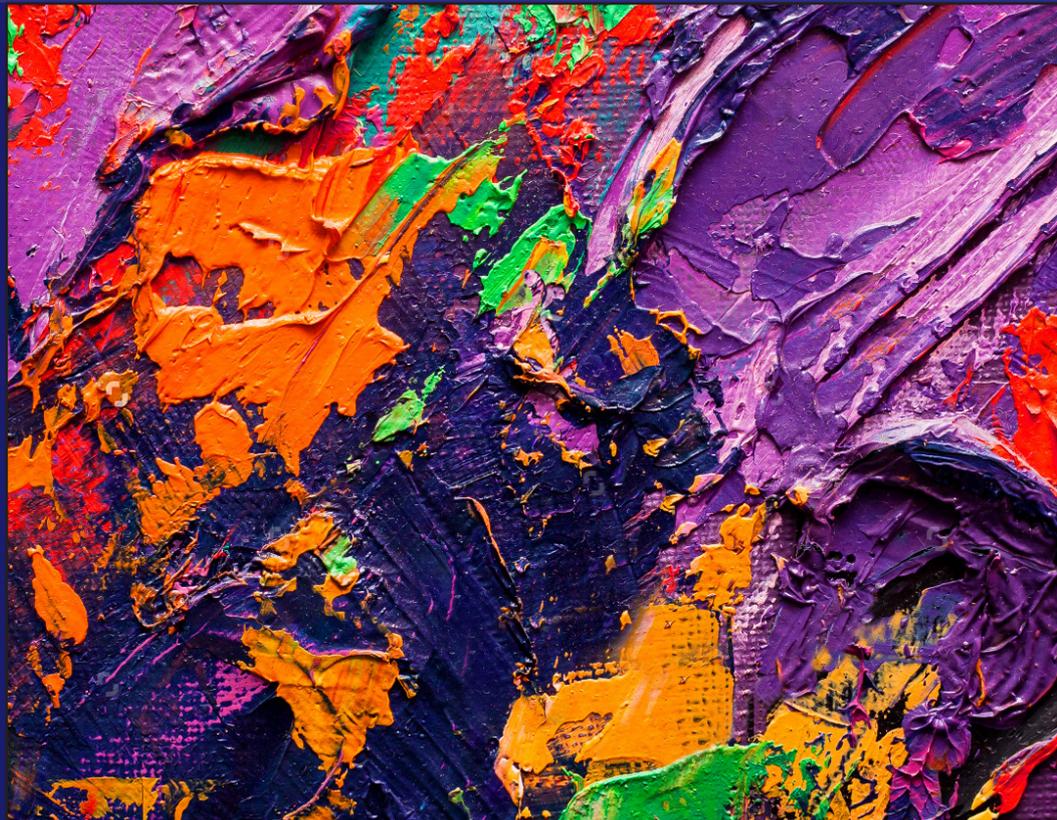


Learning to Teach in Higher Education in South Africa

*An investigation into the influences of institutional
context on the professional learning of academics in their
roles as teachers*



■ | *A collaboration between eighteen researchers
across eight universities*

Higher Education Monitor 14

Council on Higher Education



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roles as teachers*

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The South African Council on Higher Education (CHE) is an independent statutory body responsible for advising the Minister of Higher Education and Training on all higher education policy issues, and for quality assurance in higher education and training.

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ACRONYMS

AD	Academic Development
CHE	Council on Higher Education
DoE	Department of Education
DVC	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
HAUs	Historically Advantaged Universities
HDUs	Historically Disadvantaged Universities
HE	Higher Education
HELTASA	Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa
HESA	Higher Education South Africa
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
NRF	National Research Foundation
PG Dip (HE) (T&L)	Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education (Teaching & Learning)
SES	Socio-economic status
SOTL	Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
TDG	Teaching Development Grant
USAf	Universities South Africa
UoT	University of Technology
VC	Vice-Chancellor

Glossary

This glossary provides definitions of phrases as they are used in this document.

Academic development – all aspects of support for higher education learning and teaching, including professional learning and student learning

Agency – the power of individuals or groups to change their practices, conditions or contexts

Culture – the norms, values and ideas that reside within a specific context

Formal learning – professional learning that takes place through organised workshops and programmes, lunch hour seminars, teaching conferences, short courses and qualifications

Informal learning – learning that happens through day-to-day interactions with colleagues and peers in their work contexts. Lecturers also learn by doing, continued practice and experimentation.

Institutional context – the university context that is influenced by systemic and macro forces, and that, in turn, influences the working conditions of academics

Learning to teach, professional development and professional learning – all refer to lecturers learning to teach in formal or informal settings

Structure – the social arrangements, power relations and resources available in any context

Teaching – engagement with learners to enable their understanding and application of knowledge, concepts and processes, including design, content selection, delivery, assessment and reflection

Teaching and Learning Centres – a catch-all phrase to denote units responsible for supporting teaching and learning enhancement, including professional learning

Biographical notes

Vivienne Bozalek is a Professor and Director of Teaching and Learning at the University of the Western Cape. She has engaged with professional development of academic staff both at an institutional and cross-institutional level. She has led and been involved with several collaborative research projects on innovative and socially just pedagogical practices and participatory methodologies in higher education.

James Garraway is an Associate Professor and Acting Director of the Centre for Higher Education at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. He is involved with formal and informal staff development initiatives for the Western Cape region, as well as within the university itself, with a particular focus on transitions, which is also his Research and Development focus.

Nicoline Herman is the Deputy Director of the Centre for Teaching and Learning at Stellenbosch University. She is responsible for the institutional professional learning programme for newly appointed academics. As a student on this project, she completed her PhD studies with her dissertation entitled, The role of context in decision making about professional learning by lecturers at a research-intensive university.

Jeff Jawitz is an Associate Professor in the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching at the University of Cape Town. He has played a central role in the development of a programme for new academics, as well as in establishing the PG Dip and Masters programme in Higher Education Studies at UCT.

Brenda Leibowitz holds a Chair in Teaching and Learning in the Faculty of Education at the University of Johannesburg. She researches and manages several projects at the national level and at the University on teaching and learning, professional learning, the scholarship of teaching and learning, and social justice.

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Clever Ndebele is an Associate Professor in the Education Faculty at North-West University. His research interests are in academic professional development and student success. He has previously worked in the field of academic professional development at the Universities of Venda and Fort Hare.

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We pay tribute to the contribution of **Wendy McMillan**, who was an avid member of the project and who passed away, sadly, on 23 December 2015.

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Grant number 74003.

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A study on professional development in higher education

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Participating institutions:

Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Durban University of Technology

Fort Hare University

Rhodes University

Stellenbosch University

University of Cape Town

University of Venda

University of the Western Cape.



PREFACE

“Teaching and learning are never neutral. Every aspect is ideological in nature: from the admission of students, to the selection of curriculum content, to the adoption of learning materials, to the pedagogical approach, to the mode of assessment and the quality of the feedback. The form of disciplinary knowledge may vary from the more subjective and contentious to the more objective and broadly accepted, but teaching and learning remain highly political acts across all institutions, faculties and disciplines. So it is unsurprising that when a country undergoes major social change, ideological demands are placed on teaching and learning.” (HE Reviewed, CHE 2016 p.143)

There are many and diverse influences on teaching and learning as a political act, from broad social movements that challenge what is taught, to the ways in which resources have historically been allocated, to the values and goals of different disciplines, and the more immediate institutional and faculty contexts in which they take place. Learning to teach in higher education in South Africa is a timely and well-researched contribution to understanding the influences of that more immediate layer, that is, of institutional contexts, on the professional learning of academics in their roles as teachers. It explores questions of whether it matters to the professional learning process whether one is teaching in a context in which resources are scarce, or whether the departmental leadership style is authoritarian, or whether an institution has a strong drive to increase research output. And if it matters, what are the implications for facilitating opportunities for academics to ‘learn to teach’ in higher education?

Undertaken by a team of academic staff developers across eight institutional contexts, this research report offers a comprehensive, nuanced and theorised set of insights into the role that context plays in the ways in which academics learn to teach. Such insights can inform the development of professional learning initiatives at both the institutional and national policy levels. The report is one of the outcomes of a large-scale study carried out between 2011 and 2016, made possible by funding from the National Research Foundation. It has spawned many research articles, books and PhD studies (see Appendix One) and has thus in itself provided a vehicle for the development of further research and researchers on the subject. The team chose to work collaboratively, with all the possibilities and difficulties that that entails, as reflected on in Chapter 7. Thereby, it also offers an illuminating reflection and insights into such research methodology.

While the report does not specifically set out to offer anything new or surprising about the cultural and contextual differences between institutions, it does offer a coherent interpretation of such complex and intersecting conditions examined through a single theoretical lens. Indeed, the concepts of ‘structure, culture and agency’ as developed in the work of the social realist, Margaret Archer, formed the theoretical canvas for the study. The theory allows for the analytical separation of different domains for the purposes of understanding the interplay of relations, but it also offers a hope of bringing about social transformation through exercising particular modes of reflexivity. As the report argues, quoting Archer, transforming our positions in society is possible, but “their transformation depends partly on the subjective reflexivity of primary agents in seeking to play an active part in reshaping society’s resource distribution”. The researchers may not always have found it easy to apply a single theoretical lens, but the theory-based study provides a coherent representation of the differences and similarities between the institutional contexts of the eight universities, throwing into relief their different influences on professional learning, and points to pathways towards the improvement of teaching and learning in South African higher education.

A major contribution of this report that is likely to influence the discourse on teaching and learning significantly, is the conceptual shift from ‘professional development’ to ‘professional learning’. As an external reviewer noted, “in the context of the decolonization debate, [this shift] has the potential to offer a more flexible continuum in which to position different learning opportunities”. It also recognises the importance of group and individual agency and the importance of informal contexts in learning to teach.

The publication of this research report takes forward the CHE's ongoing endeavours to improve and enhance the quality of teaching and learning in higher education. It serves to complement the more practical implementation of quality assurance in higher education, which for the CHE has largely entailed a focus on teaching and learning, whether in accreditation, audits or the Quality Enhancement Project (QEP) that began in 2014 in which one of the four focus areas that universities were asked to engage with was "enhancing academics as teachers". Participation in the QEP over the past three years has contributed to a heightened awareness across the sector of the importance of academics developing competence in university teaching, particularly given the increased emphasis being placed on student success by both the government and higher education institutions themselves. As a result, universities are becoming more intentional in their efforts to help academics develop this competence. The release of the study is therefore timely, as not only will it add to our collective understanding of the complexities and nuances in the interrelationships between structure, culture and agency that inform and influence academics in their roles as teachers, but it will serve as a useful resource for institutions in their efforts to enhance university teachers and teaching.

The Higher Education Monitor series, as was elaborated in the first issue in 2003, "aims to stimulate research and the production of knowledge and interpretive frameworks that could contribute to better theorisation of higher education, more rigorous analysis of higher education complexities and more effective strategies for change and progress". It is our hope that this report will do exactly that.

We thank the National Research Foundation for funding the project that made the study and the ensuing report possible, Professor Brenda Leibowitz for leading the team of researchers, our external reviewers, and the individual authors who took the time to present drafts of their chapters to Dr Webbstock of the CHE at a workshop in May 2016.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Narend Bajjnath', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Professor Narend Bajjnath
CEO

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report forms part of the National Research Foundation (NRF)-funded project entitled, *'The interplay of structure, culture and agency: Contextual influences on the professional development of academics as teachers in higher education in South Africa'* which was undertaken by 18 researchers at 8 universities from 2011 to 2016.

While the idea that academic staff might benefit from educational development first entered higher education in the 1960s, it was the arrival of democracy and increased access to higher education that shifted understandings of the role of university teachers in South Africa. Since then, while global trends have influenced academic staff development in South Africa, the local context has played a critical role in shaping its meaning and scope. Given that South African aspirations for social and economic transformation are, to some degree, vested in the work and role of academic staff, it could be argued that academic staff developers have an important role to play in helping universities create enabling conditions and building capacity for teaching and learning. Contextual differences, however, impact on the nature of academic work and cannot be ignored in an unequal society like South Africa. A deeper understanding of context across higher education institutions could provide insights that might better inform policy at the national level.

The literature on international and South African professional academic development reveals professional learning as multi-layered and extremely complex. Theoretical consistency is required to address staff development consciously and critically. The social realist tradition offers a way of understanding the interplay of the dynamics of change, power, causality and agency in teaching and learning systems, and thus provided the theoretical framework for the study on which this report is based. The research was undertaken to investigate conditions which enable and constrain the professional learning of academics in their role as teachers, and how academics respond to these conditions in a range of different South African higher education institutional settings.

The aims and objectives of the research were:

1. to make suggestions about how to enhance professional development/professional learning regarding teaching at each of the eight participating institutions;
2. to make suggestions at the national level for appropriate and context-sensitive policy to enhance teaching and learning in South Africa;
3. to contribute to the international debates on professional development with regard to teaching and learning, with specific reference to the concepts of 'structure, culture and agency' as developed in the work of social realist, Margaret Archer;
4. to contribute to the international debates on collaborative research; and
5. to make suggestions at the national level regarding collaborative research on teaching and learning and about how to support it.

The study had a dual focus that took both the national context (policy, socio-economic trends, and the higher education landscape) and the institutional context into account. The eight participating institutions comprised three historically advantaged institutions, three historically disadvantaged institutions and two universities of technology (merged historically advantaged and disadvantaged). The group included three rural institutions, and there were also three 'research-led' institutions. A multi-level and embedded multi-case study was undertaken to investigate the support for quality teaching and the professional development of academics from a variety of perspectives across and

in varied institutional contexts. The research approach was collaborative, participatory and practitioner-led, across five different phases:

Phase one

At the national level, a desktop study investigated relevant national policies, the influence of national organisations and associations, and national trends.

