and distance mode of provisioning, while smaller institutions predominantly cater for the 'working adult' through distance mode of provisioning.

It further seems as if the institutions that understand the profile of their students are able to manage quality assurance practices and processes more effectively within their institutions.

6.5.7. Programme design

Participants who are experienced in both curriculum design and quality assurance see curriculum design as a crucial part of the programme design that forms the basis for the programme accreditation submission.

It seems as if a lack of knowledge of curriculum design and development, and how to map it out in terms of programme design, is a challenge for most providers.

> *"In the process of curriculum design, there were always the secondary responsibilities related to accreditation. Once the curriculum is designed, or re-innovated, the process for accreditation commences"* (Participant 7:5). *"I also think that curriculum development skills, particularly in small private provider structures, are often not available. So that's again, a somewhat technical discourse in itself. They often need to sub-contract those skills, perhaps while they build their own capacity around that…"* (Participant 7:7).

As pointed out earlier, some providers do not have the necessary infrastructure for higher education programme offerings. This then raised another concern, asking whether certain programmes belong in the higher education space, or should rather be presented as short courses. One participant explains:

> *"[If] you cannot have a fantastic executive team that comes with that fantastic course, you should rather offer it as a short course, because it's not going to go through as a higher education qualification. […] If you knew what you were doing, you wouldn't try and accredit something that actually, by its very nature, should be a short course"* (Participant 3:7).

Mode of delivery for higher education programmes seems to be another challenge. Even though the DHET and the CHE only recognise contact or distance legislatively, it appears as if most institutions follow a 'blended' mode of delivery.

> *"[We have] a kind of blurred relationship […] between the distance and contact programmes. […] [We] call it […] blended mode"* (Participant 12:5).

It has also been noted that any institution that wishes to change a programme's mode of delivery, especially from contact to distance mode, has to consider the many implications for the programme, as well as institutional design. While programmes that are being offered in the distance mode might need fewer full-time academic staff, they will require higher volumes of skilled support staff. Such programmes also require large capital investments to support the distance education infrastructure. Institutions that fail to recognise the differences in teaching and learning methodologies, infrastructure and resourcing that come with the changed mode of delivery often battle with quality higher education offerings of that particular mode.

> *"Some private providers […] thought: "Great, we can take our contact learning qualification and we can just deliver it to our students via the post" […]. You cannot assume that if you are a good contact provider, that you will be a good*

> *distance provider. This is a completely different pedagogy and paradigms. Staffing needs to have different approaches […] A lot of people [also] think it's cheaper to run a distance programme because you don't have the student in class, but that has not been our experience. Our experience is that when you are running distance programmes, it's more difficult and more expensive"* (Participant 3:6).

> *"The problem is, once you start with distance education, it is amazing to see how you're operational and administration staff numbers increase drastically. And the reason for that is, your setup is different"* (Participant 11: 11-12).

As mentioned earlier, eight parameters for the management of quality assurance are presented. Numbers 1 to 7 focus mainly on the internal environment, while number 8, stakeholder relationships, focusses on the external environment. The latter will be discussed next.

6.5.8. Stakeholder relationships

The data analysis process identified the four lower-order themes in relation to stakeholder relationships. The first refers to stakeholder engagement and communication, the second to the complexity of quality assurance and higher education legislation, while the third refers to various process-based challenges. The last is dedicated to the criteria and minimum standards linked to programme accreditation and re-accreditation. A private higher education view is presented. A discussion on each follows below.

Firstly, the communication between the different stakeholders was raised as a major barrier for PHEIs. A number of participants mentioned that the processes and communication channels between the DHET, SAQA, the Quality Councils and professional bodies seem to be fragmented. Concerns were mainly focussed on the ambiguity and uncertainty of the different stakeholders' policies, processes, and terminology (or lack thereof), which seemed to be adding to the confusing and often conflicted messages from the different stakeholders.

> *"I just think the communication should be better […] I think the working relationships between SAQA, DHET and CHE should really be improved to a much greater extent. I think that they are trying to improve that, […] [but] they should know what each one is doing, and their communication amongst themselves should reflect this"* (Participant 11:15).

> *"I don't understand why SAQA gets involved with applications. A lot of the information they need, is also already on the online application at the CHE? It*

> *seems like the information is going between the members, but they don't administer it and then you need to re-submit everything on a different format. I just think it's pointless. And then, we also have the documentation that needs to be submitted at the Department of Higher Education"* (Participant 3:24).

Participants often raised various concerns regarding the manner in which the state and its quality council govern the higher education sector. Most participants explained that they felt that the state's approach used to be punitive and very bureaucratic, but has definitely changed the past few years to become more focussed on capacity building within the higher education sector.

> *"[Initially] it was a very much kind of a stick-approach, and almost a kind of, I want to use the word punitive […] [It] was very much a kind of strict compliance. […] There was definitely the feeling, of having to prove yourself, which, again, as I said, is not a bad thing, because it meant that illegal providers were removed from the system"* (Participant 2:7).

Secondly, the complexity of quality assurance and higher education legislation proved to be a major barrier for private higher education institutions. The lack of the aforementioned in-house expertise leaves many gaps for institutions as they grapple with external quality assurance policies and regulations to make their own interpretations. The data indicated that often participants are unsure about what to do, or what is expected of them.

> *"We all come from the business sector. We sometimes don't even know the words the CHE use"* (Participant 1:14).

Consequently, engaging in the policy and regulatory processes is often perceived as a very negative experience, and it often seems as if institutions blame the inefficiency of the external quality assurance structures and processes for their unsuccessful compliance. However, it appears as if some institutions will use their 'ignorance' as an excuse for non-compliance to legislation. One of the participants explained:

> *"[For instance, some] institutions will always use accreditation as an excuse for their deficiencies. The fact of the matter, if you do accreditation properly, understanding it, engaging with the criteria, you don't actually have a problem"* (Participant 3:24).

Thirdly, the fundamental processes of the DHET, SAQA, and the Quality Council were criticised by most participants. Almost all complaints focussed on the long turnaround-time

for these processes – the combination of the process of programme accreditation at the CHE, the registration and re-registration at the DHET, and the programme/ qualification registration at SAQA. However, most of the concerns pointed to the processes aligned to programme accreditation. While all three processes are usually completed within two to three years, a few participants mentioned that their programmes were processed within a year. The duration of these processes seems to have a significant impact on their ability to respond to present labour needs. Duplications, within the three processes, but more specifically within programme accreditation, also seemed to be a time-consuming and unnecessary task.

> *"And it takes four days to upload that – four days to upload one programme… and then you've got to do it over again because ninety percent of the documents for the next programme are exactly the same which you've uploaded four days ago"* (Participant 5:16).

> *"Turn-over time. I think that is primarily the issue. You know that they require you to put all that surety in. Everything must be in place and then they take eighteen months to accredit a programme. So, even though we have that capital, you have to invest in all of that, all the equipment, or whatever you're going to need on board, and then wait for them. Till they decide. You can't do anything"* (Participant 1:17).

Fourthly, the criteria and minimum standards linked to programme accreditation and re-accreditation criteria were also identified as a barrier in the management of quality assurance.

While the South African programme accreditation framework is mainly based on set criteria and their minimum standards, the data revealed that these criteria were criticised. Most concerns pointed to a lack of guidance in terms of terminology, definitions, norms and standards, which cause many institutions to grapple with quality assurance instruments, trying to interpret what is required of them. In such an environment *"…each person adopts his own philosophy"* (Participant 1:19). One example, for instance, is where a participant explains that an institution's 'traditional' way of thinking about quality and quality standards is not necessarily what the HEQC understands of quality (external quality assurance). Consequently, compliance with external quality assurance legislation proceeds from institutions' own views on quality and quality assurance:

> *"Everybody always talked about standard [referring to the quality of education], […] the standards are dropping. How can you know that? And one*

> *of the professors in Engineering says to me: "I know that standards are […] not dropping, because I routinely fail sixty percent of my fist year class". So, I said to him: "Okay. So that's one possible explanation. The other one is that you're a bad lecturer, because if I had sixty percent of my class failing, I would seriously be worried about what I was doing wrong. I'm clearly not teaching that. So, don't assume that your understanding […], is actually going to be the HEQC's understanding" (Participant 3:25-26).*

The majority also commented on the actual criteria for programme accreditation, particularly those relating to the classification of the different modes of delivery; curriculum design, particularly recognition of prior learning (PRL) and work integrated learning (WIL). The lack of recognition of the use of ICTs in the higher education sphere, especially in student support, mode of delivery, learning materials, and library holdings is also problematic. The criteria themselves also seem to pose a cause for concern.

As established earlier, some participants mentioned that they perceived the criteria as ambiguous and that the criteria for programme accreditation should be re-written. However, there were those participants that were comfortable about and confident in the current framework and criteria of programme accreditation, but remain uncertain about the requirements and criteria of re-accreditation as it seems to a more complicated process than the first.

6.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided the qualitative findings obtained during the study, during which four key themes were identified. Each was explained, by means of examples taken out of the twelve semi-structured interviews.

The first theme focussed on the participants' knowledge and understanding of both quality and quality assurance in higher education. This was linked to sub-research question 1. Two lower-order themes emerged. The first focussed on the views or definitions of quality within the private higher education sector. The second focussed on the knowledge and understanding of quality assurance in private higher education.

The second theme focussed on the views and perceptions on the requirements of the quality assurance legislative environment in higher education, which are also linked to sub-research question 2. The lower-order themes identified focussed on the understanding of the requirements of the South African higher education and quality assurance legislative environment, and the participants' views on programme accreditation as a form of external

quality assurance and recommendations for alternative accreditation models in South African Higher Education.

The third theme explored the views of the participants on the management of quality assurance within the institutions, and was linked to sub-research question 3. Two lower-order themes were presented. The first refers to management functions, structures and personnel that determine and implement the quality assurance policies; and the second on the management and implementation of quality assurance policy, processes and procedures with the aim of safeguarding the quality of both the institution and its qualifications.

The fourth theme identified institutional barriers and challenges linked to the management of quality assurance, as well as the legislative environment. This was linked to sub-research question 4. The conceptual framework of this study was used to lead this discussion, using the eight parameters. The first seven include institutional design; faculty knowledge, skills and abilities; leadership and ownership; institutional policies and practices; resources; programme design; and student profile and the role of the student in the quality assurance process. The eighth refers to stakeholder relationships and with four major barriers: stakeholder engagement and communication, the complexity of quality assurance and higher education legislation; the various process-based challenges; and lastly the criteria and minimum standards linked to programme accreditation and re-accreditation.

The analysis of these findings will be presented in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 7
DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS

7.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews the findings in relation to the literature in order to answer the research question: *How do private higher education institutions (PHEIs) manage quality assurance as they engage in the process of programme accreditation in South Africa?*

The four sub-research questions guide this chapter. Subsequently, this chapter provides a summary on how private higher education institutions view quality and how it influences the way in which quality is assured. It further explores how the different stakeholders understand the quality assurance legislative framework for PHEIs in South Africa. It follows with an overview of the key findings on how PHEIs manage quality assurance within their institutions, and concludes by presenting the challenges that PHEIs face as they engage in quality assurance processes and procedures.

7.2. UNDERSTANDING AND PERCEPTIONS OF PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (PHEI) OF BOTH QUALITY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The literature views or defines quality in terms of something that is 'exceptional', as 'perfection' or 'consistency'; as 'fitness for purpose'; as 'fitness of purpose'; as 'value for money' or as 'transformation' (CHE, 2004a; Geda, 2014; Harvey, 2007; Harvey & Knight, 1996; Lagrosen *et al*., 2004; Luckett, 2006; Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2002). In South Africa, the CHE's Higher Education Quality Council's (HEQC) understanding of quality incorporates fitness for purpose and individual and social transformation, within an overarching fitness of purpose framework (CHE, 2001). For programme accreditation, the CHE's HEQC mainly adopts a 'mission-based fitness for purpose' in its framework and criteria (CHE, 2004a; CHE, 2004b).

During the data analysis phase, it was noted that private higher education institutions frequently have differing views of quality. Subsequently, the following views or definitions of quality in private higher education institutions were identified: quality as 'exceptional'; quality as 'value-for-money'; quality as 'fitness for purpose'; quality as 'fitness of purpose'; and quality as 'transformation'. It was further noted that in some cases their views did not necessarily correspond with that of the public higher education sector. Their views and understanding of each are summarised below:

Some private higher education institutions' view of quality resonates with Harvey's conception of quality as 'exceptional' (Harvey, 2007:5). These PHEIs often associated themselves in terms of achieving exceptional quality standards, particularly in specific niche disciplines in their unique curriculum or programme design, or addressing specific needs in the industry. This is particularly evident in the smaller institutions:

> *"We are the leading organisation in this country, in Africa, in what we do"* (Participant 1:6).

In addition, for the private higher education sector, a respectable reputation in the industry is most desired and sometimes carries more weight for them and their students than to be 'accredited'.

The view or definition of quality in terms of 'value-for-money' usually relates to the investor's considerations in terms of its return on investment (ROI) (Carnoy, 2005). For the PHE sector, investors vary and might be companies paying for their employees to pursue higher education qualifications, parents or students. Ultimately, for students (and their parents) suitable or desired employability is usually the pay-off:

> *"Our purpose is to deliver professionals (specialists) to the labour-market and not generalists"* (Participant 1:3).

However, companies seek specialised skills within their companies, and to become cutting-edge within their own sector. For them, return of investment (ROI) would be measured in terms of productivity that would ultimately lead to more profit.

> *"[The] sponsor [company] would want to know whether he is receiving any [Return on Investment (ROI)] from the money spent on training. ROI will indicate to both the sponsor [company] and the student what his contribution was towards the business, be it saving on expenses, manpower or time. ROI further could stem from innovation, […] [improvement in] systems […] or many others"* (Participant 9:2).

The literature reveals that there are various ways in which the definition of quality in terms of 'fitness for purpose' is understood (Harvey, 2007). Accordingly, some private higher education institutions' view of quality resonates with Harvey's conceptions of a 'mission-based fitness-for-purpose', and 'fitting-the-customer's satisfaction' (as a form of fitness of purpose).

A ‘mission-based fitness for purpose’ seemed to be influenced by the mission-based approach to the programme accreditation framework and criteria, as well as how such processes are structured.

> *“[Everything] that we do, must come to some kind of conclusion that can be evaluated against the quality of what our mission and vision are” (Participant 5:6).*

Accordingly, ‘fitting-the-customer’s satisfaction’ (as a form of ‘fitness for purpose’) is operationalised in terms of quality assurance processes that are mainly focussed on the students’ experiences throughout their studies. This is done by implementing and managing specialised student support activities and processes, and usually aligns all its educational products and services to conform to and address its customers’ needs and their requirements.

> *“Customer service is priority”* (Participant 9:14).

The literature further distinguishes between the definition of quality as ‘fitness for purpose’ and ‘fitness of purpose’ (Cele, 2005; CHE, 2004a, Harvey, 2007). The latter requires institutions to consider national goals, priorities and targets in developing their vision and mission, while aligning their own vision, mission and values within the legislative framework requirements so that learning programmes and supportive policies address the legislative obligations and transformation agendas of South Africa. It further recognises the need for further alignment of additional layers of legislative requirements – within specific learning disciplines internationally as well as educational needs and requirements of neighbouring and other countries (CHE, 2004a; Cele, 2005). The data revealed that most private higher education institutions view quality in higher education in terms of ‘fitness of purpose’. Compliance with the relevant higher education legislation and regulation is a necessity as it equates to their license to operate as legal higher education providers in South Africa, and ultimately increases their profit margins.