Phase two

At each of the participating institutions, a series of documents was compiled by team members using jointly-designed research instruments. These included: a brief description of the institution in terms of size, shape, geographical setting, resourcing, and student population; a discussion of how teaching and professional development is described in publicly available documents such as policies, and mission and vision statements; and a reflective discussion of the conditions, activities and impact of the professional development unit/centre for teaching and learning (compiled by the head of the relevant unit/centre). In addition, institutional policy documents related to teaching and learning were collated.

Phase three

In 2012, an electronic survey with closed- and open-ended questions was distributed to all permanently employed teaching academics at all eight participating institutions (n = 735).

Phase four

Project team members conducted audio-recorded interviews with a range of academics at each participating institution (n = 116).

Phase five

At the end of years one, three and six of the project, each researcher wrote a short reflection on their participation and the workings of the project.

The national level data and the institutional documents collected during Phases one and two were analysed by sub-groups within the research team. The answers to the open-ended questions in the questionnaires (Phase three) and the transcriptions of the interviews (Phase four) were analysed by project members from each participating institution. Data from the open-ended questions in the questionnaires and the interviews were analysed according to the following themes which were arrived at by the team via a thematic analysis:

1. How good teaching is understood – it was felt that, before one can understand how good teaching is promoted, it is necessary to describe how this is defined at an institution, and whether there is a shared understanding.
2. The stature of teaching – its relative status in relation to research, administration and community interaction; the significance of the activity of teaching for academics.
3. How teaching is promoted at the institution – how professional development is understood to occur; how it is described as being promoted; and how individuals believe it should be promoted.

4. How individuals describe their own role in their learning to teach.

The study endorses the concept of 'professional learning' that is broader than the notion of professional development, and that is lifelong and agentic. A key finding is that there is a continuum from formal learning opportunities, more ad hoc and informal learning opportunities, to the most informal of all, i.e. learning from one's own ongoing practice. These are all important. The relationship between these dimensions of learning is complementary and mutually reinforcing. A further salient finding signalled at all eight institutions is the valuing of research over and above teaching. This is compounded especially in some of the HDIs, where there is a concomitant pressure for academics to obtain postgraduate qualifications in their disciplines. An important area for further research and strategy development in South Africa, as well as in other higher education contexts where there are competing priorities for the enhancement of scholarship and capacitation, is how academics can enhance their capabilities in a more holistic or integrated manner than is at present made feasible.

In the study, the domain of culture has been shown to be extremely significant in reproducing and transforming dominant ideas about teaching and learning in higher education. This domain is salient at all institutions, whether historically advantaged or disadvantaged. The study endorses the view that agency is significant. A contribution of this project derived from the findings is the suggestion that agency and reflexivity promote the negotiation of obstacles. Further investigations into how less-committed teachers can be encouraged to learn to teach requires further consideration.

The study suggests that inter-institutional, large-scale collaborative research within the South African higher education setting is feasible, but challenging. There are few guidelines for how to ensure successful collaborative research environments. Such information would go a long way to support this burgeoning approach. Finally, this study process also points to the interrelationships among research, learning, and professional practice, and thus how these various forms of scholarship are interlinked.

Several recommendations emerged from this work relating to issues of professional learning and methodology. In sum, the actions suggested by this document for immediate attention at the national level are:

1. that a policy on professional learning regarding the teaching role be written (or a chapter within a broader policy document on the professionalisation of the higher education academic cohort), drawing on some of the key findings to emerge from this work;
2. that a good practice guide for institutions, academic developers and faculty management be commissioned; and
3. that the lessons from this research be incorporated into funding policies of the DHET (for example, while support for good teaching might require focused funding, its success is dependent on the funding and functionality of the whole higher education system and on the funding and functionality of individual institutions).



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

This report forms part of the National Research Foundation (NRF)-funded project entitled, 'The interplay of structure, culture and agency: contextual influences on the professional development of academics as teachers in higher education in South Africa' which was undertaken by researchers at eight universities from 2011 to 2013, with a second tranche of funding from the NRF from 2014 to 2016.

The project emerged from a call from the NRF in 2010 for educational research to be undertaken collaboratively by researchers from at least three higher education institutions, one of which should be rural. A team of 18 researchers working in the field of professional academic development were motivated to become involved in this project as they all worked to enhance teaching and learning in their universities. The team members saw this project as an opportunity to reflect on various aspects of their own institutional contexts: on the quality of teaching, and the way their institutions and their academic development units supported professional learning regarding the teaching role of academics.

The project is an investigation into contextual influences on the professional learning of academics as teachers in higher education in South Africa. It is based on an analysis of the national context and of eight case studies at public higher education institutions. The eight institutions and sites for the case studies are:

Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Durban University of Technology

Fort Hare University

Rhodes University

Stellenbosch University

University of Cape Town

University of Venda

University of the Western Cape.

The lead institution for the research from 2011 to 2013 was Stellenbosch University; and from 2014 to 2016, it was the University of Johannesburg.

1.2. Rationale and problem statement

The research was undertaken in order to investigate conditions that enable and constrain the professional learning of academics in their role as teachers, and how academics respond to these conditions, in a range of South African higher education institutional settings. The role of academics as teachers is broadly understood to encompass teaching as delivery, programme design, evaluation, and the scholarship of teaching and learning. The conditions which enable and constrain the professional learning of academics in their role as teachers have not received serious attention in South Africa. The efficacy of various approaches to academic staff development using certified courses, workshops, collaborative research projects or grants and symbolic awards, has not been studied extensively, nor in comparative projects across higher education settings. There has been only one published impact study on professional development in a South African higher education context of which the authors of this proposal are aware (Cilliers & Herman 2010). That study concludes with an endorsement of further research that will facilitate

understanding of the factors that enable and constrain the success of professional development initiatives. While comparative studies on the efficacy of professional development approaches have been undertaken in Europe and Australia (e.g. Gibbs & Coffey 2004; Postareff et al. 2008; Prosser et al. 2006; Weurlander & Stenfors-Hayes 2008), no comparative, inter-institutional study has been conducted in South Africa. Furthermore, findings generated from studies in settings in the global North cannot be applied to contexts such as South Africa without further investigation and interpretation. This study seeks to investigate the role of institutional context in academics' learning to teach in South Africa, using the notion of the interplay between the systemic features of structure and culture, and individual or group agency.

Furthermore, academic developers, i.e. those who support the professional learning of academics, require a research base and a capacity to undertake research and reflection in their field of work. An important means to extend this research base and capacity is through the sharing of expertise, and one way to encourage this is through collaborative research. Thus, it is useful to understand the potential of this activity, as well as the contextual features that enable and constrain this.

1.3. Focus

When the first grant proposal was written for this research, the focus was academics' participation in 'professional development' activities. At the time of writing this report, there exists a greater sense of what is understood by 'professional development' regarding the teaching role. As will be discussed in the literature review in Chapter 3, 'professional development' applies to participation in formal programmes and opportunities that are provided by academic developers. This term is contested by those who advocate the use of the term 'professional learning', arguing that 'professional learning' emphasises a more life-long, agentic and self-directed approach to learning. It includes formal as well as informal opportunities to learn. 'Learning to teach' is a further term that is applied to this activity. 'Professional learning' and 'learning to teach' draw attention to the ways in which learning to teach occurs, not only via acquiring theory and ideas about teaching in courses and workshops, but also via ongoing practice, reflection and attention to detail and enhancement. These processes are supported by the social interaction and material conditions at departmental, faculty and institutional level. Furthermore, as discussed in the study, there is a strong interrelationship between motivation to learn to teach and the material and social conditions that promote this motivation. Thus various terms are used in the study: academic development which, especially in South Africa, is the generic term given to the field of teaching and learning support and enhancement; professional development, when the focus is on the formal opportunities to which academics have access; professional learning or learning to teach, when the focus is on the role of the lecturer as learner; and teaching, when the focus is on conditions that enable and constrain good teaching – and thus, indirectly, learning to teach well. 'Professional learning' connotes a broader range of activities than 'learning to teach'. It suggests that teaching is a profession, with regular practices, standards, associations and networks – even though these are not uniformly upheld and acknowledged in society. The focus of the study is not solely on the conditions that promote learning to teach but, in addition, the role of lecturers and how they respond to these conditions.

The focus of the study is the period when data was collected (2011–2012), although some of the statistical data reflect earlier years, for example, HEMIS data from 2009. The chapter on the South African higher education setting has an 'updated' chapter, as this would be of more interest and value to the readers. It is evident that many of the university-specific conditions have changed. However, the general structural and cultural conditions at the eight universities remain similar to what they were in 2011 and 2012, other than the condition of the emergence of the #Rhodesmustfall and #Feesmustfall campaigns. Despite the fact that the research was conducted before these

campaigns, the key points highlighted in this study remain pertinent:

- the substantial inequality between public higher education institutions in South Africa, which is a feature of the greater inequality highlighted by the student protests;
- the minimising of the importance of teaching and, through this, of student success; and
- the great lengths to which a significant subsection of university teachers go to enhance their teaching ability and to teach students well.

This study emphasises the importance of close attention to conditions 'at the coalface' when developing strategies for social transformation and change to teaching approaches, and highlights the significant role, within such transformation drives, of structural and cultural features, and individual and group agency.

A final dimension of the focus is the output, process and experiences of the researchers in this large national study. The time scale for this is 2011 to 2016.

1.4. Aims and objectives

The aims and objectives of the research were:

1. to make suggestions about how to enhance professional development/professional learning regarding teaching at each of the eight participating institutions;¹
2. to make suggestions at the national level for appropriate and context-sensitive policy to enhance teaching and learning in South Africa;
3. to contribute to the international debates on professional development with regard to teaching and learning with specific reference to the concepts of 'structure, culture and agency' as developed in the work of social realist, Margaret Archer;
4. to contribute to the international debates on collaborative research; and
5. to make suggestions at the national level regarding collaborative research on teaching and learning and about how to support it.²

This report covers the background to the study, the national setting, theoretical underpinnings, the research design, the findings and discussion of issues arising out of the findings, and concludes with recommendations for policy and practice at various levels of South African higher education as a system.

The report continues in Chapter 2 with a description of the structures at the macro level, primarily the regulatory and policy framework affecting teaching development, which would have had an influence on how professional learning was conceptualised and conducted during the period under study.

1 The change of terminology from 'professional development' to 'professional learning' occurred after the original funding proposal was written, as a result of debate within the research team and the implications of the research findings.

2 The last two aims were introduced in the second phase of the research.



2. NATIONAL CONTEXT

2.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a background for the study, and an overview of national policy, higher education organisations and socio-economic trends that impacted on higher education during the period 2011 to 2012.

One of the assumptions of the project is that the national policy context (among other factors) has direct implications for professional learning, both across institutions, within institutions, and within faculties and departments. For this reason, it is not possible to look at individual institutions and departments as if these are distinct or autonomous – not only are these higher education institutions interconnected, but they are interrelated with other spheres such as primary and secondary institutions (Bozalek & Boughey 2012). The idea that higher education universities are ‘entangled’ – bound to the other in “relations of obligation” (Barad 2010, p. 265) – is suggested by several of the interviews with VCs, and developed at more length in the chapter produced as a result of this project by Bozalek and McMillan (2017).

The higher education landscape in South Africa has changed considerably since the 1994 transition to democracy. These changes, implemented at the level of policy, legislation, enrolments and the numbers of institutions, focused on the development of a coherent higher education system to provide a quality learning experience for all – staff and students. The diversity that exists across the system is significant, resulting in many national imperatives playing out quite differently on the ground. This institutional differentiation and the historical legacy influenced, and continues to influence, the emergence of opportunities for the professional learning of academics.

In 2011, student enrolments in higher education in South Africa stood at 938 200, supported by 16 935 academic staff (DHET 2013). The figure for academic staff has remained relatively static and has not kept pace with student enrolments, an observation which has obvious implications for conditions related to teaching and learning. In 2012, only 35% of all permanent academic staff members were in possession of a doctorate (Cloete, Sheppard & Bailey 2015). The implications of the increasing student numbers and the relatively small percentage of academics who could take on the full range of teaching responsibilities, including the responsibility of doctoral supervision, were considerable. The need for more staff to qualify at higher levels had implications for the development of their roles as educators, since the need to develop the researcher and the teacher capacity and identity can conflict and impact on time available for each.

2.2. Policy documents and implications

The overview of policy documents and the regulatory framework affecting higher education in South Africa was complemented by the experiences of research team members who worked in this sector.

The most significant shifts at the level of policy were heralded by the passing of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act 85 of 1995 which brought into existence the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) with SAQA as a ‘guardian’ of the framework. The adoption of an outcomes-based education (OBE) framework had (and continues to have) implications for academics who had to learn a new ‘language’ to describe their work and to master a new set of principles informing curriculum design and assessment. Assessment had to be designed using criterion-based referencing and academics were expected to engage critically with the new requirements for curriculum development. Workshops were held throughout the country to assist academics with this new kind of work but no formal requirements were laid down for academics. In 1997, the Department of Education (1997, pp. 7-8) published Education White Paper 3: A programme for the transformation of Higher Education, in which it expanded the brief of the higher education sector by listing its purposes as being:

- To meet the learning needs and aspirations of individuals through the development of their intellectual abilities and aptitudes throughout their lives;
- To address the development needs of society and provide the labour market ... with the ever-changing high-level competencies and expertise necessary for the growth and prosperity of a modern economy;
- To contribute to the socialisation of enlightened, responsible and constructively critical citizens; and
- To contribute to the creation, sharing and evaluation of knowledge.

These purposes required a change in the way higher education in general was understood, as well as the way individual institutions understood their roles. For example, that higher education should provide graduates directly for the labour market had, in the past, not been a central concern for the traditional universities. The White Paper signalled the need for academics to engage with their educator roles at a level above the technical concerns related to the development of curricula or the facilitation and assessment of student learning. As such, it had profound implications for staff development.

Education White Paper 3 of 1997 also provided for the introduction of quality assurance in higher education through the establishment of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) as a permanent committee of the Council of Higher Education (CHE). The HEQC is responsible for several quality-related functions including i) institutional reviews, ii) programme accreditation, iii) national reviews, and iv) capacity development.

Criteria for institutional reviews included one set specifically devoted to teaching and learning. The first round of institutional audits was conducted by the HEQC between 2004 and 2011.³ All institutions were required, for the first time, to report on the arrangements they had in place to assure the quality of teaching and learning, including the development of academic staff as educators. The second round of audits was not implemented in the same way as the first and instead the HEQC launched the Quality Enhancement Programme (QEP) which began in 2016 and focused on the development of quality systems of teaching.

The 1998 Skills Development Act 97 established Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) in several areas.⁴ One such SETA is responsible for Education, Training and Development Practices (ETDP SETA). The Department of Labour's Skills Development Levies Act of 1999 established a skills development levy to be paid by all employers to provide funding for a National Skills Fund administered by SETAs.⁵ Some universities allocated whatever funding they received from this source directly to the development of academic staff as educators, while at others the funds were absorbed into the general budgets of the universities.

The 2001 National Plan for Higher Education led the way to a restructuring of the South African higher education system through a series of mergers and incorporations that reduced the number of institutions from 36 to 23, clustered in three institutional types: traditional research universities; universities of technology (UoTs);⁶ and comprehensive universities.

3 See http://www.che.ac.za/media_and_publications/other/audit-status-all-audited-institutions-january-2014.

4 See <http://www.saga.org.za/docs/legislation/2010/act97.pdf>.

5 See <http://www.labour.gov.za/DOL/downloads/legislation/acts/skills-development-act/Act%20-%20skills%20Development%20Levies.pdf>.

6 See <http://www.dhet.gov.za/Management%20Support/Academic%20Policy%20for%20Programmes%20and%20Qualifications%20in%20Higher%20Education.pdf>.

7 In 2016 there are 26 institutions, according to the USAf website <http://www.universitiessa.ac.za/>.

This restructuring had profound implications for academics in relation to their teaching roles. Each institution was required to develop a suite of programmes that would allow it to achieve the mission and vision that had been identified and successfully graduate students from their sets of programmes. The so-called 'research-intensive' universities, which were relatively unaffected by the restructuring, needed to consider how the privileging of research related to undergraduate teaching. In a similar fashion, UoTs, developed from former technikons, needed to help academic staff undergird their curricula with more theory on knowledge, technology and society. Finally, within institutions which moved from 'traditional' to 'comprehensive' status, there were staff who needed to enhance their capacity to develop vocationally-based programmes.

A new Funding Model for Higher Education introduced in 2003 allocated state funding to public universities based on academic activities in the form of teaching and research outputs (Department of Higher Education and Training 2003).⁸ The model consisted of two components: i) undesignated block grants and (ii) earmarked grants. The allocation of block grants was determined by institutional research outputs (publication units, and research masters and doctoral graduates), teaching outputs (completed non-research degrees and diplomas) and teaching inputs (full-time equivalent student enrolments). Block grants also contained a development component related to research and teaching needs. Teaching Development Grants (TDGs) were allocated initially to institutions where outputs did not meet national norms, and later to all universities. Earmarked grants were used to support specific purposes, for example the funding of the foundation phase of Extended Curriculum Programmes (ECPs).

The 2003 Funding Model had profound implications for teaching and learning, not least because of the rewards that were perceived to accrue to research. In some institutions, the attainment of research outputs became a priority which was managed by means of performance appraisal and other mechanisms. This put pressure on staff to research and arguably jeopardised the amount of time available for teaching and for professional learning. The pursuit of research outputs also put pressure on staff to complete higher degrees, most notably the doctoral degree. Again, this impacted on the time available for teaching and for teaching development.

In principle, TDGs were intended to foster a focus on the enhancement of teaching and curriculum design. In the initial years, these grants were not limited to this purpose and were loosely monitored. In many institutions, few gains were made as a result. In 2008, a Working Group was established to review the use of TDGs and it recommended, among other things, that all institutions should be eligible for one, regardless of their performance against national norms.

Once again, the availability of potential funding had implications for staff development activities. In some cases, it projectivised spending on teaching development, tying it to activities that could be shown to require funding within a three-year cycle, or allocating more money (and thus control) to teaching and learning units specifically. In some cases, it freed up funding for creative initiatives in faculties and lifted the visibility and status of teaching development. At the time of writing this document, the DHET has circulated a proposal for changing the way in which earmarked grants are to be allocated to higher education institutions from 2017. It is proposed that the University Capacity Development Grant will now be a combination of the Teaching Development Grants and the Research Development Grants. It remains to be seen how this new proposal will be implemented and how it will impact on teaching and learning. It could reduce the polarisation between teaching and research, or it could increase the competition between the two roles, especially if these are represented by different role-players in the university.

⁸ See <http://www.dhet.gov.za/Archive%20for%202011/Funding%20of%20Public%20Higher%20Education%20Framework%20of%202003,%2031%20Aug%202011.pdf>.

2.3. National and professional organisations

Higher Education South Africa (HESA), formed in 2005, represented the Vice-Chancellors of all South African public universities. Its mandate was to facilitate the development of public policy on higher education and to encourage cooperation among universities, government, industry and other sectors of society. HESA's strategic plan and framework (2010-2020) made broad reference to sustaining quality throughout the university system, including teaching and learning, and research. The organisation changed its name in 2015 to Universities South Africa.⁹

A HESA (2011) proposal for growing the next generation of academic staff highlighted many of the key challenges facing the sector. These included several issues relevant to this research, including the inequality across the sector, the very limited 'postgraduate pipeline', prevailing cultures in the different institutions, as well as factors relating to academics, such as remuneration, mobility, and the age profile. The proposal also provided a strong rationale and substantial recommendations for developing teaching capacity amongst the next generation of academics. The potential for the findings of this research to support the endeavours of the HESA proposal strengthened the rationale for this study.

In 2006, the South African Technology Network (SATN) was established to promote the particular interests of the five UoTs, with sub-committees to address issues related to teaching and learning, such as assessment and work-integrated learning. The mandate of the committees was to enhance teaching and learning across the sector through sharing practices.

The Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa (HELTASA), initiated in 2005, is a professional association for educators and other role-players in the tertiary sector which is building on the work of its predecessor, the South African Association for Academic Development (SAAAD). HELTASA encourages collaborative work between academics and policy-makers, statutory bodies and other professional associations with an interest in higher education. Within and across institutions, HELTASA endeavours to promote networking between staff in central units responsible for enhancing educational quality, and faculty-based academic staff with a scholarly interest in teaching and learning. As such, it has the potential to serve as an important driver in the work towards enhancing the professional learning of academics in their teaching role. In 2009, HELTASA launched the National Teaching Excellence Awards in collaboration with the CHE. This initiative served to acknowledge and publicise the concept of teaching excellence. Its function was complemented in 2015 by an additional teaching excellence scheme, the Teaching Advancement at University (TAU) Fellowships Programme, also under the aegis of HELTASA.

HELTASA's main forum is an annual conference which provides opportunities for networking and sharing research and experience. HELTASA also endeavours to support the sector through a range of special interest groups (SIGs). The Professional Development SIG was formed in 2007 with the goal of establishing a support network for addressing the key challenges in the professional development of academics. The Academic Development leaders' SIG supports members in providing leadership for learning and teaching, implementing strategic direction for their institutions, and engaging in and promoting research in learning and teaching. The remaining SIGs have focused on Foundation Programmes, Tutoring and Mentoring, Access and Admissions, E-learning and Writing Centres.

HELTASA therefore provides a range of enabling opportunities, both for the professional development of academics in their teaching role, and for AD practitioners whose work is to facilitate such professional development. However, the impact of this work appears to be limited to the community of academic development practitioners. A review of the 2011 HELTASA membership list suggests that few disciplinary academics saw the organisation as their home.

⁹ See <http://www.universitiessa.ac.za/>.

Further conferences focusing entirely or in part on teaching and learning in higher education have emerged since 2000: the South African Educational Research Association (SAERA), which is linked to the American Educational Research Association (AERA), and promotes research on higher education; and the University of KwaZulu-Natal's University Teaching and Learning in Higher Education conference. This has been in addition to the emergence of several universities' partially in-house teaching and learning conferences and symposia.

Several discipline-based national organisations in South Africa focus on aspects of teaching and learning in higher education. The South African Association of Health Educators (SAAHE) hosts an annual conference that attracts AD practitioners and academics teaching in the health sciences. The Southern African Association for Research in Mathematics, Science and Technology Education (SAARMSTE) has its own journal and provides support for capacity building in this field. The research-focused Centre for Research in Engineering Education (CREE) at UCT helped to establish the Society for Engineering Education in South Africa (SEESA) in 2011. Each of these organisations contributes to the mosaic that makes up the SA higher education teaching and learning landscape and influences the practice of individuals across the system.

Several of the statutory professional bodies in South Africa play a role in the higher education context including, inter alia, the Engineering Council of South Africa, the Health Professions Council of South Africa, the South African Institute for Chartered Accountants, and the South African Council for Social Service Professions. Many of these professional bodies require that their members earn continuing professional development (CPD) points and, in some instances, they recognise training in areas of teaching and learning as being appropriate CPD events.

This chapter has shown that developments during the previous two decades have focused on the construction of a single uniform higher education system to provide quality education for all. Various legislative, financial, governance and infrastructural initiatives have been undertaken to build and steer the new system. Efforts to build a network of opportunities for professional learning of academics have been supported in part by many professional and voluntary associations. Results of these efforts regarding equality of opportunity for staff and students alike, and opportunities to learn to teach, have at best been mixed, as will be demonstrated in Chapters 5 and 6 of this report, and as evinced by the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall student demonstrations in 2015 and 2016.



3. LOCATING THE STUDY IN THE LITERATURE

3.1. Introduction

This chapter comprises a review of three bodies of literature informing the study: professional learning; a social realist approach to change and context; and collaborative research.

The idea that academic staff might benefit from educational development entered higher education in the 1960s, coinciding with the massification of higher education, rapid technology changes, pressures to publish, and changes in thinking about the role and nature of higher education (Grant et al. 2009). In South Africa, the arrival of democracy and increased access to higher education shifted understandings of the role of university teachers from student development (the 'underprepared' student) to teacher development (the 'underprepared' teacher and, by implication, the 'underserved' student) (Volbrecht 2003; Boughey 2007). The agenda for staff development has struggled to find coherence in the post-apartheid context, with its increasing pressures of teaching, research, publication, institutional transformation, community engagement and systems of 'hard' management. There is subsequently little shared understanding of the priorities for academic staff development between academic development practitioners and university managers. Practices have, at times, been contradictory: discourses of social justice blend with discourses of student deficit, while modernist approaches to development persist, even while it is acknowledged that these approaches fail to address key issues (Bozalek & Boughey 2012; Bozalek & Dison 2012). Global trends have influenced academic staff development in South Africa, although the local context has played a critical role in shaping its meaning and scope; there are thus important differences between South African understandings of professional learning and dominant international versions (Gosling 2009a, 2009b).

This chapter contains an overview of the literature on the professional learning of academic staff in their teaching roles. It begins with a survey of the international literature on formal and informal provision, then explores some of the underpinning principles on which this provision is based, and finally looks more closely at the importance of the South African context in which professional academic development is situated. The literature is followed by an explication of the conceptual framework that guides our own understanding of professional learning of university teachers.

3.2. Formal and informal professional learning opportunities

The international literature describes a wide range of professional development activities in support of academic staff in their teaching roles: seminars (Boud 1999); workshops (Steinert et al. 2006); formal programmes (Butcher & Stoncel 2012); educational research grants (Brew 2011); teaching academies (Olsson & Roxå 2013); departmental 'workgroups' (Trowler 2008); collegial networks – both face-to-face (Walker 2001; Vogel 2009) and online (Duncan-Howell 2009); consultations and peer review processes (Sachs & Parsell 2014), such as teaching awards (Wright et al. 2004); and teaching portfolios for ad hominem promotion (Seldin 2004; Trowler & Bamber 2005). A number of terms have evolved to describe these practices, such as 'academic staff development' (Ballantyne, Borthwick & Packer 2000); 'educational development' (Cilliers & Herman 2010; Amundsen & Wilson 2012); 'professional academic development' (Quinn 2012); 'professional development' (Guskey 2002) and 'professional learning' (Knight, Tait & Yorke 2006; Webster-Wright 2009).

The terms have histories of usage and different nuances (Leibowitz 2016a). For example, 'educational development' has largely been understood as comprising taught courses, something that academic developers provide for academic staff (Webster-Wright 2009), implying a more passive role for university teachers, while the term 'professional learning' (Knight, Tait & Yorke 2006) implies a more active role for university teachers in pursuit of their own learning. Regardless of the 'baggage' that these terms may carry, the literature suggests that both 'professional development' and 'professional learning' are relevant practices in support of improved student learning (Mayer & Lloyd 2011).