> *“[All] our qualifications […] are accredited and appear on the SAQA website. […] So [students] can verify that…”* (Participant 7:10).

It was also found that the majority of private providers seek further affiliations and accreditation elsewhere. For instance, business schools would seek to get AMBA-accreditation, which is an international affiliation and increases their reputation, even though it has no specific legal standing in South Africa.

Viewing quality as 'transformation' seems to be an important factor for both the HEQC and the PHE sector; and constitutes enrichment and empowerment of its stakeholders as well as adding specific value to them (Baumgardt, 2013; Badat, 2010; CHE, 2001; CHE, 2004a; DoE, 1997b; Harvey, 2006; Harvey, 2007). It is also captured in programme accreditation criteria 2 and 3, where equity should be addressed.

In this regard, the data revealed that the majority of private higher education institutions view quality as 'transformation' and feel that they are actively contributing towards the sector and industry, at national and institutional level.

At a national level, many providers stated that they contribute towards transformation of the country in various ways. Their contribution is viewed, firstly, as doing ethical business, and by offering qualifications that are relevant to the country. Secondly, many PHEIs work together, whereby they collaborate and combine their efforts in order to improve the sector.

Thirdly, providers feel they contribute towards transformation of companies in the industry and the students alike. At institutional level, PHEIs address this by offering 'applied degrees' to specific companies or enterprises. In doing so, institutions feel they are instrumental in creating new knowledge for those entities and ultimately contribute towards transformation in South Africa:

> *"Clients who have specific expertise or a niche in business which require special skills can be accommodated in an applied programme. […] they want them trained in a specific specialisation area, but within [a] registered programme"* (Participant 9:17-18).

As established, the way in which quality is viewed greatly impacts on the way that quality is assured. Within this study, quality assurance has been understood in terms of "the systematic internal and external management procedures and mechanisms by which an institution of higher education assures its stakeholders of the quality of its systems, processes, products and outcomes and of its ability to manage the maintenance and enhancement [of] quality" (Luckett, 2006:14), and the findings confirmed this. Literature further identified the purpose of external quality assurance as compliance, control, enhancement (or improvement) and accountability (Harvey, 2007). While most of these purposes are recognised in the private higher education sector, they appear to be conflated, as the primary focus remained on the protection of the students.

> *"[Accreditation] is ultimately about protecting the consumer"* (Participant 7:1).
> *[…] "[The] student requires […] protection"* (Participant 7:10).

The approaches to and effectiveness of external quality assurance and related quality assurance mechanisms within (for instance accreditation) were questioned.

> *"The issue is that accreditation is a compliance-activity, it's not a quality assurance mechanism"* (Participant 8:10).

With regard to internal quality assurance, its purposes were linked to the way in which the private higher education institutions viewed quality and differed from institution to institution. Furthermore, the profit imperative drove many of the internal quality assurance processes, as the majority of providers are 'for-profit' business entities.

To conclude, the widely held definition or view of quality pointed to the second definition of 'fitness-for-purpose", which is referred to as 'fitting-customer-satisfaction'. By concentrating and allocating much of its resources on student support, it aims at providing higher education products and services to students that the public higher education sector is unable to do. Some examples point to smaller student groups (classes); more informal or open relationships between the academic and support staff, and the students; closer vigilance and support to 'at-risk' students; effective use of high-level ICTs that fit in with the students' profile and needs, for instance using online student discussion groups or forums for working adults, to name a view. Its niche or specialised fields of study also make it a preferred choice for many of its customers (both companies and students) in addressing the increased need for continuous specialised life-long learning, another by-product of globalisation (Carnoy, 2005). Consequently, quality assurance practices and processes within the private higher education sector are mainly focussed on the customer.

7.3. VIEWS AND PERCEPTIONS ON THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN QUALITY ASSURANCE LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

At institutional level, the data revealed that key senior persons in private higher education institutions, who are expected to have high levels of understanding of both the higher education and quality assurance legislative requirements, often actually have limited relevant knowledge. This may result in dubious operations, or sometimes even de-registration of private higher education institutions, or non-accreditation (or re-accreditation) of their learning programmes. The data further revealed that there are only a handful of providers who have experts that understand the total quality assurance legislative environment; and these experts are usually found at the larger entities. Furthermore, there is a great need within the private higher education sector for more capacity development initiatives, and more specifically on the processes of programme accreditation.

While the understanding of accreditation, according to the literature, usually refers to the processes that evaluate whether specific minimum standards in a higher education setting are met; it also calls for and expects accountability and transparency in all its processes, and generally includes facets of quality enhancement (or improvement). Accreditation also allows for the facilitation of student mobility, both locally and internationally (Mizikaci, 2006; Sanyal, 2013; Van Damme, 2002).

In South Africa, it has been established that the nature of the programme accreditation framework and criteria is developmental, as it provides guidelines and broad indicators in the form of minimum standards for institutions to develop and conceptualise their own governance and policy structures. Its main purpose is to encourage institutions to build institutional and programme capacity in developing new programmes, particularly at historically disadvantaged institutions and new institutions, and to protect students from poor quality programmes (CHE, 2004a).

However, the data indicated that even though the private higher education sector understands the state's aforementioned intentions, it is not perceived as developmental in its approach.

> *"If you read [CHE's] policies, it is developmental in nature, to help institutions but they act in a punitive nature. It is not supportive, it's punitive. The same with the […] registration [process] at the Department of Higher Education"* (Participant 1:6).

The data also confirmed that most private providers support the principle of accreditation and acknowledge that accreditation plays an important part in the quality assurance functions of the sector. However, the focus on programme accreditation seemed to be a fragmented approach to accreditation, while a combination of both programme and institutional accreditation seemed to be preferred. Interestingly, it seems to be the opinion of many participants (especially at the larger and more reputable institutions) that there is a maturity within the PHE sector and that most institutions do want to provide quality higher education offerings. Hence, with the increasing demand on institutions (in terms of regulation), and the large volumes of applications received by the CHE, the idea of self-accreditation – within a strict framework of accountability – was favoured.

On the topic of ranking of PHEIs, the data revealed that consensus could not be reached. The most popular suggestions led to discussion on a discipline-specific ranking system; while some focussed on institutional ranking. While half felt it a commendable and even

necessary idea, others felt it would create another layer of bureaucracy and unnecessary competition and strife amongst providers.

Various stakeholders held different views on how they thought quality in higher education should be externally assured. In addition, the management of internal quality assurance seemed to differ quite extensively, and will be discussed in the next section.

7.4. MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

In this study, the management of quality assurance refers to the overall management functions, structures and personnel that determine and implement the quality assurance policies of an institution, which in turn aims to safeguard the quality of the institution's services and products (Luckett, 2006).

The absence of management functions, structures and personnel seemed to be the major barrier in the management of quality assurance. The staff profile of the private higher education sector, in terms of the percentage of part-time and full-time staff, including academic and support staff, varies significantly. However, in larger PHEIs there seems to be differentiation in terms of staff's roles and responsibilities, especially in relation to quality assurance and management and academic faculty; while smaller private providers seldom have such differentiation. It also seems to be the norm for persons in charge of the management of quality assurance within the institution to take up other key roles and responsibilities, which is not usually the practice within public universities.

> *"[In] most institutions, you have the CEO, who's also the registrar, who's also a lecturer, and also the manager"* (Participant 3:7).

In undergraduate programmes, it appears as if many PHEIs choose to employ newly qualified staff; while a very small group of institutions chose to make use of senior academic staff, especially retired senior lecturers and professors. In these cases, the institutions were mainly focussed on offering postgraduate programmes, such as master's and doctoral degrees. With younger, inexperienced academics in leadership positions, academic leadership is often lacking and educational and research outputs usually reflect that. Retired senior lecturers or professors may battle with staying abreast with the increasing changes within various industries; or most often do not see their positions as a career, but rather as recreational. They may perhaps suspend their services any time if experienced as an inconvenience to them.

The use of consultants and outsourcing of educational services seems to be the norm within the PHE sector. Such services vary from assistance with the application for programme accreditation, to designing and setting up quality assurance processes and tools, providing academic leadership within a specific time, capacity development, assistance with policy-formation, curriculum design and other services. In some cases, a consultative team might be employed, especially in the interim before institutions are certain of their programme accreditation status. Such practices, if managed properly, may provide quality educational outputs. However, it appears as if institutions generally do not have knowledgeable and in some cases even competent persons to manage quality assurance within the institutions to initiate, implement, manage and maintain quality standards, often resulting in poor quality educational outputs. This usually has a negative effect on the governance and management of internal quality assurance processes and procedures.

Governance executed at national level is often referred to as “external governance” (De Boer, 2009:10), while governance executed at institutional (or micro) level, is often referred to as “internal governance” (De Boer & File, 2009; Hénard & Mitterle, 2010; Luckett, 2006). The data indicated that effective and efficient internal governance has been recognised as an important factor influencing the management of quality assurance within PHEIs.

Larger more established PHEIs appear to favour more collegial and peer-driven governance structures such as ‘senate-like’ executive boards, primarily for their academic management; while smaller institutions favour ‘traditional’ bureaucratic structures of governance with a ‘top-down’ approach to the management and implementation of their quality assurance practices and processes.

Although the approaches to the management of internal quality assurance practices differed greatly, the data did indicate certain trends, briefly mentioned below.

As identified earlier, the majority of reputable and profit-driven PHEIs seem to spend much of their time and resources on building a good rapport with the industry, as well as to “produce work-ready graduates” (Participant 10:10). Hence, many PHEIs have developed their quality assurance models and approaches around customer satisfaction and/or meeting customer needs.

While ‘franchising’ of higher education programmes or services is not allowed (DHET, 2016b), the data further revealed that larger institutions with a national footprint of multiple campuses frequently use a centralised management approach to quality assurance. Consequently, most of the management tasks such as communication, organisation, leadership and planning in relation to, for instance, curriculum design, training, student

support, and the like, are usually done at head office and delegated through bureaucratic structures.

Some of their strategies for the management and implementation of quality assurance would include the use of national and regional conferences, where they would communicate relevant information, expectations and responsibilities related to quality assurance matters, or use such gatherings as a training platform for capacity development on various issues that might require special attention for improvement. However, it generally seems as if meetings and ad hoc scheduled training sessions were the most favoured to communicate expectations for quality assurance processes and procedures.

Mature institutions (in terms of years of existence) seemed to have developed and implemented their own formal or informal quality assurance models; while a small group of PHEIs preferred being ISO-accredited and compliant.

However, most PHEIs favoured a policy-based internal quality assurance model, which is mainly driven externally (i.e. as indicated and prescribed by external stakeholders) (CHE, 2003a; Cele, 2005; Mhlanga, 2013; Singh, 2010). Consequently, a link was drawn between the policies that are required to be drafted by the institutions for their programme accreditation submission, and the institution's own policies. In most cases the policies required for programme accreditation forms the foundation for the institutional policies. It further appears as if the engagement with external quality assurance processes has influenced the internal quality assurance process, as expressed by this participant:

> *"[External quality assurance processes, such as programme accreditation] forces an institution to do self-reflection, to air the dirty laundry, and to say: "These are the gaps. What are we going to do about it?"* (Participant 2:8).

It has been established that effective and efficient management of quality assurance in higher education (both internal and external) does not occur in isolation, but is affected by and deployed within a global, national and institutional dimension (Badri & Younies, 2006; Barnett, 1992; Cheng, 2003; Csizmadia, 2006; Kettunen, 2008; Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2003). Accordingly, the preferred definition of internal quality assurance for this study states the following:

> "Internal quality assurance refers to the policies and mechanisms in an institution or programme to ensure that it is fulfilling its own purposes and meeting the standards that apply to higher education in general or to the profession or discipline in particular" (Martin & Stella, 2007:34).

In this regard, the creation of a 'quality culture' seemed most celebrated by participants and has been identified as an important facet in the management of quality assurance.

> *"Embedded principles and procedures from external quality assurance processes have now become much more part of our institutional culture"* (Participant 2:8).

The literature review indicated that a quality culture is often used to define an approach where everyone in the organisation takes up full responsibility within the institution, with regard to the quality of the higher education product or service (Crosby, 1979; Harvey, 2006; Harvey, 2007; Loukkola & Zhang, 2010). While the nature of quality assurance within higher education usually relates to teaching and learning (Harvey, 2006), the creation of a quality culture should therefore aim to establish a sound culture for teaching and learning. Accordingly, a sound culture for teaching and learning often refers to a positive climate (the way in which students and faculty experience the climate or atmosphere), sound classroom environments, sound external stakeholder relationships, effective leadership, management and administration, neat buildings and facilities, availability of resources, high professional standards amongst academic faculty, where there is order and discipline, effective instructional leadership and a shared sense of purpose (European Commission, 2013; Van Deventer & Kruger, 2010). The data indicated that the majority of PHEIs do intend and attempt to create a sound quality culture.

One of the strategies for the creation of a sound quality culture mentioned by participants was the inclusion of all their staff, both academic and support staff, in their quality assurance processes. This proved to have been greatly beneficial to both the institution and the staff.

> *"[Originally, the staff said:] 'this is not my job… We have to prepare for lectures […].' So they weren't prepared to really contribute to these processes. But we have created a culture of quality assurance. […] [Our Dean] just said it's been hugely beneficial"* (Participant 2:9).

While the creation of a sound quality culture is desired, private higher education institutions seem hindered by many barriers and challenges as they engage in the management of quality assurance. These barriers will be discussed next.

7.5. INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (PHEIS) FACE AS THEY ENGAGE IN QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

In this study, a barrier refers to anything that prevents a private higher education institution (PHEI) from effectively managing quality assurance. A challenge related to quality assurance matters refers to a situation an institution is faced with that requires mental or physical effort to achieve success (Cambridge Dictionaries, 2016). If such a situation is not solved, it might hinder effective management of quality assurance.

Using the conceptual framework for this study, as adapted from Zaki and Zaki Rashidi's (2013) model, the essence of each barrier and/ or challenge is listed below:

i. Institutional design (or institutional organisation or organisational structure): Governance and management structures of quality assurance within the institutions, especially with the fusion of roles and responsibilities, are major barriers for many PHEIs.

ii. Faculty knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA): Private higher education institutions (PHEIs) require a network of specialised staff and therefore need to find suitable staff, in terms of their qualifications, expertise, experience, and equity in the staff complement, all of which are seen as a challenge for the majority of providers.

> *"[There's] a shortage of academic staff generally, and I tell you, all the institutions are battling with it"* (Participant 3:4).

iii. Leadership and ownership: Academic ownership is mainly vested in full-time academics, and instrumental in the creation of a sound quality culture. However, the larger portion of the staff of most PHEIs consists of part-time members.

iv. Institutional policies and practices: Institutions seems to battle with capacity constraints, especially regarding sound policy formation, as well as its implementation and management.

> *"We realise, that if you don't have [your policies] in place, you are jeopardizing the institution"* (Participant 11:11).

v. Resources: The high costs involved in the processes of compliance with quality assurance and higher education legislation, in terms of monetary, physical and human resources, seem to be a huge barrier for most providers.

> *"[It is] almost a 'chicken-[before-the]-egg'-situation. You don't have the staff to do it now, or you don't have the […] buildings yet, but as soon as [your programme is accredited], you will"* (Participant 4:10).

vi. Student profile and the role of the student in the quality assurance process: The profile of the student population in 2015 and 2016 has changed drastically from for instance the student profile ten or even twenty years ago (CHE, 2016a). PHEIs are challenged to find various ways to recognise the student as an important stakeholder in the higher education sector, and are also challenged in terms of ways in which the institution engages with the student.

vii. Programme design: Curriculum design and its mode of provisioning present many challenges for each programme design within the different institutions.