The literature claims a variety of benefits for a range of professional development and learning practices – from theory-based learning on formal programmes, to less formal practice-based learning through mentoring or critical reflection on practice. While taught programmes tend to foreground theory, it is not only in formal programmes that university teachers engage with learning theories. Participants in seminars and reading circles also engage deeply with educational theory. Similarly, it is not only through informal learning that university teachers deepen their engagement with practice; formal systems for ad hominem promotion, for example, require teaching portfolios that involve candidates developing rich, detailed descriptions of their practice. Professional development and learning can be group-based (for example, participation in teaching and learning networks and projects) or individual (for example, a staff member engaging with student feedback on his/her teaching). The literature thus suggests that a range of both formal and informal, individual and group, theoretical and practice-based learning opportunities are important for professional growth and development, from enrolment on formal professional development programmes, to participation in informal supportive networks.

The terminology noted above has also shifted in emphasis from educational development or academic staff development to professional development and professional learning. The shift from ‘learning to teach’ (Ramsden 1992) to ‘professional learning’ (Knight, Tait & Yorke 2006) is indicative of the growing importance of the professionalisation of teaching in higher education, despite its continuing lesser status in relation to research (Brew 1999). Professionalism is predicated on the idea that the professional can apply systematic knowledge to practice, which Eraut (1994) describes as a key attribute of a profession. As professionals, university teachers would be expected to possess systematic knowledge related to teaching and learning, since systematic knowledge is bound up with the idea of professional judgment (Evans 2008; Winch 2015). University teachers should be able to legitimate their actions through appeal to the systematic knowledge base that underpins their practice and to employ it in decision-making (Edwards & Daniels 2012). Eraut (1994) believes that the personal attributes of confidence, commitment, openness to feedback and a deep professional commitment to the value of one’s work is essential in professional practice. In professional learning, the flow of knowledge is not necessarily one way only. Professional communities themselves take part in knowledge creation (Nerland & Jensen 2012). In the context of university teaching, Gosling and O’Connor (2006) propose a Review of Professional Practice (RPP) model, a non-judgemental collaboration between academic developers and academic staff for the purposes of professional learning. The importance of organisational cultures, practices and support has been recognised as critical, as the *“lack of organisational support can sabotage any professional development effort, even when the individual aspects of professional development are done right”* (Guskey 2002, p. 48).

The emphasis on informal opportunities to learn has been accompanied by the view that learning that occurs in the micro setting is more significant than that which occurs as the result of centrally provided formal learning opportunities (Knight, Tait & Yorke 2006) and therefore that attention to the work environment is crucial to ensure professional learning (Boud & Brew 2013, 2017). It is suggested by McKinney (2006), Bozalek et al. (2014) and Buller (2015) that, within such enabling environments, lecturers and teaching are valued both by peers and by management. According to McMurray and Scott (2013), a climate that fosters learning, displays attributes of support, trust and fairness, and innovation and recognition. According to Trigwell (2012), the feelings evoked by and towards our contexts are of more significance than any permanent emotional dispositions we might have. This is supported by Costandius (2012) who states that the emotional reactions of humans usually reveal characteristics of their environments. Cultivating caring environments at institutions of higher education could therefore be a potentially productive approach to enhance the decision making of academics for participating in professional learning opportunities for teaching (Herman 2015). The literature has cited factors other than interpersonal relationships as impacting on professional learning. For example, workload has been cited as a feature affecting professional learning by academics in national and international studies (Kahn 2009; Cilliers & Herman 2010; Boud & Brew 2013; Clarke

& Reid 2013). The influence of culture in the localised network or the ‘microculture’ for teaching and learning has been demonstrated in a research-intensive university in Sweden (Roxå & Mårtensson 2009). Roxå (2014, n.p.) makes the point that microcultures “provide opportunities for professional sophistication as well as for defensive withdrawal from the organizational context surrounding them”.

3.3. Principles underpinning the provision of professional academic development

The research literature on academic staff development points to both the importance of relevant theoretical knowledge for underpinning practice and that of supportive networks for collaborative learning from experience, critical reflection on practice and wider participation (Mayer & Lloyd 2011). Academic staff development could be located along a continuum, with largely theory-based learning at the one end of the continuum, and informal, practice-based acquisition at the other end (see Figure 3.1):

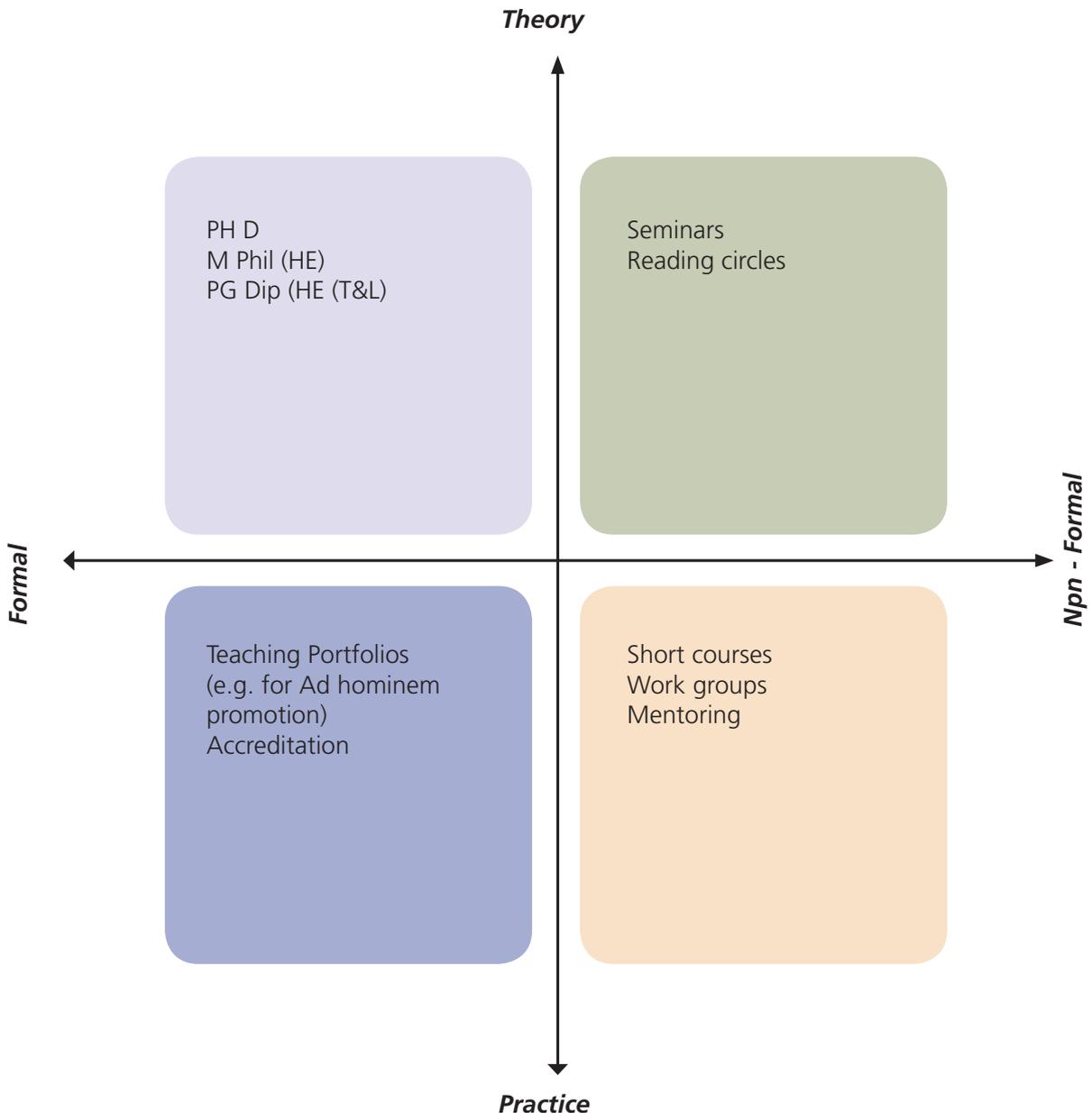


Figure 3.1: A continuum of professional development and professional learning activities

The different positions on the plane above correspond to Ryle's (1949) classic distinction between 'knowing that' (theoretical knowledge that underpins practice) and 'knowing how' (skilful practice). Schwandt (2005) explains these positions in terms of two models of professional learning. In Model 1, practices are understood to be underpinned by relatively fixed bodies of disciplinary knowledge that can be applied to well-defined problem situations. Model 2, on the other hand, involves practitioners in purposefully and cooperatively redefining problems and developing new ways of doing through interaction with one another and with material objects in the site of practice. Although there are always elements of Model 1 in Model 2, the latter has greater relevance to practice. There are many variants along this continuum, and different professions tend to prefer different positions along the continuum.

Academic staff development has occurred in the absence of an explicit educational model, although the practice has been hybrid, teaching both the underpinning theory in classroom settings (Model 1), with the inclusion of context and practice through critical reflection on practice, or through practice-based assignments (Model 2). Academic staff are required to learn on-the-job from day one, often without guidance, mentoring or support. Separating university teachers from their departments into generic staff development spaces might be inappropriate, particularly if it promotes decontextualised teaching 'skills'. As Wenger (1998) points out, the workplace should be the central arena for professional learning, as foregrounding the training room (or online equivalent) as the main site of learning teaches the professional to be a student rather than a practitioner. It can be difficult for academic staff to relate theoretical knowledge to practice when making the transition from the training room to their own classrooms. In this regard, it is important for academic developers to understand something of the situated workplaces of the university teachers whom they are supporting (McAlpine & Harris 1999; Boyd, Smith & Beyaztas 2015).

Good teaching

Central to the idea of teaching excellence in the literature is 'reflective practice' which is the bedrock of professional identity (Schön 1987). Reflecting on performance and acting on reflection has long been understood as a professional imperative in higher education (Barnett 1997). Reflective practice is understood as the process of learning through and from experience towards gaining new insights into self and practice (Edwards & Daniels 2012; Siebert & Walsh 2013; Reich & Hager 2014). This involves examining the assumptions of everyday practice and requires practitioners to be self-aware and to critically evaluate their own responses to practice situations. By engaging in critical reflection, practitioners open themselves to scrutiny, and thus might become subject to self-control and self-surveillance (Zembylas 2006); but, if implemented meaningfully, reflection invites practitioners to question the ethics, values and underpinning theories that form the basis of their practice. As such, reflection on practice offers a potential challenge to existing practices in higher education.

Dewey (1910) was an early proponent of the importance of reflection for rational action. Dewey's principles of reflective practice were taken up by Schön (1983, 1987) who extended these principles to explain skilful practice, including the teaching of skilful practitioners. Later scholars argued that Schön's conceptual framework ignored the importance of context in practice in professional education and introduced the concept of critical reflection. Freire (1985) introduced this concept, understanding that teachers and their students should be liberated from social oppression, and making the point that teachers make conscious political choices, such as to be ethical in thought and action. Excellent teachers, Freire argues, are disposed to change: they acknowledge their personal attitudes and are self-aware of the process of change. Freire saw critical reflection as the culmination of a movement from social conditioning to critical reflection towards praxis. Mezirow (2000) proposes three types of reflection for transformative action: 'content reflection' in which the subject thinks deeply about the content of what was taught/learned; 'process reflection' in which the subject considers and evaluates the strategies used to teach/facilitate learning; and 'premise reflection' in which the subject confronts personal assumptions and values. The concept has entered many fields

of education. Bryan and Recesso (2006), in computer engineering, describe teachers' reflective activities as a deep engagement with values, beliefs and assumptions. Critical reflection is thus intellectually unsettling; and its outcome is changed practice, with a social justice focus across many fields and professions (Benade 2015). Critical reflection "lays bare the historically and socially sedimented values at work in the construction of knowledge, social relations, and material practices ... it situates critique within a radical notion of interest and social transformation" (Giroux 1983, pp. 154-155). Critically reflective teaching practice challenges both strategies and beliefs about teaching and learning within the wider socio-economic and political fabric of society and is concerned with exposing and challenging discourses, narratives and discursive practices at play within society.

Recent studies have suggested that the knowledge-base for higher education teaching and learning has not stabilised into a systematic body of knowledge (Vorster & Quinn 2012), although, as pointed out above, there has long been an understanding that knowledge built through critically reflective practice contributes significantly to professional learning (Brookfield 1995; Van Mannen 1995). While 'critical reflection' remains the mainstay of professional learning (see for example, Ashwin et al. 2015), there is emerging critique of this (see, for example, Bozalek & Zembylas 2016). There has also been an emerging body of additional concepts that have become fairly standard in both formal and informal learning at introductory and more advanced levels. These include: the role and importance of the higher education context; learning theories (particularly social constructivism) and learning-centred pedagogies (with a growing focus on ICTs for teaching and learning); constructive alignment (Biggs 1996); 'epistemological access' to disciplinary knowledge (Morrow 2009), and what this means for challenging deficit understandings of student learning; 'threshold concepts' (Meyer & Land 2006); and graduate attributes (Barrie 2006), including 'employability' (Barrie et al. 2010).

3.4. The South African context

Much of South African aspirations for social and economic transformation is vested in the work and roles of academic staff (CHE 2016). Undoubtedly, professional academic staff development and learning is needed in the South African higher education context and academic staff developers have a role to play in helping universities to create enabling conditions and to build capacity for teaching and learning.