> *"[Even] our contact [mode programmes are probably considered] more blended [mode]. Students who can't come to classes, can view the lectures online, because we livestream classes"* (Participants 12:5).

viii. Stakeholder relationships: Stakeholder engagement and communication, especially between the private higher education institutions and the three main stakeholders in higher education, the DHET, CHE and SAQA, appear to be problematic for most providers. One reason for this might point to the fact that a negative outcome may result in financial loss. While the process of programme accreditation usually happens first, it may result in a legal dispute between the CHE and an institution. Such a probability usually has a negative impact on the way in which the CHE communicates with the particular institution.

> *"[We] really had such bad experiences. Once we nearly had [the CHE] in court"* (Participant 1:6).

The bureaucratic nature and structure of the DHET, CHE and SAQA also seem problematic as communication is fragmented and uncertain.

> *"Everybody is too afraid to make a decision"* (Participant 1:6).

Other major concerns pointed to the complexity of quality assurance and higher education legislation. This includes the various process-based challenges; and the criteria (especially criteria 1 and 5) and their minimum standards that are linked to programme accreditation and re-accreditation, which were identified as the most prominent challenges.

> *"I mean the negative experience totally overrules any positive experience […] [Of] course we learned, because we comply, so there was a learning process [but] it was a very negative experience"* (Participant 1:17).

The long and complex processes to get a programme accredited by the CHE, registered with the DHET, and to obtain your registration certificate, and registration of the qualification by SAQA, also present several challenges for providers.

> *"The process is far too long, the cycle it's too long. It now takes us from, from submission to, to implementation two years [at the CHE] – which is too long. […] [Then] I have to wait another month for the Department of Education to re-issue me with a new certificate [and often it] is too late for the next academic year […] I'm losing […] millions in income. [The] whole process is almost stretched to three years"* (Participant 5:12).

In order to focus the discussions on the most prominent concerns for the sector, the aforementioned barriers and challenges were reviewed and the following central themes (or categories) were identified (see Figure 7.1).

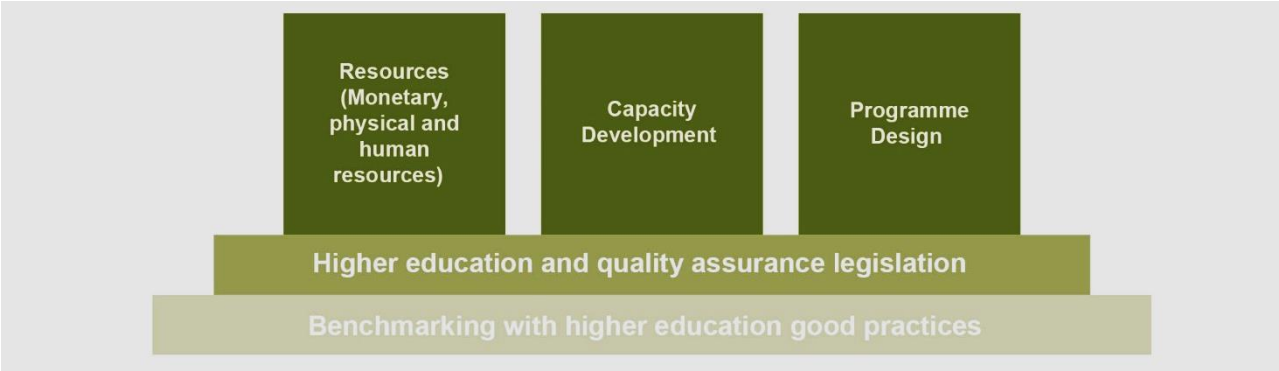


Figure 7.1: Central themes identified as most prominent concerns for the private higher education sector

While the three central themes (or categories), namely resources, capacity development and programme design are identified; five elements are presented. Each element presented in Figure 7.1 is briefly discussed below.

a. Resources

Not all PHEIs operate from the same base (in terms of infrastructure, historical background, pedagogical philosophy, etc.). As confirmed in this study, some are newly established

institutions, for instance some Nursing Education Institutions (NEIs) or FET or TVET Colleges have moved into the higher education sector, some were illegal operators that were given the opportunity to legalise their operations, some are single-site PHEIs and some are multi-site PHEIs. Some are based in City Business Districts (CBDs), while others are urban-based. A few are foreign PHEIs, while most are based in South Africa. Equity in the provisioning of the private higher education sector remains a major concern.

> *"You can have a very good programme that is accredited in principle […], but in Durban it works and in Nelspruit it doesn't work"* (Participant 4:8).

> *"[There] are private providers out there who's got absolutely no conscience and they do not [care] about the students and that is bad for business – for all of us"* (Participant 3:11).

For the private higher education institutions, sufficient, adequate and relevant resourcing in terms of monetary, physical and human resources seems the be some of the bigger barriers and/or challenges within the sector.

> *"I think one of the tensions in the privates is that compliance is a pain, […] and it's kind of draining the resources"* (Participant 12:13).

Often it appears as if prospective PHEIs are uninformed and not ready for the demands that come with the higher education domain. Established institutions however battle with the constant demands for maintaining their status with compliance in terms of higher education and quality assurance legislation.

b. Capacity development

Given the disparity in types of private providers, institutions often battle with capacity development in terms of staff.

There also appears to be a significant relationship between successful capacity development and sound academic leadership. According to Engelbrecht (2015), academic leaders are defined as "individuals who are considered instrumental in advancing the core business of the university - teaching and learning, research and social engagement. They are responsible for strategic decision making with regard to the academic project/agenda of the university – knowledge development, knowledge production, knowledge dissemination – in creating a sustainable and equitable higher education sector through innovation, promoting academic excellence and the collaborative pursuit of knowledge."

The lack of sound academic leadership has a significant impact on private higher education institutions, especially if they are small.

> *"It's like supervision in post graduate studies – you have a bad supervisor or a good supervisor and you learn from that and how to supervise others. So, I would say there's benefits in having a range of people, and will have to build capacity to ensure that we have enough people that are experienced"* (Participant 4:12).

Academic leadership in terms of pedagogical processes includes the development of pedagogical tools, tasks (or activities) and strategies that are appropriate to, and support the institutional and programme design. Often private higher education institutions make use of part-time staff that are actively pursuing careers in specific industries and are grounded in educational studies and their lack of appropriate skills may present serious flaws in the management of quality assurance, which is considered as fundamental good practice within higher education institutions.

> *"[An] academic is not just anybody. An academic has to actually care about teaching the stuff that they love. So, there's always a toss-up between, do you want somebody with more committed with being a teacher, or more committed to [its career, in for instance] auditing? So, if you get the person who's more committed to auditing, you don't have a teacher"* (Participant 3:4).

> *"[There] are many things we don't understand. We are not educationalists"* (Participant 1:14).

Academic leadership in the development of research includes the development and supervision of undergraduate and postgraduate students in their research; as well as the development of young researchers within the institution. The latter also includes the development of young researchers to become confident research supervisors themselves. Private higher education institutions often battle with this and often contract staff members in this capacity.

> *"We will head-hunt that person and appoint him or her as an independent contractor […] [to be] promoters (supervisors) for our doctoral students. Whenever we finally select and accept a doctoral student, he or she will get a promoter which is the best in the country. We will look for experts in the field, with the right academic credentials and these students obviously pay a lot of money for this privilege"* (Participant 1:4).

Academic leadership in relation to the provision of knowledgeable and expert guidance on both higher education legislative and quality assurance matters includes the creation of an enabling institutional environment through its policy formation and implementation. This is often difficult for providers, mostly because of a lack of experience, or outsourcing. A lack of internal skills to formulate, implement and manage policies also influences the continuity of offering quality higher education services and products.

> *"[When] we started, [we knew] very little about the processes [of programme accreditation], and I think it has been in development all the time…"* (Participant 11:4) *[…] "[The] problem actually is, when you have people coming in and out of your institution, then you have to ensure those policies and procedures are in place, otherwise you really have problems"* (Participant 11:10).

Capacity development within the aforementioned areas has been identified as a major barrier and challenge for most providers.

c. Programme design

As established, the concept of programme design refers to the complete design of the programme and not only the curriculum. This requires an institution to align all its processes and planning within a specific qualification to the institutional mission and vision. It also calls for the identification of the needs of students and other stakeholders, to consider programme coherence, and articulation possibilities internally (vertically and horizontally) and externally, and the development of learning materials (CHE, 2004a). Here, the CHE's framework and criteria (specifically criteria 1 to 8) for programme accreditation bear reference (CHE, 2004b).

The data established that the most prominent problem areas linked to programme design seemed to be the lack of deeply-vested knowledge and skills of higher education curriculum design (and development), understanding of the different teaching and learning strategies linked to each mode of provisioning (or delivery), and accurate use of ICTs in specific disciplines within the higher education sphere.

> *"I also think that curriculum development skills, particularly in small private provider structures, are often not available. So that's again, a somewhat technical discourse in itself. They often need to sub-contract those skills, perhaps while they build their own capacity around that…"* (Participant 7:7).

> *"[For] some modules and for some students, the [tablet devices] just work. Some just didn't like it. […] In fact, we had two students, whose parents have gone out and actually just bought the books"* (Participant 2:13).

d. Higher education and quality assurance legislation

As established, the absence of appropriate and relevant higher education and quality assurance legislation seemed to be another major barrier and/or challenge for most private providers. The process of programme accreditation appears to be the most complex and is perceived as a very uncertain process, unmanageable and inefficient.

> *"[To] be very honest [the process of programme accreditation] is always such an intense process and you're not always sure if you're spot on"* (Participant 11:3).

> *"[What the CHE has] is a very complex kind of process, which is actually unmanageable"* (Participant 8:3*). "[…][The] split is [between] people who've been [involved in the processes of programme accreditation] for years, and people who haven't been doing it for years. I think there needs to be far better induction for new providers. […] It's […] a case of, how long you've had to do it and how successful you've been at it"* (Participant 8:4).

e. Benchmarking

According to Scheerens and Hendriks (2002), benchmarking is loosely used in the sense of "comparing to the best". For PHEIs to stay competitive and current, benchmarking with industry standards, as well as national and international comparability of good practices in quality assurance in higher education, becomes an imperative task. Examples at both public and private higher education institutions should be reviewed. The data has reference:

> *"[We] also have other strong affiliations […] that's actually an African Association […] and we also publish a journal [together] […] specifically focussing on […] Africa"* (Participant 11:16).

> *"I am also very much familiar with international standards [for accreditation] and there is not much of a deviation, especially with the business schools"* (Participant 12:5).

> *"We use standard textbooks that are used by all the public universities"* (Participant 5:23).

However, this seems to be the exception, and mostly found within the larger institutions. Generally, it was found that even though the SAQA qualifications submission (which forms part of the programme accreditation processes), requires local and international comparability, it is not evaluated extensively. It is often perceived as another compliance

activity, rather than high-level interpretation of academic standards based on research. It also appears as if many private providers benchmark themselves against similar-type institutions, and are mainly limited to the curriculum. Consequently, they often benchmark themselves with institutions that follow similar curriculum designs, teaching and learning models or approaches, or pedagogical beliefs, and can therefore exclude good examples of 'good practices' within the sector in order to promote their own views.

7.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the findings of this study, addressing the research question. In doing so, four themes have been identified, linked to the sub-research questions.

It appears as if most PHEIs agree that quality in higher education can be viewed in terms of 'fitness for purpose'. While they do attempt to align all their functions, services and programmes to their institutional vision and mission, it seems as if most private providers prefer the variation on the traditional definition of 'fitness for purpose', which is often referred to as 'fitting-customer-satisfaction' in the literature (Harvey, 2006).

While the PHE sector is growing due to various factors discussed in this study, the management of quality assurance in PHEIs in South Africa seems to remain problematic. In 2016, it is clear that the PHE sector continues to face many barriers and challenges. Some of these challenges include a lack of knowledge of the legislative environment and quality assurance management. A general lack of knowledge of teaching and learning strategies, including subject specific knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, seems most problematic.

This chapter further reflected on the conceptual framework and presented a revised conceptual framework. The conceptual framework from this study identified three central themes (of categories) of major barriers and challenges, namely resources, capacity development and programme design. All three have a major influence on the quality of higher education provisioning within the PHE sector.

While the management of quality assurance in higher education globally remains in flux, PHEIs in South Africa seem to battle continuously with the balance between the business imperative, the academic nature of their business, and the services they provide. In 2016, there is a general rise in public confidence in many sought-after niche PHEIs in South Africa. However, numerous quality deficiencies still characterise the PHE sector. In the interests of the 'public good', it appears as if the state and all its stakeholders are called on to do

significantly more capacity development within the PHE sector in an attempt to assure equity in provisioning across the higher education sector.

CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations of this study. The main findings are summarised and based on these recommendations are made. The chapter further identifies areas for impact as well as further opportunities for research.

8.2. CONCLUDING THE FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY

During conceptualisation, it was assumed that the findings of this study would identify specific barriers and challenges, as institutions engage in the process of programme accreditation. It was anticipated that the majority of PHEIs would battle with capacity constraints, which might include a general lack of knowledge in terms of quality assurance and higher education good practices, not having enough or knowledgeable staff employed at institutions, and that the majority of participants struggle with sufficient resources relevant to the higher education sector. It was further assumed that the rigorous and bureaucratic processes linked to programme accreditation might suppress the transformational imperative of South Africa. While some of these assumptions were corroborated, it was evident that the processes of programme accreditation are much more complex, and there are more aspects that need to be explored.

While the research question of this study focussed on exploring the management of quality assurance in PHEIs in South Africa special emphasis was placed on the process of programme accreditation as a form of external quality assurance in South Africa. The research question was explored through the sub-questions that guided this study.

The study found that the way in which PHEIs define and view quality has an impact on the way in which they assure quality. The findings revealed that the private higher education sector views quality diversely and that it most probably differs from the view held by public higher education institutions. In addition, the following definitions or views of quality in the private higher education sector were identified: quality defined or viewed as something ‘exceptional’; described in terms of ‘value-for-money’; ‘fitness for purpose’; or ‘fitness of purpose’; and/ or producing an outcome of ‘transformation’.

The most prominent definition or view of quality pointed to a variation on the traditional definition of ‘fitness for purpose”, which is often referred to as ‘fitting-customer-satisfaction’ in the literature (Harvey, 2006). The latter places much of its focus on concentrating on and

allocating considerable resources for student support. Being mostly profit-driven, it aims at providing higher education products and services to students that the public higher education sector is mostly unable to do. With the massification of the public higher education sector, the private higher education sector often counters that offering its programmes in smaller student classes naturally produces more informal or open relationships between the academic and support staff and the students. Mature private higher education institutions with sufficient capacity are often very much focussed on meeting the needs of different sectors in which they are offering higher education programmes, and may even go to great lengths in meeting their customers' (companies and students) needs. In addition, there are some niche or specialised institutions offering programmes in particular specialised fields of study, often making them a preferred choice for many of their customers in addressing the increased need for continuous specialised life-long learning, which is another by-product of globalisation (Carnoy, 2005). It follows that quality assurance practices and processes within the private higher education sector are mainly focussed on the customer, and customer satisfaction.

The literature confirmed that the common purposes of external quality assurance generally include compliance, control, enhancement (or improvement) and accountability (Harvey, 2007). However, the findings indicated that many of these purposes were recognised by the private higher education sector, but appear conflated. The prevalent view on the purpose of external quality assurance pointed to it ultimately protecting the students.

Generally, the findings concluded that while accreditation is a necessary approach to control and oversee the higher education sector in South Africa, the approach of programme accreditation seems fragmented. The majority suggested a combination of both institutional and programme accreditation. Other alternatives or additions to accreditation were suggested, such as adding an additional layer of self-accreditation, and the ranking of institutions or programmes. It was also highlighted that the private higher education sector is much more regulated that the public higher education sector.

The findings indicated that the absence of management functions, structures and personnel seemed to be a major barrier for institutions as they engage in the management of quality assurance. It was further revealed that the majority of providers make use of part-time staff or consultants, which most frequently reflects negatively on the management functions and consequently on the consistency of quality output. Private higher education institutions (PHEIs) also generally conceptualise their quality assurance models on the premise of the requirements needed for programme accreditation and other external quality assurance processes. The findings suggest that there exist a clear link between the expectations of the

state, through its external quality assurance bodies, and the successful management and implementation of internal quality assurance processes within an institution. Furthermore, some institutions made use of standardised quality assurance systems (such as ISO9000), while the larger or more mature institutions developed their own formal or informal quality assurance management structures.

In the study, I have presented a detailed discussion of the barriers and challenges linked to each parameter identified in the conceptual framework. These parameters included institutional design; institutional policies and procedures; student profile and the role of the student in the quality assurance process practices; faculty knowledge, skills and abilities; leadership and ownership; resources; programme design; and stakeholder relationships. From these, this study identified three central themes as most prominent concerns in the sector, namely resources, capacity development and programme design.

While monetary, physical and human resources each had their own particular areas of concentration, the general lack of such resources was evident. For instance, in some cases institutions would have the facilities, but not the finances to maintain them. In other cases, there is staff, but the staff does not necessarily have the necessary knowledge, skills or abilities to further advance the institution in the higher education sector. Subsequently, large portions of the private higher education staff would be employed on a part-time basis. Very often they were also employed to fulfil a particular function, and academic ownership and integrity of quality assurance policies and procedures were vested within these individuals. Also, an overall lack of sufficient and appropriate physical resources was noted, and included poor facilities, accompanied by issues linked to health and safety requirements (especially with rented facilities), libraries, computers, information management systems, and poorly designed teaching and learning material, to name a few.

While many key roles and responsibilities are outsourced, capacity constraints were most evident. Often institutions battled with capacity development, especially of their academic leadership within the institutions. The latter includes guiding, training and developing its academic staff in sound pedagogical processes and procedures, research and supervision of research, which were often neglected. In addition, the fact that PHEIs do not share the public purse for research grants made research an ‘additional task’ and not an important factor for their academic staff.

Programme design seemed to be most problematic, as institutions not only battled with curriculum design, and the conceptualisation and benchmarking thereof, but also the broader design of the entire programme. The latter includes, for instance, the teaching and learning

model and approach, the mode of delivery, the accurate use of information communication technologies, student support, the availability of resources that support the programme, and the whole coherence and orchestration thereof.

8.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of this study are focussed on the following two areas: firstly, recommendations for PHEIs offering business and management programmes in Gauteng, and secondly, recommendations for regulatory bodies and councils.

8.3.1. Recommendations for private higher education institutions

It would appear that the following suggestions may be of value to PHEIs offering business and management programmes in Gauteng. The findings of this study identified three central themes (or categories) (presented in Chapter 7, Figure 7.1), namely resources, capacity development and programme design, which guide the discussion of recommendations for PHEIs below.

a) Resources (monetary, physical and human resources)

As with any business, thorough planning and availability of financial resources seem imperative for any private higher education institution's (PHEIs) existence. Hence, it is recommended that institutions require both financial and higher education specialised services to inform their financial investments and budgetary protocol.

From an operational point of view, it is recommended that PHEIs develop a total budget or budgeting system which consists of various sub-budgets, such as an operating (cash) budget; activity (departmental) budget; capital budget and project budgets (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2010). The CHE's programme accreditation process as in 2015 and 2016 (CHE, 2004a; CHE, 2004b) requires a list of specific budgets that could be used to guide an institution in developing its own institutional budgeting system. This is also imperative for the availability and management of physical resources.

The data revealed that the following were identified as popular references in discussion on physical resources: buildings; student support services and facilities; internet availability on and off campus; software licencing; computer systems and networks; and libraries that are current and relevant. Reference was also made to furniture and facilities to support teaching and learning strategies. It is therefore recommended that PHEIs that wish to compete against both local and international higher education institutions should, as their first preference, do thorough research on what physical resources would optimise and be best suited for their programme offerings, rather than a traditional classroom configuration for their lecturing

rooms. It further requires in-depth research and analysis of its student profile and to determine their needs while planning or investing in any physical resources.

The profit-driven dynamics of most PHEIs places them in a competitive business model; however, “great vision without great people, is irrelevant” (Collins, 2001:42). Consequently, the recruitment and employment of suitable staff, and the combination of the staff profile complement, especially within a start-up or growing organisation, seem to be imperative.

While both prospective and growing PHEIs wish to save costs, consultants have become the “preferred choice” (Participant 7:19). In such cases, it is recommended that institutions make use of suitable and relevant recruitment strategies for finding commendable and reputable consultants. It is further suggested that institutions do not make use of one consultant only, but employ a team to assist them, not only to obtain their programme accreditation status, but in improving the quality of their higher education provisioning holistically.

With regard to the appointment of staff, there does not seem to be consensus. However, research indicates that employing both full-time and part-time staff (both academic and support staff) in higher education institutions has both positive and negative outcomes. It is therefore recommended that institutions refrain from using only part-time staff, as it generally points to poor academic output, and a lack of academic ownership. Consequently, this study established that institutions do require sufficient and qualified full-time staff to offer a programme and to ensure consistent quality of educational outcomes throughout the institution. This is also a requirement for the process of programme accreditation. Part-time staff might be complementary and should not be the majority, as they do bring an instant flow of expert and industry-relevant knowledge and skills.

Furthermore, it is imperative that an institution’s academic staff should be adequately qualified to offer that particular programme. In addition, academic staff within (smaller) PHEIs should possess the necessary knowledge and skills for curriculum design at higher education level. Although not a requirement, academic staff with knowledge of internal and external quality assurance processes and procedures is becoming more important, especially at institutions with multi-site campuses. To conclude, all staff should not only have adequate qualifications (one qualification level higher than the programme it is offering), but institutions should aim at employing staff that see higher education teaching as a profession and not merely as a stepping stone to another career (Swanepoel, 2015).

b) Capacity development

I recommend that PHEIs invest in their staff by developing them professionally. Professional development of staff includes training in terms of teaching and assessment as well as further academic enrichment and development through continued subject specific training and specialisation. With reference to academic staff, the CHE's QEP (CHE, 2015b) suggests that the focus should be on the areas of development in teaching, curriculum development and assessment for enhancing academics as teachers in order to create an enabling institutional environment.

It is further recommended that staff responsible for the management of quality assurance should be well informed and stay abreast with what is considered as good practices within higher education – both in South Africa and globally.

Furthermore, the roles of the persons involved in quality assurance should be separated from other main tasks and the roles and responsibilities of academic staff be mainly limited to teaching, assessment, curriculum development, and research.

Private higher education institutions (PHEIs) are encouraged to focus on academic leadership as a core function of the academic management team. In addition, the creation of a quality culture, wherein inward accountability becomes the driving force to offering quality higher education qualifications, should become the norm (Mhlanga, 2013).

The purpose of quality assurance should guide its approach. Accountability is usually enforced within organisational structures. It could be done formally, or informally. It is recommended that a person, team or unit take full responsibility for quality assurance within the institution, and while it is not necessary to be qualified in quality assurance in higher education, they do need to have strong embedded knowledge and understanding of higher education and its practices.

While control is about ensuring the integrity of the private higher education institution (PHEIs) (Harvey, 2007), it is therefore recommended that a suitable quality assurance model be implemented that is aligned with and supports the institution's vision and mission. The most popular views suggest institutions should develop their own quality assurance model (policies, processes and procedures) that supports the vision and the mission of the institution (CHE, 2004a; Lagrosen *et al*., 2004; Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2002).

Compliance with external quality assurance processes is one of the most important tasks as it gives an institution the right to operate as a legal PHEI in South Africa. Quality assurance managers are encouraged to develop a "buy-in-culture" where every member of staff

understands the importance of their continuous compliance with both internal and external policy requirements.

With regard to improvement (or enhancement), the CHE's QEP (2015b) has identified four selected focus areas for enhancement, which include enhancing academics as teachers, enhancing student support and development, enhancing the learning environment and enhancing course and programme enrolment management. It is recommended that PHEIs use these as guiding principles for the development of enhancing initiatives as they aim at building capacity within the institution.

c) Programme Design

In the report, *A proposal for undergraduate curriculum reform in South Africa: A case for flexible curriculum structure*, the CHE states that "a good educational design, informed by the context, is essential for facilitating learning" (CHE, 2013b:38). While the curriculum design provides the map on which programme design is built, a poor curriculum design is often the cause of higher education institutions' failure to obtain accreditation (CHE, 2012a; CHE, 2013a; CHE, 2014c).

It is therefore recommended that institutions make use of both subject and/or curriculum design experts, from the beginning. Curriculum design and development needs to be embedded in fundamental pedagogical knowledge, including aspects such as credits, knowledge and practice, progression, assessment, articulation, benchmarking of the curriculum, student focus and employability, to name a few (CHE, 2013b; Campbell & Rozsnyai, 2002; Van Deventer & Kruger, 2010). Institutions should also be made aware of the copyright infringements when designing their curriculum, and its learning support management (LSM) systems (Ncube, 2015; Schonwetter & Ncube, 2011).

Often institutions will also implement various methods of using ICTs before they consider the curriculum (CHE, 2014a; Nieuwenhuis, 2015). ICTs should complement and support the curriculum and not vice versa.

Different modes of provisioning each require specialised expertise. Furthermore, a contact programme cannot, for instance, simply be offered through the distance mode of provisioning and vice versa. In the contact mode of delivery, the lecturer becomes the instrument of delivery; while in distance education, the learning material is the instrument for delivery. Hence, it requires completely different teaching and learning strategies, which greatly impacts on the entire programme design.

8.3.2. Recommendations for regulatory bodies and councils

Based on the findings of this study, it appears that the impact on PHEIs of the following four aspects of the processes and practices of the state bodies should be further investigated.

Firstly, while the majority of participants recommended that the process of programme accreditation and its criteria be re-engineered, it should also be more responsive to the specialised demands of higher education in the twenty-first century. Consequently, it is recommended that the entire accreditation process should change and should include both programme and institutional accreditation. Thirdly, without neglecting quality, the cycle of the process also needs to become shorter and more streamlined. Lastly, it appears as if the PHE sector might benefit from capacity development initiatives, especially related to accreditation, standards setting, quality assurance 'good practices' and how to use these effectively within the higher education sphere.

8.4. IMPACT OF THE STUDY

This study provides valuable research on quality assurance in the private higher education sector. Workable suggestions and recommendations have been provided. If implemented, this could improve the management of quality assurance in PHEIs in South Africa. The study also presents the voice of the PHEIs in South Africa and its findings could inform policy, which could have a positive impact on the higher education sector holistically.

8.5. OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has exposed a number of aspects regarding the management of quality assurance (and programme accreditation) in private higher education institutions (PHEIs) in South Africa that call for more research on the following topics:

a. The research question of this study lends itself to identifying more research in this field. This study focussed only on a small sample, using qualitative data, so it has not covered all aspects of the question.

b. Topics around the impact of resources within (private) higher education institutions on the quality of higher education provisioning could be further explored. Aspects such as actual library holdings versus electronic resources; buildings, types of furniture, and facilities could be the focus of such research.

c. Research pointing to the development of the PHE sector could become more popular in the near future. With the greater demands for 'free higher education for all' in the public sector, characterised by strikes and riots in top South African universities, the importance of private higher education sector in South Africa has become a focus.

d. Curriculum design focussed on incorporating application knowledge, or "mode 2"-knowledge (Gibbons, 1994) in higher education, continues to be a huge challenge for many private higher education institutions (PHEIs), especially in the twenty-first century.

e. More quantitative studies are needed within the private higher education sector, as there is a lack of audited and reliable data representing the nature of the private higher education sector.

8.6. CONCLUSION

This study has presented a literature review in which it conceptualised quality, quality assurance, quality assurance management and quality control within the higher education sector. It has distinguished between external and internal quality assurance and their relationship. A discussion of governance and management within private higher education has been provided, with an overview of the PHE sector in South Africa. Gaps in literature were identified and it was established that the topic of programmes accreditation has received scant attention and the voice of PHEIs in the literature is almost silent. In addition, the study has presented the policy context for programme accreditation for PHEIs in South Africa.

The study has contributed significantly to the body of knowledge. A conceptual framework for the management of quality assurance in the private higher education sector has been presented. The aim of the conceptual framework is to understand the parameters (or key areas) responsible for effective management of quality assurance in higher education, both external and internal to PHEIs.

Within this qualitative study, four key themes emerged from the data, which corresponded with the four sub-research questions as listed in Chapter 1.

While the conceptual framework for this study assisted in the analysis of the data, it also identified barriers and challenges PHEIs face with regard to the management of both internal and external quality assurance at institutional level.

It was established that the traditional definitions of quality as stipulated in the literature, such as 'quality as consistent', 'exceptional' or 'transformational', have been recognised in and by the PHE sector. However, this study found that the most prominent view on or definition of quality for the PHE sector seemed to point to quality seen in terms of 'fitness for purpose'. While this is mostly because it corresponds with the HEQC's view on quality, and more specifically the process of programme accreditation, in practice 'fitting-the-customer's

satisfaction' was a more accepted definition. It was also favoured above a mission-based 'fitness for purpose'.

It appears as if there is a general lack of knowledge of quality assurance and higher education good practices in the PHE sector. More experienced participants viewed quality assurance in terms of their own quality assurance framework and quality control systems – whether a business or higher education model – which is mainly linked to institutional goals. Less experienced participants from smaller PHEIs seemed to have built their internal quality assurance models around the expectancies from regulatory bodies, councils and departments.

With regard to the expectancies of external stakeholders that often contradict those of the PHEIs themselves, it has been established that a lack of accurate and effective communication between the different higher education stakeholders and the complexity of quality assurance and higher education legislation are some of the major concerns for the PHE sector. Issues regarding various process-based challenges of external quality assurance processes and procedures and the criteria and minimum standards linked to programme accreditation and re-accreditation are some of the most common barriers. The findings confirmed that there exists a clear link between the expectations of the state, through its external quality assurance processes, and the successful management and implementation of internal quality assurance processes within an institution. Moreover, it was also established that there is a perception from the PHE sector that it is a lot more regulated than the public higher education sector. It appears as if they are targeted and that there is significantly higher vigilance towards PHEIs.

The findings were presented under three central themes (or categories). These themes (or categories) identified the major barriers and challenges PHEIs face as they engage in the management of quality assurance at institutional level, namely resourcing, capacity development and programme design.

Consequently, while PHE seems to be 'big business' for some providers (such as those represented on the JSE or large groups of companies), the majority battle with the availability of appropriate and relevant higher education resources. Appropriate physical facilities and library holdings seem to be some of the top concerns. This study further confirmed that there is a general lack of sound governance and management structures at PHEIs. Smaller PHEIs seem to be more affected than the larger institutions. It has also been confirmed that the use of part-time staff and consultants seems to be the norm within the sector. In addition, a lack of academic leadership and ownership continues to characterise the PHE sector.