There is growing understanding in the literature that the broader contexts impact strongly on what teachers are able to achieve: the type of university (research-intensive, teaching-intensive) (Clegg 2009; Cooper 2015); the nature of the discipline or vocational/professional programme (Boyd, Smith & Beyaztas 2015; Maton, Hood & Shay 2016); the institutional context (Wright et al. 2004); the departmental culture (Trowler 2008; Guskey 2002); as well as the resources available for teaching and learning – whether these are appropriate and adequate for large group teaching (Gibbs & Jenkins 1997), laboratory-based teaching (Bates & Poole 2003) or ICTs for teaching and learning (Laurillard 2002; Bozalek, Ng'ambi & Gachago 2013; Czerniewicz & Brown 2013).

The literature on universities in rural settings has been dominated by 'deficit' understandings of rurality, such as geographic remoteness, low educational levels of the population and a range of other 'difficulties' (White & Corbett 2014). Mqgwashu (2016) argues that higher education encourages students to turn against rural life and that the 'social goods' of higher education in South Africa cannot be considered without reference to rurality. Rurality is understood to be a demographic as well as social category which intersects with other indicators of social inequality. In general, it implies distance from urban centres, sparse population, lack of amenities and infrastructure, and material and sometimes social deprivation. Thus, in the South African context, history and geography intersect: whether a university was 'previously disadvantaged' and continues to be under-resourced; and whether its physical location affects the institution's ability to attract and retain academic staff, and in this way, impacts on teaching quality.

These issues have been explored by articles emanating from this research – for example cultural and structural features in Leibowitz et al. (2015); and features pertaining directly to how rurality intersects with previously disadvantaged institutions (Ndebele, Muhuro & Nkonki 2016). Disparities in staff-student ratios, access to resources, and a student population that for many and complex reasons is underprepared for university study, serve to perpetuate historical inequities in teaching and learning practices in rural institutions (Le Roux & Breier 2012).

Contextual differences impact on the nature of academic work across contexts. For example, teaching in a poorly-resourced context with a 1:80 staff-student ratio of largely underprepared undergraduate students makes different demands on an academic staff member than teaching in a research-intensive, well-resourced institution where there are many more postgraduate students. In the former case, academic staff would have a primary teaching focus, so putting pressure on such lecturers both to improve their qualifications and publish in accredited journals might not be appropriate in terms of their context; on the contrary, such pressure will draw resources and energies away from much-needed undergraduate teaching and learning.

The key contextual features associated with history, geography and resources cannot be ignored in an unequal society like South Africa. For instance, national policies expected to lead to the enhancement of teaching and learning should not be based primarily on good practice at elite institutions, nor solely on the needs of disadvantaged institutions. A deeper understanding of context across higher education institutions could provide insights that might better inform policy at the national level – for example, is the push for doctoral degrees appropriate? Should all funding/ranking be based on research outputs? Should teaching-intensive universities have another ranking system?

3.5. The social realist account of context and change

The literature on international and South African professional academic development reveals professional learning as multi-layered and extremely complex. Theoretical consistency is required to address staff development consciously and critically; and the social realist tradition offers a way of understanding the interplay of the dynamics of change, power, causality and agency in teaching and learning systems. Work on professional development and learning in South Africa has drawn on social realism to reveal the “deeper levels of reality” (Quinn 2012, p. 47) and to explore the causal power of the system as well as the agency of teachers, and to do so in a nuanced manner, taking into account the complexity of the multi-directional relationships that exist. It also takes into account history and social structure but, at the same time, allows for an investigation into the role of human agency and creativity.

Our study is based on the idea that the higher education system consists of two domains: structure and culture. The structural domain typically comprises “roles, organisations, institutions, systems” (Archer 1996, p. 1). Culture is understood as the dominant register of ideas or propositions, and is not always coherent or unitary (Archer 1995). Archer and Elder-Vass (2012) understand culture as emerging from iterative cycles of interaction between the cultural system and sociocultural interpretations. In any setting, an entity will have cultural or structural properties (Elder-Vass 2010). These properties will create enablements and constraints. It is how they interplay with the third domain – human agency – that leads to the variability of outcome in any situation. Agency is derived from human reflexivity (Archer 2007), a process of internal deliberation in which concerns, commitments and knowledgeability play a role. The role of reflexivity in agency and how it helps to explain how teachers in one institution attained levels of excellent teaching practice in a challenging environment is explored in more detail in Winberg (2017).

Archer’s (2007) notion that actions depend on our knowledgeability implies that reflexivity alone is insufficient to characterise how individuals respond to their conditions. A useful concept for investigating higher education institutions and their role in fostering educational development (or lack thereof) is that of ‘emergence’. According to

Elder-Vass (2010), multiple properties of an entity can interfere with or reinforce each other, leading to many possible outcomes. Elder-Vass writes, “Causal efficacy is a product of the parts and the relations combined” (2010, p. 23). This is important when considering how universities produce varied educational outcomes: we need to consider the parts that make up the organisation, and how they interact at different levels.

Our framework thus takes ‘context’ to be a set of relationships of various properties which can be analysed in relation to the domains of structure, culture and agency. These domains are separated for the purposes of understanding the interplay of relations, but they are not separate entities in their own right. Contexts, in the case of individual higher education institutions, are the settings in which the systemic relations interact with the individual.

Transforming our positions in society is possible, but “their transformation depends partly upon the subjective reflexivity of primary agents in seeking to play an active part in re-shaping society’s resource distribution” (Archer 2000, p. 11). Primary agents can respond to social or institutional structures and cultures by forming new collectivities that share a desire for transformative action. As such, they become corporate agents. Corporate agents have “capacities for articulating shared interests, organising for collective action, generating social movements and exercising corporate influence in decision-making” (Archer 2000, p. 266). The capacity to bring about social transformation is accomplished through particular modes of reflexivity. Archer argues that, while structural properties shape the situations that agents face, their modes of reflexivity define their concerns, and that social practices are produced from agents’ reflexive deliberations. Archer also refers to group agency, a concept further developed by Donati (2010) who maintains that corporate agency can be fostered deliberately by cultural and structural features.

3.6. Collaborative research

Collaborative research refers to projects that seek to contribute to the scholarship in the field by bringing together a group of researchers within that field as co-investigators. It implies a sharing of activities within a project with everyone working towards a shared goal. The term ‘community of enquiry’ was used by Christie et al. (2007) to stress that the collaboration leads to new knowledge. The nature of the collaboration is often determined by the discipline. For instance, those in the natural sciences often represent a much ‘tighter’ or structured relationship where the same design and instruments are used. A loose collaboration and sharing might be the case in the humanities and social sciences (Lewis, Ross & Holden 2012). Either way, collaborative work is recognised as being complex (Sullivan, Stoddard & Kalishman 2010; Kahn, Petichakis & Walsh 2012) and not without significant challenges. The opportunity to share expertise, particularly in terms of research practice, and to be exposed to a range of perspectives and positions, is desirable and studies point to enhanced quality of outcomes (Kezar 2005; Kahn, Petichakis & Walsh 2012). An important outcome of collaborative research can be the professional learning of those involved in the project (Walker 2001; Cox 2006; Leibowitz et al. 2012; Smith, MacKenzie & Meyers 2014).

Work that has focused on collaborative educational research has identified a range of issues that can add to the complexity of the engagement in such projects. These include the size or diversity of the group (Brew et al. 2013), its disciplinary composition (Bossio et al. 2014) and other features such as power dynamics and social and educational histories (Griffin, Hamberg & Lundgren 2013). An important outcome of collaborative research can be the professional learning of those involved in the project (Walker 2001; Cox 2006; Leibowitz et al. 2012; Smith, MacKenzie, & Meyers 2014). The extent to which this research project was collaborative, resulting in productive learning, is discussed in the findings, Chapter 7.



4. RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1. Research approach

The research approach in this project was collaborative, participatory and practitioner-led, in that academic developers responsible for professional development at eight institutions came together to undertake research that would foster their critical reflection on their practice. The literature on professional academic development and a social realist lens were used to examine how change occurs. The approach was also pragmatic (Creswell 2003; Greene, Kreider & Mayer 2005; Roziek 2013), thus driven by a motivation to ascertain findings that would lead to practical recommendations. It was a form of insider research (Trowler 2011) as all researchers worked within higher education, with the concomitant advantages as well as disadvantages of conducting research as insiders.

The research design was informed by a critical realist approach (Bhaskar 1998) that sees reality as occurring on three planes: the real, underlying relationships; the actual events as they occur, and the empirical, as individuals experience these events. The study thus sought to ascertain the underlying relationships and explanations via the empirical. The research is also informed by the analytical distinctions between, at the systemic level, the structure (including power relationships, resources and rules) and culture (the dominant ideas and the discourses), and the interplay between individual and group agency – as discussed in Chapter 3.5.

4.2. Research strategy

A multi-level and embedded multi-case study (Yin 2013) was undertaken in order to investigate the support for quality teaching and the professional development of academics from a variety of perspectives across the macro, meso and micro levels, and in varied institutional contexts. The research focused on the level of the empirical, i.e. the experiences of academic developers, administrators and academics. It also utilised information obtained from publicly available data in the national and institutional settings, and policy documents at the national and institutional level. These provided information about structures, as well as the culture, or body of ideas that are formally encoded in policy. Policy is seen to be ‘real’ and as having real consequences, despite the limited impact it might have as it is ignored, watered down or adapted, as succinctly captured in Reynolds and Saunders’ (1987, p. 44) metaphor of the policy “Implementation Staircase” (cited in Trowler 2002). The use of publicly available documents and references to macro trends provides a context – and counterfoil – which may either support or dispute the subjective accounts provided by the various role-players. The study comprised several phases:

Phase one

At the national level, a desktop study investigated relevant national policies, the influence of national organisations and associations, and national trends.

Phase two

At each of the participating institutions the following documents were compiled by team members using jointly designed research instruments (Appendices Three and Four):

- Document One, containing:
 - a) a brief description of the institution in terms of size, shape, geographical setting, resourcing, student population; and
 - b) a discussion of how teaching and professional development is described in publicly available documents such as policies, and mission and vision statements.

- Document Two, containing:
 - a) a reflective discussion of the conditions, activities and impact of the professional development unit/centre for teaching and learning, compiled by the head of the relevant unit/centre.
 - b) Institutional policy documents related to teaching and learning – these were submitted to a central database.

Phase three

An electronic survey with closed- and open-ended questions was distributed to all permanently employed teaching academics at all eight participating institutions in 2012 (see Appendix Two).

Altogether, 736 responses were received. The response rate varied per institution, with 272 (33.5%) being the highest response rate at one institution and 21 (3%) being the lowest. Only four of the eight institutions were able to make significant use of the numeric data for their institutional case studies. The difficulty of disseminating the questionnaire, especially at the HDUs, owing to technical and communication difficulties, attests to the key focus of this study – that institutional context makes a qualitative difference, whether to professional learning or to data gathering for research purposes. The questionnaire was answered on a voluntary basis, with 89% reporting that they were either ‘very interested’ or ‘passionate’ about teaching, and 75% indicating that they had attended some form of professional learning opportunity at their institution.

Phase four

Audio-recorded interviews were conducted by project team members in pairs, i.e. from one participating institution with four to five members of the senior management at another participating institution (for example, the vice-chancellor, deputy vice-chancellor responsible for teaching and learning, and two or three deans) by the end of 2012 (see Appendix Four for the interview schedules). From each institution, 10-16 teaching academics were interviewed and the interviews audio-recorded. The participants were selected according to a predetermined matrix of criteria including discipline, seniority, gender, race and degree of participation in professional development opportunities. These interviews were conducted by members of the project team (six institutions) or by research assistants at their own institutions (two institutions).

In some instances, more interviews than the prescribed minimum were conducted, leading to a total of 116 interviews across the eight institutions.

Phase five

At the end of years one, three and six of the project, each researcher wrote a short reflection on their participation and the workings of the project based on a series of questions (see Appendix Five).

4.3. Analysis of data

The national level data and the institutional documents collected during Phases one and two were analysed by sub-groups within the research team. The answers to the open-ended questions in the questionnaires (Phase three) and the transcriptions of the interviews (Phase four) were analysed by project members from each participating institution. Data from the open-ended questions in the questionnaires and the interviews were analysed according to the following set of themes, which were arrived at by the team via thematic analysis:

1. How good teaching is understood – it was felt that before one can understand how good teaching is promoted, it is necessary to describe how this is defined at an institution, and whether there is a shared understanding.
2. The stature of teaching – its relative status in relation to research, administration and community interaction; the significance of the activity of teaching for academics.
3. How teaching is promoted at the institution – how professional development is understood to occur; how it is described as being promoted; and how individuals believe it should be promoted.
4. How individuals describe their own roles in their learning to teach.

These themes pertain broadly to what emerged most strongly from the data. Themes 1 and 2 are most closely associated with the systemic domain of culture, although there are structural dimensions, especially with regard to the stature of teaching, in that policies promoting the stature of teaching would be regarded as 'structures', or as structural. Theme three pertains most directly to structural issues, but includes the conceptions of professional learning that academics held. The deeper the team delved into the data, the more apparent it became that teaching is not promoted solely via formal learning opportunities. For this reason, section 6.1.3 of this report, on conducive environments for professional learning, focuses on cultural and structural features in the teaching and learning environments. The emerging appreciation of the significance of cultural and structural features of the environment represented a shift in the study to include an enlarged understanding of what enables or constrains professional learning in higher education. Theme 4 pertains most directly to the dimension of individual and group agency.