It was also established that there is a general ignorance in terms of legislative matters, especially concerning quality assurance, the management of quality assurance and higher education good practices. This includes a general lack of knowledge of teaching and learning strategies, which also relates to subject-specific knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. In order to save costs, specific operational skills in terms of financial, physical and human resource management knowledge, skills and abilities within the PHEIs are often lacking. This study has presented recommendations that may be of value to PHEIs offering business and management programmes in Gauteng. In conclusion, it presents recommendations based on the findings to aspects related to the processes and practices of the state bodies that could be further investigated as to their impact on PHEIs.

REFERENCES

Altbach, P.G., 2012. The Prospect for the BRICs: The New Academic Superpowers? *Economic and Political Weekly,* 47(43), 127-137.

Altbach, P.G., 1999. *Private Prometheus: Private Higher Education and Development in the 21st Century.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Altbach, P.G. & Knight, J., 2007. The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11(3), 290-305.

Altbach, P.G., Reisberg, L. & Rumbly, L.E., 2009. *Trends in Global Higher Education: Tracking an Academic Revolution.* Available from: http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/trends-global-higher-education-2009-world-conference-en.pdf [Accessed 22 October 2015].

Andrade, A.D., 2009. Interpretive Research Aiming at Theory Building: Adopting and Adapting the Case Study Design. *The Qualitative Report,* 14(1), 42-60.

Babbie, E., 2007. *The Practice of Social Research.* 11th ed. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Badat, S., 2010. *The Challenges of Transformation in Higher Education and Training Institutions in South Africa.* Midrand: Development Bank of South Africa.

Badri, N. & Younies, H., 2006. The Baldridge Education Criteria for Performance Excellence Framework. *International Journal of Quality and Reliability Management,* 23(9), 1118-1157.

Badroodien, A., 2002. Private Higher Education: A Highly Contested Good? *Perspectives in Education,* 20(4), 137-141.

Baldwin, G. & James, R., 2000. The Market in Australian Higher Education and the Concept of the Informed Consumer. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Mangement,* 22(2), 139-148.

Barnett, R., 2003. *Beyond All Reason: Living with Ideology in the University.* Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education and the Open University Press.

Barnett, R., 1994. Power, Enlightenment and Quality Evolution. *European Journal of Education,* 29(2), 165-179.

Barnett, R., 1992. *Improving Higher Education: Total Quality Care.* Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE) and Open University (OU).

Baumgardt, J., 2013. *Quality Assurance Challenges for Private Providers in Post-School Education and Training in South Africa.* Dissertation, (PhD.Ed.). University of South Africa.

Beck, U., 1992. *Risk Society.* London: Sage Publications.

Becket, N. & Brookes, M., 2008. Quality Management Practice in Higher Education: What Quality are we Actually Enhancing? *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education*, 7(1), 40-54.

Billing, G., 2004. International Comparisons and Trends in External Quality Assurance of Higher Education: Commonality or Diversity? *Higher Education,* 47(1), 113-137.

Bitzer, E., 2002. South African Legislation on Limiting Private and Foreign Higher Education: Protecting the Public or Ignoring Globalisation? *South African Journal of Higher Education,* 16(1), 22-28.

Bosch, T., 2016. Twitter activism and youth in South Africa: the case of #RhodesMustFall. *Information, Communication and Society, March*.

Braun, D., 1999. Changing Governance Models in Higher Education: The Case of the New Managerialism. *Swiss Political Science Review,* 5(3), 1-24.

Braun, J. & Clarke, J., 2006. Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology,* 3(2), 77-101.

Broadfoot, P., 1998. Quality Standards and Control in Higher Education: What Price Life-Long Learning? *International Studies in Sociology of Education,* 8(2), 155-179.

Bryman, E. & Bell, A., 2003. *Business Research Methods.* New York, NY: Oxford.

Butt, B.Z. & Rehman, K.U., 2010. A Study Examining the Student Satisfaction in Higher Education. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2(2), 5446-5450.

Cambridge Dictionaries, 2016. *Challenge.* Available from: http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/quality-assurance [Accessed 17 March 2016].

Campbell, C. & Rozsnyai, C., 2002. *Quality Assurance and the Development of Course Programmes: Papers on Higher Education Regional University Network on Governance and Management of Higher Education in South East Europe.* Bucharest: UNESCO.

Carnoy, M., 2005. *Education and Open Society: A Critical Look at New Perspectives and Demands.* Budapest: Open Society Institute Education Support Program.

Cele, N., 2005. The Consequences of the Absence of a 'Norms and Standards' Legislative Framework for Institutional Accreditation in Private Higher Education: A Disconnect Between Policy, Expectations and Quality Assurance Practice. *South African Journal of Higher Education,* 19(3), 188-202.

Cheng, Y.C. & Tam, W.M., 1997. Multi-Models of Quality in Education. *Quality Assurance in Education,* 5(1), 21-31.

Cheng, Y.C., 2003. Quality Assurance in Education: Internal Interface, and Future. *Quality Assurance in Education,* 11(4), 202-213.

Cloete, N., Fehnel, R., Maasen, P., Moja, T., Perold, H. & Gibbon, T., 2002. *Global Pressures and Local Realities in South Africa.* Cape Town: Juta.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K., 2002. *Research Methods in Education.* 5th ed. London: Routledge Falmer.

Collins, J., 2001. *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't.* New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers.

Corbett, D.C., 1992. *Australian Public Management.* St. Leonard, NSW: Allen and Unwin.

Cosser, M., 2002. Quality Through Regulation? Towards Quality Provision in the South African Private Higher Education Sector. *Perspectives in Education,* 20(4), 111-121.

Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), 2012. *An Overview of U.S. Accreditation.* Washington, DC: Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2016a. *South African Higher Education Reviewed: Two Decades of Democracy.* Pretoria: CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2016b. *National Reviews*. Available from: http://www.che.ac.za/faqs/national_reviews [Accessed 14 March 2016].

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2016c. *Policies on the recognition of prior learning, credit accumulation and transfer, and assessment in higher education*. August 2016. Pretoria:CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2016d. *A good practice guide for the quaity management of short cources offered outside of the higher educaton qualifications sub-framework.* Pretoria:CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2015a. *Content Analysis of the Baseline Institution Submissions for Phase 1 or the Quality Enhancement Projects.* Pretoria: CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2015b. *Vital stats: Public Higher Education 2013.* Pretoria: CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2014a. *Distance Higher Education Programmes in a Digital Era: Good Practice Guide.* Pretoria: CHE and SAIDE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2014b. *Vital stats: Public Higher Eductation 2012.* Pretoria: CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2014c. *History of the CHE.* Available from: http://www.che.ac.za/about/overview_and_mandate/history_of_the_che [Accessed 17 March 2014].

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2013a. *A Proposal for Undergraduate Curriculum Reform in South Africa: The Case for a Flexible Curriculum Structure.* Pretoria: CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2013b. *Annual Report 2012-2013.* Pretoria: CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2013c. *Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF).* Pretoria: CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2013d. *The Aims of Higher Education: Kagisano Number 9, March.* Pretoria: CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2012a. *CHE Approved National Review Manual for the Re-Accreditation of Existing Programmes BSW.* Pretoria: CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2012b. *Annual Report 2011-2012.* Pretoria: CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2011. *Annual Report 2010-2011.* Pretoria: CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2010. *Annual Report 2009-2010.* Pretoria: CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2009. *Guide for Evaluators: Accreditation and Reaccreditation of Programmes Submitted to the HEQC.* Pretoria: CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2008. *Site Visit Preperation for Institutions.* Pretoria: CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2007. *Review of Higher Education in South Africa.* Pretoria: CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2005. *Towards a Framework for Quality Promotion and Capacity Development in South African Higher Education.* Pretoria: CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2004a. *Framework for Programme Accreditation.* Pretoria: CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2004b. *Criteria for Programme Accreditation.* Pretoria: CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2004c. *Criteria for Institional Audits.* Pretoria: CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2004d. *HEQC Guidelines for Accreditation of Private Providers.* Pretoria: CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2004e. *South African Higher Education in the First Decade of Democracy.* Pretoria: CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2003a. *Higher Education Monitor: the State of Private Higher Education in South Africa, no 1, June.* Pretoria: CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2003b. *Improving Teaching and Learning Resources.* Pretoria: CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 2001. *Founding Document.* Pretoria: CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), 1999. *Annual Report 1998 - 1999.* Pretoria: CHE.

Council on Higher Education (CHE), South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) & Department of Higher Education (DHET), 2009. *Communique 3: Procedures and Guidelines for Academic Programme Application 2009 and 2010.* Pretoria: CHE, SAQA & DHET.

Creswell, J.W., 2009. Determining Validity in Qualitative Inquiry. *Theory into Practice,* 39(3), 124-130.

Creswell, J.W., 2005. *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research.* 2nd ed. Hoboken, NJ: Pearson Education.

Crosby, P.B., 1979. *Quality is Free.* New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Csizmadia, T., 2006. *Quality Management in Hungarian Higher Education: Organisational Responses to Governmental Policy.* Thesis, (Ph.D.Ed.). University of Twente.

Curtin University, 2013. *Quality Enhancement: Curtin Planning and Quality Framework*. Available from: www.quality.curtin.edu.au [Accessed 24 July 2015].

Daniel, J., Kanwar, A. & Uvalic-Trubic, S., 2009. *Breaking Higher Education's Iron Triangle: Access, Cost, and Quality.* Available from: http://www.changemag.org/Archives/Back Issues/MarchApril [Accessed 27 February 2016].

Davis, J., 2004. *The Implementation of the European Foundation for Quality Management's (EFQM) Excellence Model in Academic Units of Uniter Kingdom Universities.* Thesis, (Ph.D.Phil.). University of Salford.

De Boer, H. & File, J., 2009. *Higher Education Governance Reforms Across Europe.* Available from: https://www.utwente.nl/bms/cheps/publications/Publications%202009/C9HdB101%20MODERN%20PROJECT%20REPORT.pdf [Accessed 2 February 2016].

De Boer, H., Enders, J. & Schimank, U., 2006. On the Way Towards New Public Management? The Governace of Univerity Systems in England, the Netherlands, Austria, and Germany. In Jansen, D. (ed.), *New forms of Governance in Research Education: Disciplinary Approaches, Interface and Integration*, 1-22. Dordrecht: Springer.

Denhardt, R.B. & Denhardt, J.V., 2002. The New Public Service: Serving rather than Steering. *Public Administration Review,* 60(6), 549-559.

Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y., 1998. Introduction: Entering the Field of Qualitative Research. In Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (eds.), *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues,* 1-42. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Department of Education (DoE), 2009. *Amended CESMs: Classification of Educational Subject Matter* (as published on 19 January 2009). Pretoria.

Department of Education (DoE), 2007. *CESM: Classification of Educational Subject Matter.* Pretoria.

Department of Education (DoE), 2005. *Minimum Admission Requirement for Higher Certificate, Diploma and Bachelor's Degree Requiring a National Senior Certificate (NSC).* Pretoria: Government Printers.

Department of Education (DoE), 2002a. *Register of Private Higher Education Institutions.* Pretoria: Tirisano.

Department of Education (DoE), 2002b. *Higher Education Act, no. 101 of 1997: Regulations for the Registration of Private Higher Education Institutions.* Pretoria: Government Gazette.

Department of Education (DoE), 2001. *The New Academic Policy of 2001.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

Department of Education (DoE), 1997a. *White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education.* Pretoria: DoE.

Department of Education (DoE), 1997b. *Higher Education Act, no. 101 of 1997.* Pretoria: Government Publishers.

Department of Education (DoE), 1996. *Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation.* Pretoria: DoE.

Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), 2016a. *Register of Private Higher Education Institutions.* Pretoria: DHET.

Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), 2016b. *Higher Education Act, no. 101 of 1997. Regulations for the Registration of Private Higher Education Institutions.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), 2015a. *Register of Private Higher Education Institutions.* Pretoria: DHET.

Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), 2015b. *Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in South Africa: 2013.* Pretoria: DHET.

Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), 2014a. *Register of Private Higher Education Institutions.* Pretoria: DHET.

Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), 2014b. *Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in South Africa: 2012.* Pretoria: DHET.

Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), 2014c. *Policy for the provision of distance education in South African universities in the context of an integrated post-school system*. Number 535, published 7 July. Government Gazette No 37811.

Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), 2013a. *National Qualifications Framework Act, no. 67 of 2008. Amendment to the determination of the Sub-Frameworks that Comprise The National Qualifications Framework.* Pretoria: Government Publishers.

Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), 2013b. *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training: Building and Expanded, Effective and Integrated Post-School System.* Pretoria: DHET.

Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), 2005. *Minimum Admission Requirements for Higher Certificate, Diploma and Bachelor's Degree Programmes Requiring a National Senior Certificate.* Pretoria: Government Gazette.

Dittrich, K. & Weck-Hannemann, H., 2010. *Private Higher Education Institutions and Quality Assurance.* s.l.: European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA).

Ellis, M.E. & Steyn, G.M., 2014. Manager's Perceptions of Regulatry Legislation of Private Higher Education in South Africa. *International Education Science,* 6(3), 445-458.

Engelbrecht, M., 2015. *The art of shape shifting: Academic leaders in time of change*. Paper presented at the 26th International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) World Conference: Growing capacities for sustainable distance e-learning provision. Sun City, South Africa, 13-16 October.

Erez, M. & Gati, E., 2004. A Dynamic, Multi-Level Model of Culture: From the Micro Level of the Individual to the Macro Level of a Global Culture. *Applied Psychology: An International Review,* 53(4), 583-598.

Ernst & Young, 2012. *University of the Future: A Thousand Year Old Industry on the Cusp of Profound Change.* Available from:

http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/University_of_the_future/$FILE/University_of_the_future_2012.pdf [Accessed 2 March 2016].

Essack, S., 2015. *Private Higher Education Institutions.* Proceedings of the Quality Assurance Workshop: Private Higher Education Institutions Johannesburg, 8 October.

Etherington, K., 2004. *Becoming Reflexive Researchers: Using Ourselves in Research.* London: Jessica Kingsley.

European Commission, 2013. *High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education.* Available from: http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/reports/modernisation_en.pdf [Accessed 31 March 2015].

European University Association (EUA), 2006. *Quality Culture in European Universities: A Bottom-Up Approach.* Brussels: European University Association (EUA).

Federation of Indian Chambers (FICCI), 2012. *Higher Education in India: Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-2017) and beyond.* Proceedings of the FICCI Higher Education Summit titled “Indian Higher Education: Quest for Quality”, New Delhi, 5-6 November.

Fielden, J., 2008. *Global Trends in University Governance.* Education Working Paper Series, No. 9. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Freeman, R.E., Jeffrey, S., Harrison, J.S., Wicks, A.C., Bidhan, L. *et al.*, 2010. *Stakeholder Theory: The State of the Art.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Freire, P., 1985. *The Politics of Education.* London: MacMillan.

Fuhnel, R., 2006. *Transformation in Higher Education: Global Pressures and Local Realities. Private Higher Education.* Available from: http://chet.org.za/download/file/fid/98 [Accessed 2 May 2014].

Garrick, J., 1999. Doubting the Philosophical Assumptions of Interpretive Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education,* 12(2), 147-156.

Geda, A.G., 2014. *Quality Assurance Policy and Practice in Higher Education.* Thesis, (Ph.D.Ed.). Univerisity of South Africa.

Geertz, C., 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Gibbons, M., Camille Limoges, C., Nowotny, H., Schwartzman, S., Scott, P. & Trow, M., 1994. *The New Production of Knowledge: The Dynamics of Science and Research in Contemporary Societies.* London: SAGE Publications.

Gola, M., 2004. *Premises to Accreditation: A Minimum Set of Accreditation Requirements.* Available from: http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Italy1.pdf [Accessed 2 February 2016].

Gouws, A. & Waghid, Y., 2006. Higher Education Quality Assurance in South Africa: Accreditation in Perspective. *Higher Education Quality Assurance in South African Journal for Higher Education,* 20(6), 751-761.

Grayson, D., 2014. *The Quality Enhancement Project (QEP): The Second Cycle: Launch of the Quality Enhancement Project.* Johannesburg: CHE.

Green, D., 1994. What is Quality in Higher Education? Concepts, Policy and Practice. In Green, D. (ed.), *What is Quality in Higher Education,* 101-111. Buckingham: SRHE and Open University Press.

Griesel, H. & Parker, B., 2009. *Graduate Attributes: A Baseline Study on South African Graduates form the Perspective of Employers.* Pretoria: Higher Education South Africa (HESA) and The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

Halloway, T., 2006. *Financial Management and Planning in Higher Education Institutions.* Thesis, (PhD.Phil.). Brunel University.

Harvey, L. & Green, D., 1993. Defining Quality. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education,* 18(1), 9-34.

Harvey, L., 2009. *Deconstructing Quality Culture.* Available from: http://www.qualityresearchinternational.com/Harvey%20Vilnius.pdf [Accessed 26 March 2016].

Harvey, L., 2008. Using the European Standards and Guidelines: Some Concluding Remarks. In Beso, A.E. (ed.), *Implementing and Using Quality Assurance: Strategy and Practice,* 11-16. Brussels: EUA.

Harvey, L., 2007. Epistemology of Quality. *Perspectives in Education,* 23(3), 1-13.

Harvey, L., 2006. Understanding Quality: Section B 4.1-1 of Introducing Bologna Objectives and Tools. In Purser, L. (ed.), *EUA Bologna Handbook: Making Bologna Work.* Berlin: Brussels European University Association and Raabe.

Harvey, L., 2004. The Power of Accreditation: Views of Academics in Accreditation Models in Higher Education: Experiences and Perspectives. In Nauta, P., Omar, P., Schade, A. & Harvey, L. (eds.), *Accreditation Models in Higher Education: Experiences and perspective.* Helsinki: ENQA.

Harvey, L., 1995. Editorial: The Quality Agenda. *Quality in Higher Education,* 1(1), 5-12.

Harvey, L. & Knight, P.T., 1996. *Transforming Higher Education.* Buckingham: The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press.

Harvey, L. & Stensaker, B., 2008. Quality Culture: Understandings, Boundaries and Linkages. *European Journal of Education*, 43(4), 427-442.

Harvey, L. & Stensaker, B., 2007. *Quality Culture: Understandings, Boundaries and Linkages.* Paper presented at the 29th Eair Forum, Innsbruck, 26-29 August.

Hayward, F., 2006. *Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education in Africa.* Paper prepared for presentation at the Conference on Higher Education Reform in Francophone Africa: Understanding the Keys of Success, Ouagadougou, 13-15 June.

Hazelkorn, E., 2007. The Impact of League Tables and ranking systems on Higher Education Decision Making. *Higher Education Management and Policy,* 19(2), 87-110.

Hemsley-Brown, J.V. & Oplatka, I., 2010. Market Orientation in Universities: A comparative study of two national higher education systems. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 24(3), 204-220.

Hénard, F. & Mitterle, A., 2010. *Governance and Quality Guidelines in Higher Education: A Review of Governance Arrangements and Quality Assurance Guidelines.* Paris: OECD.

Hernes, G.A. & Martin, M., 2008. *Accreditation and the Global Higher Education Market.* Paris: International Institute for Educational Planning.

Higgs, P., 2006. Higher Education is More than Just the Economy. *South African Journal for Higher Education,* 60(6), 833-842.

Hobson, R., Rolland, S., Rotgans, J., Schoonheim-Klein, M., Best, H. *et al*., 2008. Quality Assurance, Benchmarking, Assessment and Mutual International Recognition of Qualification. *European Journal for Dental Education,* 12(S1), 92-100.

Hoecht, A., 2006. Quality Assurance in UK Higher Education: Issues of Trust, Control, Professional Autonomy and Accountability. *Higher Education,* 51(4), 541-563.

Huisman, J., 1995. *Differentiation, Divesity and Dependency in Higher Education.* Utrecht: Lemma.

Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) & Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD), 2010. *A Road Map to Quality: Implemention for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.* Kampala: IUCEA.

InvestorWords, 2016. *GNP*. Available from: http://www.investorwords.com/2186/GNP.html [Accessed 10 April 2016].

Ismail, N., 2010. Activity-Based Management System Implementation in Higher Education Institutions: Benefits and Challenges. *Campus-Wide Information System,* 27(1), 40-52.

Jansen, J., 2004. Changes and Continuities in South Africa's Higher Education System, 1994 to 2004. In Chisholm, L. (ed.), *Changing class: Education and Social Change in Post-Apartheid South Africa,* 293-314. Pretoria: HSRC Press.

Jansen, J., Herman, C., Matentjie, T., Morake, R., Pillay, P., Sehoole, C. & Weber, E., 2007. Tracing and Explaining Change in Higher Education: The South African Case. In Council on Higher Education (ed.), *Review of Higher Education in South Africa: Selected Themes*, 157-182. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education (CHE).

Juran, J., 1988. *Juran on Planning for Quality.* New York, NY: The Free Press.

Kast, F.E. & Rozenzweig, J.A., 1985. *Organization and Management.* New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Keevy, J., 2010. *Positioning Credible Evaluation Practices.* Paper prepared for the NARIC UK Annual Conference, London, 8-9 November.

Kettunen, J., 2008. A Conceptual Framework to Help Evaluate the Quality of Institutional Performance. *Quality Assurance in Education,* 16(4), 322.

Kilfoil, W., 2005. Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Open Distance Learning. *Progressio,* 27(1/2), 4-13.

Klein, K.J. & Kozlowski, S.W.J., 2000. *Multilevel Theory, Research, and Methods in Organizations: Foundations, Extension and New Directions.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Knight, J., 2008. Higher Education in Turmoil: The Changing World of Internationalization. *Global Perspectives in Higher Education,* 13, 1-50.

Kohoutek, J., 2009. *Implementation of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in the Central and East-European Countries: Agenda Ahead.* Paris: UNESCO.

Kraak, A., 2000. *Changing Modes: New Knowledge Production and its Implications for Higher Education in South Africa.* Pretoria: HSRC Press.

Kruss, G., 2002. More, Better, Different? Understanding Private Higher Education in South Africa. *Perspectives in Education,* 20(4), 15-28.

Lagrosen, S., Seyyed-Hashemi, R. & Leitner, M., 2004. Examination of the Dimensions of Quality in Higher Education. *Quality Assurance in Education,* 12(2), 61-69.

Lange, L., 2005. *Launch of HEQC-Online.* Proceedings of the Launch of HEQC-Online, Pretoria, 14-15 June.

Laske, S., Meister-Scheytt, C. & Weiskopf, R., 2000. Qualitäten der Qualität in Universitäten. In Laske, S., Habersam, M. & Kappler, E. (eds.), *Qualitätsentwicklung in Universitäten: Konzepte, Prozesse, Wirkungen,* 177-201. München und Mering: Rainer Hampp Verlag.

Lee, M., 2004. *Restructuring Higher Education in Malaysia. Penang: School of Educational Studies.* Available from: www.chea.nagoya-u.ac.jp/seminar/kokusai/lee.pdf [Accessed 12 December 2013].

Lim, F.C., 2010. Do Too Many Rights Make a Wrong? A Qualitative Study of the Experiences of a Sample of Malaysian and Singapore Private Higher Education Providers in Transnational Quality Assurance. *Quality in Higher Education,* 16(3), 211-222.

Loukkola, T. & Zhang, T., 2010. *Examining Quality Culture: Part 1 - Quality Assurance Processes in Higher Education Institutions.* Brussels: European University Association (EUA).

Luckett, K.M., 2006. *The Quality Assurance of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education in South Africa: An Analysis of National Policy Development and Stakeholder Response.* Thesis, (PhD.Phil.). University Of Stellenbosch.

Lueger, M. & Vettori, O., 2008. "Flexibilising" standards? The Role of Quality Standards within a Participative Quality Culture. In Beso, A.E. (ed.), *Implementing and Using Quality Assurance: Strategy and Practice,* 11-16. Brussels: EUA.

Lueger, M. & Vettori, O., 2007. *Finding the Right Measure? An Interactionist View on Quality Cultures and the Role of Quality Measurement.* Paper presented at the 8th International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education, Toronto, 2-5 April.

Mabizela, M.C., 2002. The Evaluation of Private Provisioning of Higher Education in South Africa. *Perspectives in Education,* 20(4), 41-51.

Mabizela, M.C., 2000. *Towards a Typology of Structural Patterns of Private-Public Higher Education in South Africa: A Contextual Analysis.* Dissertation, (M.Ed.). University of the Western Cape.

Mainardes, E.W., Alves, H. & Raposo, M., 2011. Stakeholder Theory: Issues to Resolve. *Management Decision,* 49(2), 226-252.

Makoe, M., 2012. Teaching Digital Natives: Identifying Competencies for Mobile Learning Facilitators in Distance Education. *South African Journal for Higher Education,* 26(1), 91-104.

Mapesela, M., 2002. Is the Profiferation of Private Colleges Spelling Doom for South African Public Higher Education? *South African Journal of Higher Education,* 16(2), 56-62.

Martin, M. & Stella, A., 2007. *External Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Making Choices.* Paris: UNESCO: International Institute for Educational Planning.

Mhlanga, E., 2013. *Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Southern Africa: Challenges and Opportunities.* Bern: Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers.

Ministry of Education (MoE), 2001. *National Plan for Higher Education in South Africa.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

Ministry of Education (MoE) & Ministry of Labour (MoL), 2007. *Enhancing the Efficacy and Efficiency of the National Qualifications Framework.* Pretoria: Government Gazette.

Mitchell, D. & Nielsen, S.Y., 2012. *Internationalisation and Globalisation in Higher Education (Chapter 1).* Available from: http://dx.doi.org/10.5772/48702 [Accessed 13 December 2013].

Mizikaci, F., 2006. *A Systems Approach to Program Evaluation Model for Quality in Higher Education*. Available from: http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.466.103&rep=rep1&type=pdf [Accessed 1 May 2016].

Morrison, M., 2012. *Understanding Methodology.* In Briggs, A.R.J., Coleman, M. & Morrison, M. (eds.), *Research Methods in Educational Leadership and Management.* Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Mottier, V., 2005. *The Interpretive Turn: History, Memory, and Storage in Qualitative Research*. Available from: http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/456/972 [Accessed 1 June 2015].

Mouton, N., Louw, G.P. & Strydom, G.L., 2013. Present-Day Dillemas and Challenges of the South African Tertiary System. *International Business and Economics Research Journal,* 12(3), 285-300.

Myers, M., 1997. *Qualitative Research in Information Systems.* Available from: http://misq.org/misq/downloads/download/editorial/353/ [Accessed 1 June 2015].

Naidoo, L., 2011. Epistemology as Totality in Higher Distance Education: The Integration of E-Learning in Pedegogy. *Progressio,* 22(2), 106-120.

National Assessment and Accreditation Council of India (NAAC), 2006. *Quality Assurance in Higher Education: An Introduction.* Bangalore: National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and Commonwealth of Learning.

National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE), 1996. *Report of the National Commission on Higher Education: A Framework for Transformation of 1996.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

Ncube, C., 2015. *ICT and Intellectual Property Rights: Quality assurance and Modes of Delivery.* Paper presented at the Quality Asssurance Workshop for Private Higher Education Institutions, Johannesburg, 8 October.

Neuman, W., 1997. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches.* 3rd ed. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Ngengebule, T., 2003. *Foundations of Distance Education in the Higher Education Sector: 1948-1989.* Pretoria: UNISA.

Nicholson, K., 2011. *Quality Assurance in Higher Education: A Review of the Literature: Council of Ontario Universities Degree Level Expectations Project.* Ontario: McMaster University.

Nieuwenhuis, J., 2016. *The history of higher education quality assurance processes in South Africa*. Informal interview, 2 August, Pretoria.

Nieuwenhuis, J., 2015. *Linking Modes of Delivery with Criteria: Quality Assurance and Modes of Delivery.* Presented at the Quality Assurance Workshop for Public Universities, Pretoria, 6 October.

Ntshoe, I., Higgs, P., Wolhuter, C. & Higgs, L.G., 2010. Is Quality Assurance in Higher Education Contextually Relative? *South African Journal of Higher Education,* 24(1), 111-135.

Ntshoe, I., 2004. Higher Education and Training Policy and Practise in South Africa: Impacts of Global Privatisation, Quasi-Marketisation and New Managerialism. *International Journal of Education Development,* 24(2), 137-154.

OMNEX Inc., 2016. *OMNEX Resource Centre*. Available from: http://www.omnex.com/members/standards/iso90012000/iso_9000_2000.aspx [Accessed 14 March 2016].

Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2012. *Assessment for Higher Education Learning Outcomes.* Paris: OECD.

Ortlipp, M., 2008. Keeping and Using Reflective Journals in the Qualitative Research Process. *The Qualitative Report,* 13(4), 695-705.

Paccioni, P., Sicotte, C. & Champagne, F., 2008. Accreditation: A Cultural Control Strategy. *Internationl Journal of Health Care Quality Assurance,* 21(2), 146-158.

Parsons, W., 1995. *Public Policy: An Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Policy Analysis.* Aldershot: Edward Elgar.

Patton, M., 2015. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods.* 4th ed. London: SAGE Publications.

Potgieter, I., Basson, J. & Coetzee, M., 2011. Management Competencies for the Development of Heads of Department in the Higher Education Context: A Literature Overview. *South African Journal of Labour Relations,* 35(1), 81-103.

Power, M., 1997. *The Audit Society.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Power, M., 1994. *The Audit Explosion.* London: Demos.

Rambaree, K., 2007. *Bringing Rigour in Qualitative Social Research: The Use of a CAQDAS.* Available from: http://www.gfmer.ch/GFMER_members/pdf/CAQDAS_Rambaree_2007.pdf [Accessed 1 March 2016].

Republic of South Africa (RSA), 2016. *Teach-out date of non-HEQSF aligned programmes*. Government Gazette, 613(40123), 1-8, 7 July.

Republic of South Africa (RSA), 2013. *Intellectual Property Laws Amendments Act 28 of 201*. Notice Number 996. Government Gazette, No 37148.

Republic of South Africa (RSA), 2009. *Companies Act, no. 71 of 2008.* Cape Town: Government Gazette.

Republic of South Africa (RSA), 2008. *National Qualification Framework Act, no. 67 of 2008.* Pretoria: Government Gazette.

Republic of South Africa (RSA), 1997. *Basic Conditions of Employment Act, no. 75 of 1997.* Pretoria: Government Printers .