Data on participants' engagement with the research process collected after year one were analysed by three team members, with a focus on the outcomes of collaboration and the challenges to researchers' identities (see Leibowitz, Ndebele & Winberg 2014). Data collected after year three were analysed and written up by 14 of the team members, with a focus on the cultural and structural conditions influencing the outcome of the collaboration, and the significance of corporate or group agency (see Leibowitz et al. 2016).

4.4. Ethics

The project obtained ethical clearance from the lead institution for 2011-2013, Stellenbosch University, and from each participating institution. All information identifying specific individuals has been removed at the stage of transcription and storing of data.

4.5. Parallel studies

Several parallel sub-studies were conducted, for example, into the working conditions of extended curriculum lecturers, into professional development in the health sciences, and the influence of biography on the professional identities of academic developers. Four PhD students conducted parallel studies using selections of the data.

5. FINDINGS AT THE MACRO LEVEL

This chapter presents the structural and cultural features at the macro level. The conditions at the eight participating universities are summarised in Table 5.1 below. The eight institutions participating in the study, via their institutional reports, serve as examples of the structural and cultural macro-features of South African higher education. They demonstrate the socio-economic disparities between institutions and institution types. The uneven terrain on which they operate has the potential to influence academics' professional learning – as will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 6 and 7.

Table 5.1: Summary of participating institutions ¹⁰

Institution type	No.	Location	Focus	Merged	Student population	No. of campuses	Student/Staff ratio (SAIRR 2012)
HAUs							
	1	Urban	Research		Elite schools	3	19 to 1
	2	Urban	Research		Elite schools	4	23 to 1
	3	Rural	Research		Elite schools	1	19 to 1
HDUs							
	4	Urban	Teaching and research		Disadvantaged schools	3	27 to 1
	5	Rural	Teaching	Merged	Disadvantaged schools	3	34 to 1
	6	Rural	Teaching		Disadvantaged schools	1	33 to 1
UoTs							
	7	Urban	Teaching	Merged	Disadvantaged schools	8	34 to 1
	8	Urban	Teaching	Merged	Disadvantaged schools	8	41 to 1

This chapter makes use of the reports generated during Phase two of the study, namely the reports on the eight institutions and reflections on the workings of the Teaching Development Centre, as well as Cooper's (2015) division of South African universities into three main categories or bands. These bands are based largely on the universities' research outputs, doctoral and masters graduates, and the ratios of undergraduate to postgraduate enrolled students. Cooper's division is used as a counterfoil to the data generated by the researchers during Phase two of the study.

¹⁰ This table was prepared for a paper on the data contained in the institutional reports (Leibowitz, Bozalek, Van Schalkwyk & Winberg 2015).

An adapted version of Cooper's (2015) division is provided in Figure 5.1.

This figure illustrates a n upper band of research-intensive universities, a middle band of universities with a moderate to good research profile, and a lower band of universities with a concomitant low research profile. The universities participating in this study fall into the illustrated bands as follows: HAU1 and HAU2 fall into Band 1; HAU3 and HDU4 fall into Band 2; and HDU5, HDU6, UOT7 and UOT8 fall into Band 3.

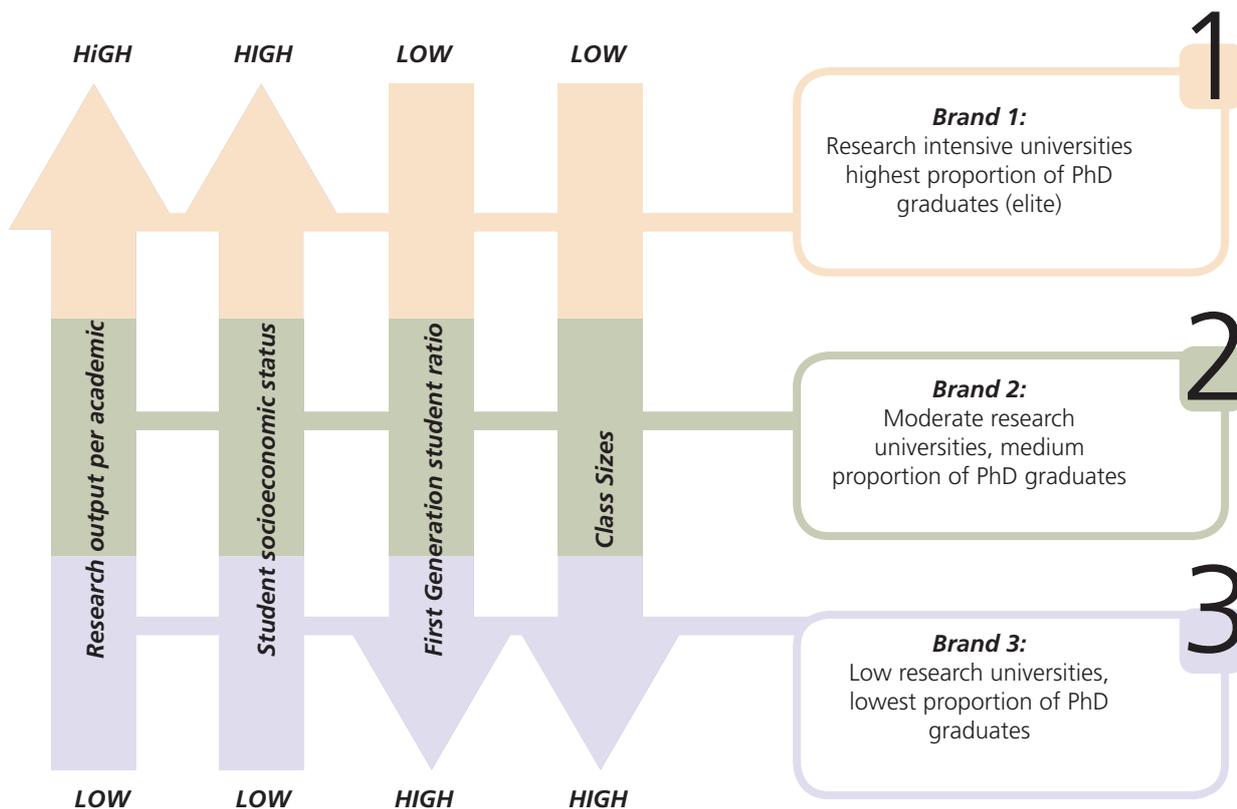


Figure 5.1: University types by research/PhDs and concomitant trends (after Cooper 2015)

Interestingly, as Cooper (2015) observes, the greatest burden of low socio-economic status (SES) students remains predominantly within the lower band of universities, where students would be expected to require the most help with their studies, and so teaching staff may face greater challenges. Furthermore, there is a general trend of decreasing staff-student ratios as one moves down the bands (see similar lecturer-student ratios in Table 5.1). In the two upper band universities in this study, there has not been an increase in African students over the past few years (in one case, there has been a drop); but, more importantly, many of these same students are second-generation university students. The situation is contrasted with the bottom band where students are more likely to be first generation and generally predominantly African (see, for example, the feeder school profiles in Table 5.1). Second generation students have a distinct advantage in undertaking university studies as compared to their first generation peers. Furthermore, those universities in the lower bands were more likely to have been affected by the mergers which can, in some cases, create unstable conditions for academic staff. Jansen (2003, p. 43), for example, noted how "the impact of mergers on staff, in all cases, has been devastating for the emotional and professional lives of all staff, at all levels". Comments on the impact of the mergers are also recorded in a chapter arising out of the research by Bozalek and McMillan (2017).

Band 1

Band 1, including HAUs 1 and 2, represents medium-sized, urban universities which tend to be characterised as 'top' universities in the country, as indicated by their high levels of research outputs and their general reputational legitimacy. For example, places in the university are strongly contested for by candidates and many of the feeder schools are recognised as being the 'best in the country'. Thus, HAUs 1 and 2 are able to attract highly qualified staff and enrol the highest achieving school leavers into their programmes. The staff-student ratio is relatively low, at about 1:21. Although such students may experience economic, social and learning difficulties, there are relatively few such students when compared to the number at the HDUs.

These HAUs have not been subject to any form of merger. They are not, however, historically and culturally equivalent: one has a long history of student support, particularly for lower SES students and was at the forefront of the development of alternative admissions and innovative teaching practices in the country, even though these may have been contested terrains within the university (Kloot 2009). The other 'top' university, though currently more strongly engaged in teaching and learning, does not have this historically developed culture, and academic development staff hold predominantly non-academic positions.

Band 2

The second group of universities in Figure 5.1 falls within the middle, average research and PhD graduate band. This is represented in the study by HAU3 and HDU4.

The first university within this stratification, HAU3, is a small university situated away from economic hubs. Despite its semi-rural positioning, it prides itself on both its strong research, and teaching and learning focus. In 2010, this university had the best throughput rate in South Africa with, furthermore, a favourable and comparatively low staff-student ratio of 1:19 (Table 5.1). It is able to attract well-qualified staff and its students come from the upper echelons of school leavers. The university has, through judicious employment of well-qualified academic staff in its teaching and learning centre, taken something of a central role in the field of academic staff development. Furthermore, the teaching and learning centre has had much success in taking its developmental message to a significant group of academic staff, in part made possible through the commitment of senior management to this project over time.

The second university in this middle band, HDU4, is that of a medium-sized HDU in a peri-urban area. This university has a long tradition of activism and resistance to discrimination in society and in education. Though predominantly a 'coloured' university, the student population is becoming increasingly African, with coloured students only making up about 47% of the student body between 2012 and 2016, as opposed to over 80% before 1994 (Cooper 2015). The university appears to be on a rapid growth curve in developing itself as a research university, and recently moved into the top group of research universities, rather than being situated with the less research-intensive HDUs. Despite this, staff tend to be active in their engagement with teaching and learning opportunities, even though there is a relatively high staff-student ratio of 1:30. The teaching and learning centre comprises one senior staff member and a small cohort of faculty teaching and learning specialists distributed across the university rather than being housed in a central unit. There was in the past a large and vibrant unit that was effectively closed by management with many of the staff taking on leading positions in teaching and learning units in other universities. This serves to emphasise the point often made about academic development centres in South Africa and elsewhere: that is, that they are often vulnerable and subject to restructuring (Gosling 2009a; Palmer, Holt & Challis 2011; Leibowitz 2016a).

Band 3

Situated in Band 3 are UoTs 7 and 8, and HDUs 5 and 6. From Figure 5.1 and Table 5.1, it appears that universities in Band 3 are in somewhat of a double bind. First, they are often burdened with large numbers of students who may require more significant support and time devoted to teaching than is the case with the more elite universities. At the same time, there is a push in some of these universities for staff to improve their research outputs, yet they start from a low base of research expertise, requiring much effort to navigate this gap. Consequently, such staff may experience difficulty in finding time for staff development initiatives, even though there may be a great need for such support. In addition to this, there are fewer resources at these lower band institutions for both students and staff due to historical legacies of privilege (Bozalek & Boughey 2012).

UoTs 7 and 8 fall into the lowest research band. These are both merged institutions. Pre-merger, the then technikons consisted of, minority black (Indian and coloured) student populations and majority white student populations. Post 1994, the ratio of Africans increased to over 60%, up from an earlier figure of approximately 10%. There has thus been a substantive shift in demographics. Furthermore, these UoTs, in part because of their lower entrance requirements and fees and their perceived closeness to the job market, tend to attract more lower socio-economic status (SES) students (Cooper 2015).

The UoTs are large- to medium-sized institutions having student-staff ratios of approximately 40:1 (see Table 5.1). In the institutional reports it was reported that these UoTs teach more intensively and hence find less time for staff development than lecturers in other universities.

Both the UoTs highlighted the importance of focusing on innovative technological solutions in society. However, they are also increasingly under pressure to raise their research profiles and outputs so as to be seen to be more on par with the research-intensive universities, though this may reflect more of a focus and mission from management than a groundswell, cultural issue within the university. Consequently, as with the more research-intensive universities, finding time and opportunity for academic development may be constrained.

In respect of the mergers, tensions still simmer around a plethora of unresolved merger issues. For example, there are different conditions of service, salaries and access to promotion, as well as larger issues of merging different cultures, a concern that was never adequately dealt with at the time of the mergers (Reddy 2007). These issues were highlighted in recent staff disruptions (news report on Eye Witness News, 20 April 2016) at one of these universities, which resulted in the cessation of teaching. The disruptions were directly attributed to these human resource (HR) and cultural differences. These issues are further discussed later in this report under Chapter 6, section 6.1.3, 'Conducive environment for professional learning'.

Despite these difficulties, both institutions currently support teaching and learning centres with staff employed on academic contracts, rather than their being seen as simply service or administrative staff, as is the case at several other institutions. Thus, despite the contradictions and difficulties academic staff may experience with taking up teaching and learning development opportunities, the universities themselves seem to value academic development staff by affording them such status.

Within this lower band research group, there are two medium-sized, rural, historically disadvantaged universities, HDUs 5 and 6, relatively distally situated from economic hubs and other universities. One of these universities has been merged. These universities, along with the UoTs, attract more lower SES, often African students and, compared to the research intensive universities, do not necessarily have the academic historical reputation to attract the most

highly qualified academic staff. Furthermore, it has been observed that staff turnover in these rural areas is higher than in urban areas and this makes less effective those initiatives aimed at staff development where there is not necessarily a more permanent and substantive group of 'trained' staff. Despite this, they have vibrant teaching and learning initiatives and centres populated by staff on academic contracts; and, at least in one case, strong reputational cachet as a university that has developed the future leaders in South Africa.