Republic of South Africa (RSA), 1995. *Labour Relations Act, no. 66 of 1995.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

Republic of South Africa (RSA), 1993. *Occupational Helath and Safety Act, no. 85 of 1993.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

Republic of South Africa (RSA), 1978. *Copyright Act, no. 98 of 1978.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

Republic of South Africa (RSA), 1973. *Companies Act, no. 61 of 1973.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

Sachs, J., 2008. The Knowledge Society as a Trigger for a Contemporary Change in Education Policy and Practice. In Sugrue, C. (ed.), *The Future of Educational Change: International Perspectives.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Sanyal, B., 2013. *Quality Assurance of Teacher Education in Africa.* Addis Ababa: UNESCO-IICB.

Sawyer, A., 2002. *Higher Education at the Crossroads: A Policy Consultation on Higher Education in Africa.* Proceedings and key note speech of the Association of African Universities, Dakar, 11-13 February.

Scheerens, J. & Hendriks, M., 2002. *Benchmarking the Quality of Education.* Available from: http://pure.au.dk/ws/files/667/validate.pdf [Accessed 4 November 2015].

Schonwetter, T. & Ncube, C., 2011. *New Hope for Africa? Copyright and Access to Knowledge in the Digital Age.* Available from: https://uctipunit.files.wordpress.com/2010/07/cprafrica_paper_tscn110410.pdf [Accessed 1 March 2016].

Scott, G., Coates, H. & Anderson, M., 2008. *Learning Leaders in Times of Change: Academic Leadership Capabilities for Australian Higher Education.* Penrith: University of Wesern Sydney and Australian Council for Educational Research.

Sehoole, C., 2012. A Decade of Regulating Private Higher Education in South Africa. *International Higher Education,* 66(Winter), 19-20.

Selesho, J., 2010. The Impact of Programme Accreditation in a Transformed Higher Education: Challenges and Success. *Journal of Quality in Education,* 1, 1-17.

Shaw, J.A. & DeForge, R.T., 2014. Qualitative Inquiry and the Debate Between Hermeneutics and Critical Theory. *Qualitative Health Research,* 24(11), 1567-1580.

Sheffield Hallam University (SHU), 2003. *EFQM Excellence Model (R): Higher Education Version 2003.* Available from: http://integralexellence.shu.ac.uk [Accessed 16 September 2015].

Singh, M., 2010. Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Which Pasts to Build On, What Futures to Contemplate? *Quality in Higher Education,* 16(2), 189-194.

Soudien, C., 2007. Quality in Higher Education and the Management of South Africa's Past: Some Paradoxes. *Perspectives in Education,* 25(3), 1-12.

South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), 2014. *National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment for NQF Qualifications and Part-Qualifications and Professional Designations in South Arica.* Pretoria: SAQA.

South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), 2013a. *National Policy and Criteria for Credit Accumulation and Transfer.* Pretoria: SAQA.

South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), 2013b. *National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning.* Pretoria: SAQA.

South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), 2012a. *Level Descriptors for the South African National Qualifications Framework.* Pretoria: SAQA.

South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), 2012b. *Policy and Criteria for Recognising a Professional Body and Registering a Professional Designation for the Processes of the National Qualifications Framework Act, no. 67 of 2008.* Pretoria: Government Gazette.

South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), 2001a. *SAQA and the Accreditation of Private Higher Education Institutions.* Pretoria: SAQA.

South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), 2001b. *Quality Management System for Education and Training Providers.* Pretoria: SAQA.

South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), 1998a. *SAQA Regulations of 1998.* Pretoria: Government Gazette.

South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), 1998b. *Skills Development Act, no. 97 of 1998.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), 1995. *South African Qualifications Authority Act, no. 58 of 1995.* Pretoria: Government Gazette.

Srikanthan, G. & Dalrymple, J., 2003. Developing Alternative Perspectives for Quality in Higher Education. *The International Journal of Educational Management,* 17(3), 126-136.

Srikanthan, G. & Dalrymple, J.F., 2002. Developing a Holistic Model for Quality in Higher Education. *Quality in Higher Education,* 8(3), 215-222.

Strydom, A.H. & Strydom, J.F., 2004. Establishing Quality Assurance in the South African Context. *Quality in Higher Education,* 10(2), 101-113.

Subotzky, G., 2002. The Nature of the Private Higher Education Sector in South Africa: Further Quantitative Glimpses. *Perspective in Education,* 20(4), 1-13.

Subotzky, G., 1999. *Alternatives to the Entrepreneurial University: New Modes of Knowledge Production in Community Service Programmes.* Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Sudha, T., 2013. Total Quality Management in Higher Education Institutions. *International Journal of Social Science and Interdisciplinary Research,* 2(6), 121-132.

Swanepoel, L., 2015. *Linking Modes of Delivery with Criteria.* Paper delivered at the Quality Assurance Workshop: Quality Assurance and Modes of Delivery, Johannesburg, 8 October.

Tam, M., 2001. Measuring Quality and Performance in Higher Education. *Quality in Higher Education,* 7(1), 47-54.

Tang, S.F. & Hussin, S., 2013. Advancing Sustainability in Private Higher Education through Quality Assurance: A Study of Two Malaysian Private Universities. *Asian Social Science,* 9(11), 270-280.

Teichler, U., 1999. Internationalisation as a Challenge for Higher Education in Europe. *Tertiary Education and Management,* 5(1), 5-23.

Tenner, A.R. & Detoro, I.J., 1992. *Total Quality Management.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

The South African Institute for Advancement (SAIA) & The Kregse Foundation, 2014. *Student Access and Success: Issues and Interventions in South African Universities.* Cape Town: SAIA and The Kregse Foundation.

Tladi, L.S., 2010. A profile of the private higher education landscape. Pretoria: UNISA.

United Nations Educational, Scienetific and Cultural Organisaton (UNESCO), 2002. *Open and Distance Learning: Trends, Policy and Strategy Considerations.* Available from:

http://unescodoc.unesco.org/images/0012/0012/001284/1284/128463e.pdf [Accessed 1 April 2016].

Van Berkel, H.J. & Wolfhagen, H.A., 2002. The Dutch System of External Quality Assessment: Description and Experiences. *Educational Health,* 15(3), 335-345.

Van Damme, D., 2002. *Trends and Models in International Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education in Relation to Trade in Education Services.* Paper delivered at the OECD/US Forum, Washington, DC, 23-24 May.

Van der Merwe, D., Parekh, A., Gravett, S., Ryan, R., De Kadt, E. *et al*., 2008. *UJ Teaching and Learning Strategy.* Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg.

Van Deventer, I. & Kruger, A.G., 2010. *An Educator's Guide to School Management Skills.* Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Van Manen, M., 1990. *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy.* New York, NY: State University of New York Press.

Van Vught, F., 2007. *Diversity and Differentiation in Higher Education Systems.* Paper delivered at the CHET Anniversary Conference, Cape Town, 16 November.

Varghese, N.V., 2006. *Growth and Expansion of Private Higher Education in Africa.* Paris: UNESCO.

Verger, A., 2010. *WTO/GATS and the Global Politics of Higher Education.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Vettori, O., 2012. *A Clash of the Cutures: Conflicting and Coalesing Interpretive Patterns in Austrian Higher Education.* Thesis, (PhD.Ed.). University of Vienna.

Vidovick, L. & Slee, R., 2001. Bringing Universities to Account: Exploring Some Global and Local Policy Options. *Journal of Education Policy,* 16(2), 431-453.

Vlãsceanu, L., Grünberg, L. & Pârlea, D., 2004. *Quality Assurance and Accreditation: A Glossary of Basic Terms and Definitions.* Bucharest: UNESCO-CEPES.

Vroeijenstein, A., 1995. *Improvement and Accountability: Navigating Between Scylla and Charybdis. Guide for External Quality Assurance in Higher Education.* Arbor, MI: University of Michigan.

Walsham, G., 2006. Doing Interpretive Research. *European Journal of Information Systems*, 15(3), 320-330.

Weinstein, C.E. & Meyer, R., 1983. The Teaching of Learning Strategies. *Innovative Abstracts,* 5(32), 1-4.

Welch, T., Reed, Y. & National Association of Distance Education Organisations of South Africa (NADEOSA), 2004. *Designing and Delivering Distance Education: Quality Criteria and Case Study from South Africa.* Braamfontein: NADEOSA.

Zaki, S. & Zaki Rashidi, M., 2013. Parameters of Quality in Higher Education: A Theoretical Framework. *International Journal of Social Science Education*, 3(4), 1098-1105.

APPENDIX A:

Summary of evidence (documents) requested by the council on higher education to prove compliance with criteria for programme accreditation of a new programme

Table A.1 summarises the documents requested for programme accreditation, as evidence with regard to compliance to the criteria (new programmes). It further lists relevant legislation and important reports and documentation that need to be consulted when drafting requested documents.

Table A.1: Summary of evidence

Criterion	Document Requested for Programme Accreditation, as evidence with regard to Compliance to the Criteria	Relevant legislation and important reports/ documentation to be consulted when drafting requested documents[16]
Programme design *Criterion 1:* *The programme is consonant with the institution's mission, forms part of institutional planning and resource allocation, meets national requirements, the needs of students and other stakeholders, and is intellectually credible. It is designed coherently and articulates well with other relevant programmes, where possible.*	• Policy for the development of learning materials	• Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) (CHE, 2013c) • Level Descriptors for the South African National Qualifications Framework (SAQA, 2012a) • National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment for NQF Qualifications and Part-Qualifications and Professional Designations in South Arica (SAQA, 2014) • National Policy and Criteria for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (SAQA, 2013a) • Classification of Educational Subject Matter (CESM) (DoE, 2007; DoE, Amended 2009) • Communique 3: Procedures and Guidelines for Academic Programme Application 2009 and 2010 (CHE, SAQA, DHET, 2009) • South African Qualifications Authority Act of 1995 • SAQA Regulations (1998a) (Government Gazette, no 19231) • The New Academic Policy of

[16] Own compilation.

Criterion	Document Requested for Programme Accreditation, as evidence with regard to Compliance to the Criteria	Relevant legislation and important reports/ documentation to be consulted when drafting requested documents[16]
		2001 (DoE) • Policy and Criteria for Recognising a Professional Body and Registering a Professional Designation for the Processes of the National Qualifications Framework Act, Act 67 of 2008 (SAQA, 2012b) • Copyright Act, 98 of 1978 (RSA, 1978)
	• Budget for the development of learning materials	Audited financial reports, or audited projected budget
	• Examples of contract arrangements	• Higher Education Act 101 of 1997
	• Outlines and outcomes of all modules (core, fundamental and optional) that constitute the programme	• Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) (CHE, 2013c) • Level Descriptors for the South African National Qualifications Framework (SAQA, 2012a) • Classification of Educational Subject Matter (CESM) (DoE, Amended 2009) Communique 3: Procedures and Guidelines for Academic Programme Application 2009 and 2010 (CHE, SAQA, DHET, 2009)
	• SAQA submission	• SAQA Qualifications Template • Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) (CHE, 2013c) • Level Descriptors for the South African National Qualifications Framework (SAQA, 2012a) • Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQSF) (CHE, 2013c)
	• List of prescribed and recommended readings	List of recent and relevant prescribed and recommended readings.
	• Letter of Professional Body Endorsement, Approval or Accreditation	• Relevant legislation and regulation as proposed by the different professional bodies.

Criterion	Document Requested for Programme Accreditation, as evidence with regard to Compliance to the Criteria	Relevant legislation and important reports/ documentation to be consulted when drafting requested documents[16]
Student recruitment, admission and selection *Criterion 2:* *Recruitment documentation informs potential students of the programme accurately and sufficiently, and admission adheres to current legislation. Admission and selection of students are commensurate with the programme's academic requirements, within a framework of widened access and equity. The number of students selected takes into account the programme's intended learning outcomes, its capacity to offer good quality education and the needs of the particular profession (in the case of professional and vocational programmes).*	• Admission policy for the programme	• Minimum Admission Requirements for Higher Certificate, Diploma and Bachelor Degree Programmes requiring for National Certificate (DoE, 2005) • Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 • Education White Paper 3, A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education of 1997
	• Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy	• National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (SAQA, 2013b) Policies on the recognition of prior learning, credit accumulation and transfer, and assessment in higher education (CHE, 2016c) • Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) (CHE, 2013c)
Staffing: Staff Qualifications *Criterion 3:* *Academic staff responsible for the programme are suitably qualified and have sufficient relevant experience and teaching competence, and their assessment competence and research profile are adequate for the nature and level of the programme. The institution and/or other recognised agencies contracted by the institution provide opportunities for academic staff to enhance their competences and to support their professional growth and development.*	• Programme Coordinator and staff Curricula Vitae (CVs)	Submit relevant Curricula Vitae of faculty
	• Staff Development policy	• Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 • Labour relations Act 66 of 1995 (RSA, 1995) • Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 • Regulations for Private Higher Education Institutions (DoE, 2002b) (HE Act 101 of 1997) • Skills Development Act 97 (SAQA, 1998b)
	• Workplace Skills Plan (WSP)	• Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 • Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 • Regulations for Private Higher Education Institutions (as amended) (DoE, 2002b; DHET, 2016) (HE Act 101 of 1997) • Skills Development Act 97

Criterion	Document Requested for Programme Accreditation, as evidence with regard to Compliance to the Criteria	Relevant legislation and important reports/ documentation to be consulted when drafting requested documents[16]
		(SAQA, 1998b)
Staffing: Staff Size and Seniority *Criterion 4:* *The academic and support staff complement is of sufficient size and seniority for the nature and field of the programme and the size of the student body to ensure that all activities related to the programme can be carried out effectively. The ratio of full-time to part-time staff is appropriate. The recruitment and employment of staff follows relevant legislation and appropriate administrative procedures, including redress and equity considerations. Support staff are adequately qualified and their knowledge and skills are regularly updated.*	• Conditions of Service	• Labour relations Act 66 of 1995 • Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997
	• Staff Recruitment Policy	• Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 • Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 • Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 • Regulations for Private Higher Education Institutions (DoE, 2002b) (HE Act 101 of 1997)
	• Examples of contracts with academic staff	Submit examples of contracts
	• Staff equity policy	• Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 • Labour relations Act 66 of 1995 • Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 • Regulations for Private Higher Education Institutions (DoE, 2002b) (HE Act 101 of 1997)
Teaching and learning strategy *Criterion 5:* *The institution gives recognition to the importance of promoting student learning. The teaching and learning strategy is appropriate for the institutional type (as reflected in its mission), mode(s) of delivery and student composition, contains mechanisms to ensure the appropriateness of teaching and learning methods, and makes provision for staff to upgrade their teaching methods. The strategy sets targets, plans for implementation, and mechanisms to monitor progress, evaluate impact and*	• Budget for the support and development of teaching and learning	Audited financial reports, or audited projected budget
	• Budget for the support and development of teaching technologies	Audited financial reports, or audited projected budget
	• Teaching and learning policy of the institution/ faculty	• Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) (CHE, 2013c) • Level Descriptors for the South African National Qualifications Framework (SAQA, 2012a) • Copyright Act, 98 of 1978 (RSA, 1978) • Classification of Educational Subject Matter (CESM) (DoE, Amended 2009) • Communique 3: Procedures and Guidelines for Academic Programme Application 2009 and 2010 (CHE, SAQA, DHET, 2009)

Criterion	Document Requested for Programme Accreditation, as evidence with regard to Compliance to the Criteria	Relevant legislation and important reports/ documentation to be consulted when drafting requested documents[16]
effect improvement.	• Module outlines, student guides, and programme handbooks	Same as above (Criterion 1)
Student assessment policies and procedures 1. disputes; the rigour and security of the assessment system; RPL; and for the development of staff competence in assessment.	• Experiential learning assessment and monitoring policy	• Work Integrated Learning (CHE, 2012a) • Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQSF) (CHE, 2013c) • Level Descriptors for the South African National Qualifications Framework (SAQA, 2012a)
	• Assessment policy	• National Policy for Designing and Implementing Assessment for NQF Qualifications and Part-Qualifications and Professional Designations in South Arica (SAQA, 2014) • National Policy and Criteria for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (SAQA, 2013a) • Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQSF) (CHE, 2013c) • Level Descriptors for the South African National Qualifications Framework (SAQA, 2012a)
Infrastructure and library resources *Criterion 7:* *Suitable and sufficient venues, IT infrastructure and library resources are available for students and staff in the programme. Policies ensure the proper management and maintenance of library resources, including support and access for students and staff. Staff development for library personnel takes place on a regular basis.*	• Financial plan for the maintenance and upgrading of infrastructure/ resources	Audited financial reports, or audited projected budget
	• Proposed or actual library holdings/ budgets specific to the programme	• Audited financial reports, or audited projected budget and/or • A complete list of the relevant library holdings (subject specific and should include all types of resources)
	• Specialist equipment or infrastructure specific to this programme	• Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993 (RSA, 1993) • Regulations for Private Higher Education Institutions (DoE, 2002b) (HE Act 101 of 1997)
	• Occupational Health and Safety Certificate	• Same as above
	• Student Support (Dealing	• Criteria for Programme

Criterion	Document Requested for Programme Accreditation, as evidence with regard to Compliance to the Criteria	Relevant legislation and important reports/ documentation to be consulted when drafting requested documents[16]
	with the needs of a diverse student population)	Accreditation (CHE,2004) • Education White Paper 3: A programme for the transformation of higher education of 1997
Programme administrative services *Criterion 8:* *The programme has effective administrative services for providing information, managing the programme information system, dealing with a diverse student population, and ensuring the integrity of processes leading to certification of the qualification obtained through the programme.*	• Policies/ procedures for the certification of qualifications	• Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 • Regulations for Private Higher Education Institutions (DoE, 2002b) (HE Act 101 of 1997) • Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQSF) (CHE, 2013c)
Postgraduate policies, procedures and regulations *Criterion 9:* *Postgraduate programmes have appropriate policies, procedures and regulations for the admission and selection of students, the selection and appointment of supervisors, and the definition of the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and students, etc.*	• Research policy	• Research Outputs Policy (DHET, 2015)
	• Policies/ procedures for the appointment of supervisors	• Research Outputs Policy (DHET, 2015a) • Intellectual Property Laws Amendment Act 28 of 201 (RSA, 2013) • Intellectual Property Laws Amendment Act 38 (RSA, 1997) • Communique 3: Procedures and Guidelines for Academic Programme Application 2009 and 2010 (CHE, SAQA, DHET, 2009)
	• Code of Ethics	• Same as above
Section C: Programmes offered through distance education (No 10) *10.1* *10.2* *10.3* *10.4* *10.5* *10.6* *10.7*	• Rationale for the use of distance education for the delivery of this programme to the intended target learners. • Evidence of the institution's systems, structures, policies, procedures and processes for materials development and delivery	• *Distance Higher Education Programmes in a Digital Era: A good practise guide* • *Designing and Delivering Distance Education: Quality Criteria and Case Study from South Africa by Tessa Welch and Yvonne Reed (NADEOSA)* • *Policy for the provisioning of distance education in South African universities in the context*

Criterion	Document Requested for Programme Accreditation, as evidence with regard to Compliance to the Criteria	Relevant legislation and important reports/ documentation to be consulted when drafting requested documents[16]
	for distance learning. • Quality assurance policy and procedures for monitoring teaching and learning through distance education. • Evidence of staff training, monitoring and support in offering specialised distance education through the different roles they perform, including the design, management and delivery of the programmes. • Evidence of how the design of the programme relates to the strategy for teaching and learning at a distance, including arrangements for students to access texts and materials required by the curriculum. • Detailed policy for formative and summative assessment, including mention of feedback to students and the conduct of examinations. • Evidence of mechanisms which is used for student support. If contact sessions are offered, it should describe the systems in detail.	*of an integrated post-school system (DHET, 2004c)*

APPENDIX B:

Policy Context for programme accreditation – Distance education

The Council on Higher Education, in its publication *Distance higher education programmes in a digital era: good practice guide*, presents three factors to consider when an institution wishes to design a programme through the mode of distance education.

A continuum is presented, whereby the first factor is presented as it refers to the spatial or geographical distribution of lecturers and students and how it affects the mode of delivery. By means of another continuum, the second factor refers to the extent to which supporting Information Communication Technologies (ITCs) are use. A third factor points to the group size of the cohort student enrolment as it maps programmes on a resulting grid. It also takes into consideration the previous two continua in relation to each other as horizontal and vertical axes. A brief discussion on each will follow:

The first factor refers to the mode of education provisioning, which can therefore be viewed on a continuum which ranges from purely face-to-face tuition, though to education purely focussed on distance education, also traditionally referred to as correspondence tuition. With the increased use of supporting education technologies, there is a tendency for institutions to move their mode of education provisioning more to the centre (CHE, 2014a).

Figure B.1: Spatial or geographical distribution of lecturers and students
Source: CHE (2014a:84).

From a programme quality assurance perspective, the CHE explains that “the geographic location of one’s students should continue to inform the ways in which learning experiences are designed, mediated, assessed and reviewed (CHE, 2014a:1).

The second factor focusses on the extent to which supporting ICTs are use. Another continuum is used to plot the use of ITC’s ranging from being ‘fully online’, to a completely traditional correspondence provisioning of a programme. The latter provides no digital support. Providers in an African context are encouraged to consider digital forms of support that do not require internet access. Examples of these include learning, which is supported by offline media, such as CD / DVD / flash drives which are normally distributed through the

post. Consequently, it is necessary that the physical location of students and their access to appropriate resources and technology remain important considerations when institutions design its programmes.

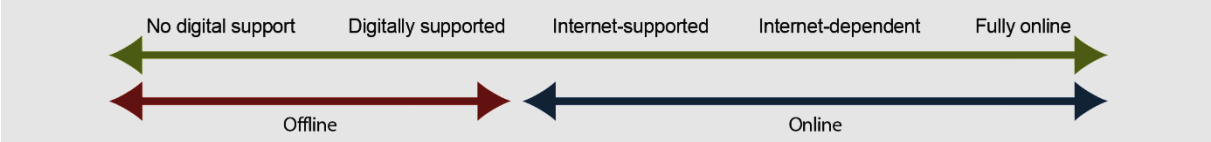


Figure B.2: Extent of ICT support

Source: CHE (2014a:84).

A third factor to consider points to the group size of cohort student enrolment. Institutions are encouraged to research and plan for institutional capacity to offer a specific programme. Consequently, the nature and extent of the interactions between the (possible) lecturer-student, and student-student; the need for a network of tutors; the level of interaction between the lecturers and tutors; the level of support to the students; and the nature of the assessment; also hinges on the group size of the student cohort enrolment. These in turn influence the overall pedagogical approach (CHE, 2014a).

Conceptualising the previous two continua in relation to each other as horizontal and vertical axes, the various programmes can be mapped, according to group size on the resulting grid as illustrated in Figure B.3 below. The circles positioned on the grid represent examples of various programmes at various higher education institutions. Institutions are therefore able to plan their progression through the grid as their student enrolments increase or decrease. An institution offering programmes to larger group sizes, might choose to follow a fully online education delivery, with various contact and online tutor support. Another example is where an institution offering programmes to a smaller group might offer full digital support for its students located at a remote site.

The figure below illustrates how group size, this occurrence:

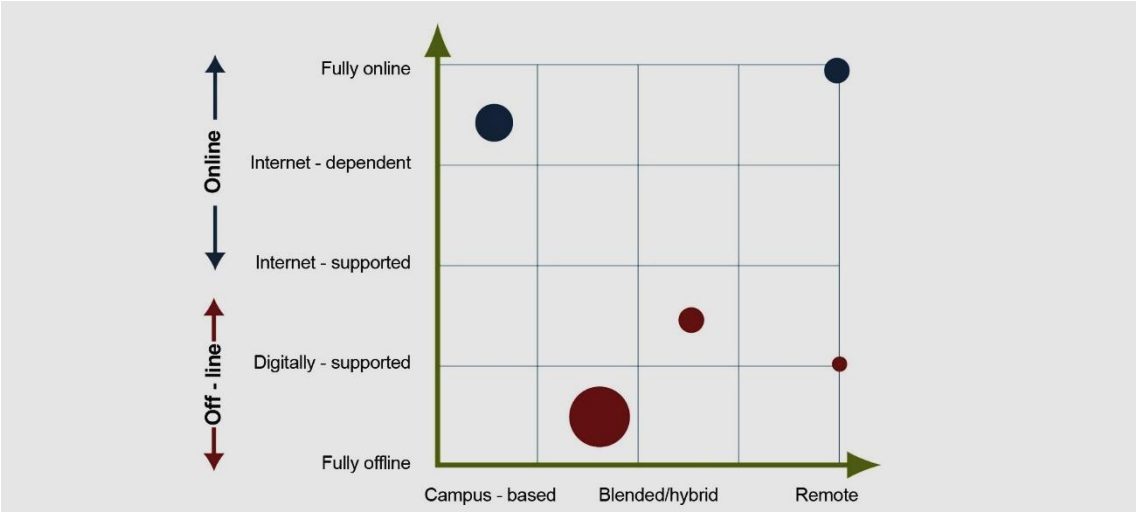


Figure B.3: Mapping programmes on a resulting grid

Source: CHE (2014a:84).

Conclusion

Institutions are encouraged to consider the three factors discussed above as they embark on the design of programmes that are being offered through the distance mode of provisioning.

APPENDIX C:
Interview schedule

TOPIC: Exploring the management of quality assurance in private higher education institutions in South Africa

---

Institutional Background:

1. Please provide me with a short overview of your institution.
2. What type of students usually enrol for programmes at your institution?
3. Your institution has several programmes accredited. What courses are your most lucrative programmes at the moment? Please explain?

Institutional Capacity

4. What previous experience or training have you had, particularly in quality assurance, or programme accreditation? Please explain.
5. With regard to the employment of both your academic and support staff, does your institution mainly employ them on a full-time, or part-time basis? Please explain.
6. What type of knowledge, skills and abilities do you look for, when recruiting academic staff?

Management of internal quality assurance:

7. How do you communicate your expectations with regard to the quality assurance processes, such as for the programme accreditation process, within your institution?
8. How is accountability managed within your institution? How does this process work?
9. How do you manage the stakeholders within your institution to implement corrective decisions in order to focus on improvement of quality?

Programme Accreditation:

10. How do you understand the purpose of programme accreditation? And do you feel it is necessary? Please explain.
11. Explain the procedure or process that you follow in your institution in preparing an application for programme accreditation.

12. Who else is involved in this process and what are their roles?
13. In your experience, what are some of the challenges you have encountered in the programme accreditation process, and how does this affect the management of quality assurance within your institution?
14. Which criteria for programme accreditation and re-accreditation do you feel are more difficult to comply with than the others? Please explain.
15. Do you have any suggestions with regard to improving the process of programme accreditation?

Linking Internal and External Quality Assurance

16. How does the programme accreditation process fit into your quality assurance functions, i.e. your policies, practices and procedures, within your entire institution?
17. In hindsight, going through this process, what have you learned? And what was the most remarkable change that happened during this time?

Final open-ended question

18. With regard to this study, is there anything else you wish to mention?

APPENDIX D:

Linking the conceptual framework with the interview schedule

Table D.1 provides an overview by linking the eight parameters, proposed by the conceptual framework of this study as adapted by Zaki and Zaki Rashidi (2013), with each interview question listed in the interview schedule (Appendix C) (see Chapter 4: Conceptual Framework).

Table D.1: Application of the conceptual framework in relation to the interview schedule

Interview question (according to interview schedule)	Main parameter of the conceptual framework, relevant to each question
1. Please provide me with a short overview of your institution.	Institutional Design
2. What type of students usually enrol for programmes at your institution?	Student profile
3. Your institution has several programmes accredited. What courses are your most lucrative programmes at the moment? Please explain?	Programme design
4. What previous experience or training have you had, particularly in quality assurance, or programme accreditation? Please explain.	Faculty knowledge, skills and abilities
5. With regard to the employment of both your academic and support staff, does your institution mainly employ them on a full-time, or part-time basis? Please explain.	Institutional Design
6. What type of knowledge, skills and abilities do you look for, when recruiting academic staff?	Faculty knowledge, skills and abilities
7. How do you communicate your expectations with regard to the quality assurance processes, such as	Leadership and ownership

for the programme accreditation process, within your institution?	
8. How is accountability managed within your institution? How does this process work?	Leadership and ownership
9. How do you manage the stakeholders within your institution to implement corrective decisions in order to focus on improvement of quality?	Stakeholder management
10. How do you understand the purpose of programme accreditation? And do you feel it is necessary? Please explain.	Institutional policies and practices
11. Explain the procedure or process that you follow in your institution in preparing an application for programme accreditation.	Institutional policies and practices
12. Who else is involved in this process and what are their roles?	Institutional design
13. In your experience, what are some of the challenges you have encountered in the programme accreditation process, and how does this affect the management of quality assurance within your institution?	Leadership and ownership
14. Which criteria for programme accreditation and re-accreditation do you feel are more difficult to comply with than the others? Please explain.	Stakeholder management
15. Do you have any suggestions with regard to improving the process of programme accreditation?	Stakeholder management
16. How does the programme accreditation process fit into your quality assurance functions, i.e. your policies, practices and procedures, within your entire institution?	Leadership and ownership
17. In hindsight, going through this process, what have you learned? And what was the most remarkable	Institutional policies and

change that happened during this time?	practices
18. With regard to this study, is there anything else you wish to mention?	Open-ended
It should also be noted, that the parameters are interdependent, as explained in Chapter 4. In addition, responses of respondents were often a combination of factors, which relates to various factors within the different eight key parameters.	

APPENDIX E:

Letter of invitation presented to participants

EXPLORING THE MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

You are invited to take part in a master's research project conducted by Elmarie Stander at the University of Pretoria in the Faculty of Education Management, Law and Policy Studies, under the supervision on Professor Chaya Herman. The purpose of the study is to explore some of the challenges that Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) face with regard to programme accreditation in South Africa.

I would like to make an appointment for an interview at your convenience. The interview should last about an hour. With your permission, I would like to record the interview for data analysis purposes. Please note that taking part in the interview is voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time. You may also refuse to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

All information provided by you, as part of this study, will be handled confidentially. Your data will be anonymous, which means that your name will not be mentioned or linked to the data. You may direct any queries to the supervisor of researcher:

Supervisor: Professor Chaya Herman

Email: Chaya.herman@up.ac.za

Tel: 012 420 5665

Fax: 012 420 3581

Researcher/ Student: Elmarie Stander

Email: stander.elmarie@gmail.com

Mobile: 083 661 1302

Fax: 086 575 2645

_____ _____

Prof. C. Herman **Elmarie Stander**

APPENDIX F:

Consent form presented to participants

EXPLORING THE MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

I hereby agree to participate in a research project exploring the challenges that private higher education institutions (PHEIs) in South Africa are facing with programme accreditation. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any point during the interview. I am also aware that participation in this research project will not necessarily benefit me personally.

Furthermore, I understand that my name will not be mentioned and that my answers remain confidential. I am also aware that the findings from this research may be published in academic journals or presented at conferences.

_____ _____

Name of participant **Date**

_____

Signature of participant