Both these universities have lower staff-student ratios than the UoTs, but ratios are still relatively high at 1:32 (Table 5.1) which, it can be suggested, has an impact on opportunities (time) for staff development. They also experience upward pressure to increase research outputs to improve research rankings.

Conclusion

In concluding this chapter, it is possible to identify patterns of university types (Figure 5.1) and trends (Figure 5.1 and Table 5.1) which accord with these general patterns. These trends appear matched to distinct difficulties which staff in the lower research-intensive universities are likely to encounter in their teaching; and, by association, whether and with what sorts of academic development they are likely to engage. Conditions pertaining to geographic location, institutional type, feeder schools, staff-student ratio and history of support for staff to learn to teach, appear salient. Factors not covered in this chapter, given its focus on teaching and learning, would include funding. This was not investigated directly but the impact of funding and resourcing is evident from lecturer accounts in Chapter 6. These institutional conditions are only one side of the story. A more fine-grained understanding of the contexts and histories of the individual universities is also necessary to understand what may enhance or constrain staff members' take-up of academic development opportunities. This is the focus of Chapter 6.



6. FINDINGS AT MESO AND MICRO LEVEL

This chapter reports on the data with a focus on the immediate institutional environments at the level of structure and culture in which the academics work, and on how they respond to these environments (thus individual and group agency).

6.1. Contexts for professional learning and lecturer agency

The discussion is organised according to the following topics and data sources:

Table 6.1: Organisation of findings

Topic	Aspect of the interplay	Data source
Opportunities for professional learning at the eight institutions	Structure	Reflective reports per institution (Phase two, Document two)
Beliefs about teaching and about professional learning	Culture	Interviews with senior managers (VCs, DVCs, Deans) and academics
Conducive environments for professional learning	Structure and culture	Interviews with academics
Individual and group agency	Agency	Interviews with academics

6.1.1 Opportunities for professional learning at the eight institutions

This chapter provides a synopsis of the findings concerning opportunities available for professional learning as reflected primarily in the institutional case study reports collected during Phase two. The synopsis highlights the different forms of academic professional development, and the structures in place to enhance professional learning, with a particular focus on the role of academic staff developers and policies.

The study found almost the full range of opportunities discussed in the literature, from the more formal to informal, as listed below:

1. Formal and accredited:

PhD programmes on higher education

Masters programmes on teaching and learning

Post graduate diplomas in higher education teaching and learning (offered in six of the eight institutions by 2013, where three institutions in the Western Cape offer one on a shared platform)

Short courses

2. Formal (organised by mostly academic developers) but not accredited:

Workshops

Mentor programmes

Hands-on training (for example, for using ICTS – instructional design)

Consultations with academic developers

Teaching and learning conferences

Incentive-oriented:

- Funding schemes e.g. grants for innovations or research on teaching
- Institutional or faculty teaching excellence awards

Policy and strategy led:

- Teaching and learning strategies
- Policies on performance evaluation and promotion

Committee-led:

- Institutional and Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees

Other formal:

- Student feedback systems

3. Informal:

- Self-reflection
- Conversations with colleagues and supervisors
- Observation of senior staff and excellent teachers as role models, and encouragement from these

This range was found across the institutions. The impact of these opportunities was not investigated in the study, and is an area worthy of further investigation. Generally, a variety – including the more and less formal – could be found at each institution, although the accredited Masters programmes tended to be offered at a limited number of institutions, and predominantly at the HAUs. This gives rise to the following questions for further investigation: 1) Why have these programmes tended to be offered mainly at HAUs? 2) What is the effect of this at institutions not offering such programmes? 3) Would it be advisable for all universities to offer such programmes, or could collaboration and sharing amongst institutions be a useful strategy?

As will be discussed further in section 6.1.2, the more formal opportunities tended to be voluntary, but in some cases compulsory for new academics or those who received unsatisfactory student feedback. Activities organised by academic developers in central teaching and learning centres were more likely to be interdisciplinary, while those taking place in the faculties tended to be more discipline-oriented.

Structures aligned with professional learning

Structures and positions aligned most directly with professional learning were:

- DVCs (Academic/Teaching)
- Deputy Deans (Teaching)
- The Heads of Department. Most seemed not to have an overt teaching function, but featured prominently in the interviews, as either promoting or hindering an academic's professional development
- Teaching and Learning Centres

- Academic developers in faculties
- Teaching and learning 'champions' (drawn from the pool of academics, and utilised to make presentations and participate in projects and task teams)
- Recipients of teaching excellence awards (similarly as with 'champions')

(The effectiveness of the different models was not investigated.)

From the institutional reports, the following issues pertaining to these structures received attention:

Status and stature – frequently academic developers who did not enjoy academic status felt that this hampered their voice and sense of identity, their ability to undertake research and reflection, and thus their effectiveness. In institutions where it was felt that the academic developers were very competent, or well qualified academically, this appeared to enhance their effectiveness and ability to effect change. An extract from the reflective reports illustrates the importance of perception of competence amongst academic developers, tied (in some cases) to issues of disciplinarity:

... lack of expertise in the Centre in relation to teaching in all the disciplines, particularly science disciplines. There are lecturers, particularly in the Science Faculty, who do not believe that the generic courses offered have sufficient relevance for their contexts (including the teaching of large classes) (Reflective report HAU1).

Setting out to consciously develop themselves and enhance their academic stature, academic developers at HAU3 quickly reaped the benefits:

At the end of the 1990s, staff employed in the Academic Development Centre were minimally qualified to work with academic staff with most only qualified at honours level. In the context of the need to work within a new brief of contributing to institutional development through staff and curriculum development, all without master's degrees set about completing them.... The need to work with curriculum development and constructs such as learning outcomes and criterion referenced assessment was also identified as a gap and colleagues in the Centre set about their own staff development programme, reading widely and discussing their understandings. This impacted on the quality of the work they were called upon to do not least by allowing them to claim a degree of expertise in the areas in which they were working. The willingness of staff to pursue their own development and to support each other in this aim is something which must not be overlooked in accounting for the success the Centre has had in working with the professional development of educators not only at XXX University but also elsewhere (Reflective report HAU3).

In HAU3 the ability and demonstrated competence in teaching on formal programmes also contributed to the perception of their competence as academics. Based on their experience, HAU3 also developed the first Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education for academic developers.

In contrast, some of the institutions did not have enough academic development staff and had to 'outsource' this function (for example, HDU6). A further issue to do with location of academic developers was that they were frequently placed in a central office outside of faculties, yet if they offered diploma courses, they were required to work mostly through faculties of education. Their complicated relationships with these faculties also influenced their ability to effect change.

Resources for professional academic development

The study found that, in almost all the institutions, resourcing for academic professional development was both external and internal. A significant source of professional learning for academics at one HDU was the provision of learning opportunities at a HAU. This was viewed by some lecturers as particularly beneficial, as it meant exposure to the ideas of that programme, and of the ideas of experienced lecturers who participated alongside them in that programme:

... even very experienced lecturers who were with me, they were saying, oh, this is the way to do it. We realised quite a lot. The questions they were asking were really relevant questions (Lecturer HDU6).

This points to the concentration of cultural resources in the form of knowledge about teaching and learning in specific institutions and, allied to this, the importance of inter-institutional contact.

Funding for professional academic development was provided by some of the HEIs from their mainline budget, whereas other universities relied heavily on funds from external sources. External funders included those outside the country, nongovernmental organisations, the Teaching Development Grants, and skills development grants. It should also be noted that the funds were generally allocated for formal learning opportunities, or what was defined in the introduction to this study as 'professional development', rather than to encourage informal learning opportunities or to enhance conditions in which teaching and learning takes place.

6.1.2 Beliefs about teaching and about professional learning

In section 6.1, various structures supporting professional learning were described. This section explores institutional contexts at the level of culture, that is, the range of beliefs, values and attitudes about teaching and learning and the professional learning of lecturers that emerged from the data. The data also reflects on conceptions of good teaching, which is important, as these conceptions have implications for how academics may be supported or encouraged to learn to teach.

6.1.2.1 Status of teaching

In official documentation (for example, institutional vision and mission statements), all eight institutions foregrounded the importance of knowledge dissemination (teaching) as one of their core purposes. However, the data from the eight institutional case studies showed that there was, particularly among teaching staff, a continuum of beliefs related to the status of teaching in institutions.

Across the board, respondents reported an ongoing tension between the status of teaching and the status of research, believing that the dominance of a research culture made it difficult for them to focus sufficiently on the teaching aspect of their role as academics:

Even the one now (teaching development workshop held recently), I was supposed to be there, but I had to go to a paper-writing retreat. So I was writing papers for publication ... (Lecturer HDU6).

The prioritisation of research broadly – and postgraduate studies particularly – limited time and motivation for engagement with undergraduate teaching and learning and with professional learning.

In some of the HDUs and UoTs it has been necessary to enhance disciplinary and research capacity. A senior manager at HDU5 stressed the extent of this need:

I would like to see that all my HODs are on a Masters level (Senior manager HDU5).

The unintended consequence was that the role of teaching was now perceived as being less important than that of research:

We have excellent incentives for research, wonderful financial incentives, rewards, recognition As far as I'm concerned, teaching and learning has lagged behind in terms of the emphasis that is placed on it in terms of the recognition for excellence in teaching... (Senior Manager HDU6).

For those academics who saw a clear link between their teaching and their research, the tension between the two core roles was less marked; research was seen to be necessary to ensure that their teaching was responsive to changes in their disciplines. Reward structures, particularly those related to promotion, appeared in many institutions to emphasise research outputs more than good teaching. Some believed that although they were being told (through policies, etc.) that teaching was valued, the reality was that it was research 'that count(ed)':

All of the implicit and explicit messages favour research and allocating time there ... at the end of the day ... being a researcher is key to your success ... at [institution] (Senior Manager HAU1).

In some research-intensive institutions, findings suggested that a great deal had been achieved with regard to increasing the status of teaching and learning vis-à-vis that of research and it was acknowledged that there were many excellent teachers who valued their roles and regarded teaching as one of their core functions:

And I have incredible job satisfaction. I love research. I love teaching. I love working in the profession and I find that the university affords me a very rich space to bring all those interests into a sort of relationship and it gives me an opportunity to kind of grow in quite interesting ways ... My vision would be that everybody takes their role as a teacher seriously; values it equally to the other aspects of their academic life, like research, and that they become critical, reflective teachers (Senior Manager HAU3).

The valuing of and commitment to teaching and learning was signalled in a range of ways in institutions by these, for example: the creation of key positions such as deans of teaching and learning; university policies related to probation and promotion; awards for 'good' teaching; the funding of scholarship of teaching and learning initiatives and other projects related to teaching and learning; and the establishment of well-resourced teaching and learning centres – though this varied greatly from one institution to another.

The signalling of the value of teaching was sometimes contradicted, either in practice or in the policies, or other forms of public documentation themselves. An interesting example of this is an analysis on the website of HAU1 conducted by Jawitz and Williams (2015) which reveals that the website displays noticeable absences with regard to signalling the importance of teaching and learning – despite what is pronounced about the importance of teaching in other forums.

In both rural HDUs, as well as in the two UOTs that were part of the study, teaching was regarded as having lower status than research:

Publication is what it's all about. There is very little, if any, reward for good teaching or recognition (Lecturer UoT8).

In addition, in these institutions, the importance of disciplinary expertise as the basis for good teaching was recognised and both senior managers and academics noted the need to achieve higher degrees and do research in one's field to enhance teaching. However, it was noted by some that being a good researcher did not mean that one was necessarily a good teacher.

Junior staff as well as temporary teachers were usually expected to teach large undergraduate classes so that senior academics, who are also often prolific researchers, could have more time to devote to their research endeavours. The incentives available to researchers and the weighting given to research in terms of career advancement, contributed to research being seen as primary. There seemed to be, however, an emerging sense that much had been done to raise the capacity of staff to do research and that it was time to enhance the status of teaching in the same way:

Being a former technikon ... we did not have a focus on research and therefore his [the dean's] emphasis is more on research So while I teach I also research at the same time because the university is very clear that we need to have research outputs ... (Lecturer UoT7).

From the data, it is clear that teaching and learning, although a core activity of higher education, was generally not as highly valued as disciplinary research. To change this, beliefs and values around these core activities needed to be challenged. In addition, there was a frequent variance between policy and practice, and between what was stated by senior managers (for example, vice-chancellors and deans) and middle level managers (for example, heads of department). Finally, especially at HDUs, there were competing priorities due to capacity constraints and other factors such as the mergers, where young academics required capacity development with regard to the teaching role and the simultaneous need to gain postgraduate qualifications in their disciplines.

6.1.2.2 Conceptions of good teaching

Predictably, good teaching was understood and described in many different ways, ranging from linking teaching to philosophical explorations of the macro purposes of higher education, to descriptions of the range of practices and skills which make academics 'good' teachers in their specific disciplinary and institutional contexts. Teaching that enabled institutions to realise their vision and mission was seen as desirable. A comparison of the views of senior managers and of teaching academics revealed similarity, but also variance. Academics tended to view good teaching in relation to their own teaching, their students and the possible outcomes. Senior managers, especially at the Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor level, were more inclined to take a national and policy-related perspective, to view teaching in relation to their own management of staff capacity, or to talk with empathy about the conditions under which academics taught.

At a basic level, good teaching was seen to require curricula that are aligned and taught by teachers who are well prepared. Good teaching was described as multidimensional, complex and differed according to context, including year of study, and focus of discipline – whether theory- or practice-based. Some teachers viewed good teaching as a way of making a difference in students' lives or as giving back to society:

... you ought to be able to make a difference ... contributing to the development of ... people's minds and skills in a meaningful kind of way (Lecturer UoT7).

Although the notion of good teaching as the transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the student was evident in the data, many argued that it was necessary to engage students actively. Others used more philosophical explanations to describe good teaching as going beyond simply 'transmitting' a body of knowledge to students; it was understood as enabling students to be creators and not just passive recipients of knowledge. As a senior manager in an institution said:

... the quality of teaching and learning ... hinges on what the students can engage with ... getting students to participate ... knowing ... when to stop talking and getting students to talk ... (Senior Manager HDU6).

While some had an instrumentalist notion of good teaching as ensuring student success and good throughput rates, for others it was about introducing students to ideas that lead to transformed understandings of the world and of themselves. Some saw good teaching as developing students' in-depth understanding of disciplinary fields. Some academics saw their role as "the cultivation of highly educated graduates" (Senior Manager HAU3). In addition, it was seen as important to develop students as independent learners.

Good teaching, according to some, should take account of the social context and should foreground the 'cultivation of humanity' rather than just 'produce competent technocrats' (Senior Manager HAU3):

... there's a need for the recognition of teaching as something much more than the simple transformation of usable information and rather as the cultivation of a personhood (Lecturer HAU2).

One of the goals of good teaching and learning was described as needing to develop students with a consciousness of their responsibility towards the country and the world at large and the need to contribute to changing society for the better. It was noted that good teaching should also pay attention to the needs of the discipline or the field through appropriate curriculum development. In addition, good teaching required an awareness of how the world was changing, including what different technologies meant for learning and pedagogy.

Particularly given the history of South Africa, many saw good teaching as ensuring that students who graduated were competent in their fields, were able to find suitable employment and contribute economically to their families' prosperity and to the development of the country.

Good teachers were seen by some as academics who were able to respond positively to teaching challenges, especially those related to increased class sizes, diversity of the student cohorts and the articulation gap between school and university. For some, this meant coming to terms with the fact that traditional lecture formats and in particular 'chalk and talk' teaching were not leading to the kind of learning needed and to look for more interactive methodologies. Good teaching was complex and changed as required by changing contexts:

[Students] are not always as prepared as they used to be, so I have to put in more effort to help them scaffold their learning. ... I can't just go into the classroom and teach ... (Lecturer HAU3).

Practices that were considered to be part of good teaching included ensuring the active engagement of students in their own learning and responding to student diversity; developing good relationships with students, including showing concern for the whole person; teaching in ways which boost students' confidence in themselves and their abilities; teaching students to be critical thinkers, competent professionals and good citizens of South Africa and the world.

Creativity was seen as an important component of good teaching. This included the use of innovative teaching and learning methods. The use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to engage students in learning was regarded as important. The importance of providing students with good feedback to promote learning was seen as an aspect of good teaching. For others, collaborative teaching and sharing good practices were facets of good teaching. Good teaching responded to student diversity and to the needs of workplaces. For some, depending on their institutional contexts, good teaching was constrained by limited resources, including lack of adequate infrastructure and very large classes.

For many interviewees, good teaching resulted from academics who were passionate about their disciplines and committed to their students' learning and well-being. Some believed that academics were "born good teachers" and that "good teaching is instinctive and intuitive"; "either you can teach or you can't ... you've either got it or you haven't" (Lecturer HAU1).

Others believed that good teaching was rooted in scholarship, both in relation to disciplinary knowledge and to knowledge from the field of higher education studies. Good teaching thus had a philosophical basis:

[Teaching and learning are not] some kind of technical or neutral process ... the ultimate test ... for ... any university is the extent to which we have engaged with profound epistemological and ontological issues, teaching and learning issues and curriculum issues (Senior Manager HAU3).

Linked to this, for many, was adopting the identity of reflective practitioners. The latter led to renewal and change, thus enabling better dealing with challenges related to contemporary higher education contexts:

Initially [you are] very confident and secure about the information that you have gleaned ... because you enjoy teaching Then you begin ... to realise how much you still need to learn, ways you still need to grow and ways that you can make learning more exciting to your students, because you realise it isn't just a matter of giving them information, it's a matter of stoking that desire to learn themselves and to become as fascinated about your discipline as you are (Senior Manager HDU5).

The variety of conceptions of good teaching and how this is attained goes some way towards explaining the variety of views on professional learning, which is discussed in the next chapter.

6.1.2.3 Beliefs about professional learning

Across the eight institutions there was a range of beliefs and opinions about various issues: whether professional development in relation to teaching and learning was necessary in higher education; what form such professional development should take; who should undertake professional development; what motivated academic staff to engage in professional learning; and what the enabling and constraining conditions were for academics to participate in professional development activities.

The data from the case studies indicated that the majority, particularly members of senior management and younger lecturers, believed that some form of professional development was necessary and useful for higher education teachers:

... [academic staff development] is critically important We need to make sure that every academic who stands in front of a class is a competent teacher and understands some of the basic theories of teaching and learning and how teaching and learning takes place So we really believe very deeply in the professionalisation of teaching and that one can develop scholarship of teaching and learning ... (Senior Manager HAU3).

This belief in the importance of professional learning is tempered by results in the questionnaire suggesting that actual participation in professional learning opportunities across the board might be low. While 75% of respondents reported attending professional learning opportunities with regard to teaching, 41% attended such opportunities once a year or less.

Some academics (especially more established academics) had the view that their disciplinary qualifications and knowledge equipped them adequately to teach and/or that learning to teach happened through immersion – that being thrown in at the deep end was the best way to learn.

For many academics, the desire to improve their teaching was intrinsically motivated by their passion for their discipline and for their deep concern for their students' learning and well-being. For some this was complemented by their commitment to and belief in lifelong learning. In some institutions, though, staff engaged in professional development activities to promote job security and promotion possibilities.

Some made the argument that changes in higher education with increased student numbers and a more diverse student body meant that traditional ways of teaching were no longer effective; that lecturers needed to develop new ways to deal with new teaching and learning challenges and that, therefore, academic staff development was crucial.

There was a range of underpinning beliefs about what professional development for academic staff should be. Some had a pragmatic view and were most interested in training opportunities to learn important and useful skills to solve specific problems; some were looking for 'tips and tricks', or a 'pocket guide for teaching' (Institutional reflective report). In some cases, academics wanted training in particular aspects, for example, how to use teaching technologies, cope with large classes, and so on.

While some understood professional development as little more than skills training, for others, professional development entailed deeper exploration of the values, theories, beliefs and ideologies which underpinned their disciplines and the teaching of their disciplines:

... a huge influence on my teaching I must say has been this whole scholarship of teaching, of reading, of understanding, of you know, trying to see why are the students doing this ... reading books ... reading articles (Lecturer UoT7).

There was, however, variation in terms of academics' willingness and commitment to see academic staff development as a scholarly endeavour which entailed engagement with the literature of higher education studies.

For some, professional development was viewed as promoting critical reflection, as challenging academics to think critically and to shift their views on their teaching practice. Professional development was viewed as a space to question common sense theories of teaching and learning:

... we constantly need to re-evaluate what we are doing ... get ourselves out of our comfort zones and challenge ourselves and be challenged by other people, by doing things differently (Lecturer HAU1).

Critical reflection on one's own teaching practice was understood by interviewees as central to development and growth, as discussed in the study on excellent teachers by Winberg (2017).

For the majority who were in favour of professional development, there was acknowledgement that there were many both formal and informal opportunities for academics to learn to teach that might lead to improved student learning. For some, the spaces to learn from others had been invaluable:

[The induction programme] was an amazing experience for me to meet other academics from across disciplines ... and it was a wonderful way of induction. ... we've gone through a joyous experience and you have this sense of an [institutional] community (Lecturer HAU1).

Informal learning opportunities included these: learning from knowledgeable peers, including through team teaching/informal discussions in departments; being mentored by a more experienced peer; forming supportive communities of practice; and so on. For others, professional development entailed self-study.

Although some lecturers felt that enhancing teaching proficiency and understanding teaching and learning was something individuals should do for themselves, many others strongly believed that, as few lecturers had any formal teaching qualification, there was a need for formal institutional structures for the professional development of academics as teachers:

I think what the [Teaching and Learning Centre] has done in the institution is develop that sort of institutional teaching and learning network ... I think that's why I was so inspired and motivated to join the institution's initiatives because it was the first time that I felt there was a community on my own campus (Lecturer HDU4).

There was a range of opinions on the best format for formal professional development structures but these included formal qualifications such as a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education, short courses, workshops, writing breakaways for the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), teaching fellowships for promoting SoTL and so on. There was considerable support for specific programmes such as those currently on offer in some institutions. There was also some debate as to whether formal staff development initiatives should involve lecturers from across the various disciplines, or be discipline specific. It was noted that there were pros and cons to both modes.

Given the range of attitudes and beliefs, there was much disagreement as to whether the staff development opportunities provided by institutions should be compulsory or voluntary and for whom professional development was most appropriate. Good arguments were advanced for both compulsory and voluntary participation with some arguing that only lecturers who had or who were deemed to 'have a problem' should be compelled to attend staff development initiatives. Some thought that negative feedback from students on teaching might be a criterion for

deciding who should participate. It was acknowledged that compliance in response to university policies or only for career advancement purposes may not lead to the kind of learning hoped for:

I wouldn't make anything compulsory. I really think it's about persuading people. It's about people seeing the value of engaging with the teacher roles. I wouldn't make it compulsory, ever (Senior Manager HAU3).

There were also examples in the interviews, where staff attended activities because they were compulsory, and became more enthusiastic due to their exposure to new ideas and practices.

In conclusion, some academics experienced formal learning opportunities as enabling and enriching, whereas others – a minority – resented them and experienced them as an imposition. If participation in all forms of professional learning were to be encouraged, it would be necessary to have shifts in institutional culture and to value and promote the role of teaching and of professional learning much more highly – and this across institutional types.

6.1.3 Contextual influences on professional learning

In previous chapters, it was suggested that there was a strong appreciation of the value of formal offerings as well as of the work of academic developers. From the interviews with academics it emerged, however, that their working environments significantly influenced their attitudes towards their teaching – and, by extension, their professional learning. In this chapter, key features of the working environments and how they appeared to influence learning to teach are discussed.

Workload and class size

One of the notable features raised in academics' accounts of their working contexts was that of high workload. The research findings across all institutions indicated high workload and the accompanying lack of time as major constraints on the uptake of professional learning opportunities. This feature appeared more prominently at the HDUs, underscoring the points made about institutional inequality in Chapter 5. Academics mentioned "over-crowded classes, where the university teacher to student ratio can reach up to 1:500" (Reflective report HDU5).

Heavy workloads were also linked to a shortage of posts at three disadvantaged institutions.

Employment conditions

The existence of staff without proper teaching contracts, who could not access the institution's resources, was mentioned at HDU5; and the casualisation of staff teaching on the extended degree programmes was mentioned at HDU4. The casualised status of extended degree programme lecturers is developed in one of the parallel studies supported by the project – see Garraway (2015). The high administrative burden, sometimes as the result of teaching large classes, was particularly problematic at UoT7, UoT8, HDI4, HDI5 and HDI6.

Physical infrastructure and resources

Dimensions of infrastructure and available resources for teaching and learning were cited by colleagues across the institutional range as impacting on teaching and learning. One of the few positive comments about physical conditions was expressed by a lecturer at a historically advantaged university:

I've got no complaints about the environment in terms of teaching. Our labs are well equipped, as you can see our lecture halls are well equipped and I think we've got a very good platform and things can actually only get better from here. [XXX] University offers a fantastic environment for us as lecturers. It gives us the opportunity to be ... to reach out and touch the most recent technology (Lecturer HAU2).

Although physical conditions were mentioned across the board, this was more so at HDUs:

I offer them extra lectures, you know, lecture-driven tutorials ... because of the facilities, like the lecture venues that ... don't support a projector, I've actually done a workbook for students. ... if they can't see the board or they can't hear me, they've still got the notes in front of them. ... because I have problems with voice projection in large classes, I end up circling the lecture venues, so that everybody can get to hear me at some point in time. ... I spend a lot of time making my notes and getting them printed and following up with ... the note making. I try to put them in a way that is easily understandable. I spend a lot of my time on that and if I had more, if I didn't have to really do all of that, in other words if students could see the board, ... I wouldn't have to give them as comprehensive notes and then I could actually spend time on research and my own professional development (Lecturer HDU5).

This quote has been reproduced at length, as it demonstrates how a lack of facilities can influence professional learning. A fuller account of the interrelationship between the material and discursive and how these are mutually reinforcing, is provided in Leibowitz (2016b). A similar point about the link between material resources and teaching approach was mentioned in UoT7:

I think a lot of what one does is determined by the circumstances ... sometimes the circumstances force you into ... or let's say minimises the amount of options that are available to you and sometimes ... yes it is chalk and talk ... because that's all you can do at that moment ... that's all you have available to you at that moment (Lecturer UoT7).

This relationship between inadequate facilities and transmission-type teaching was called into question by lecturers who circumvented these constraints by adopting radically different teaching approaches. See Section 6.1.4 for one example of a creative teaching approach as a response to inadequate teaching conditions. The relationship between resourcing and teaching models requires further investigation and discussion.

Collegial relations

For many academics, the first port of call with a learning query was their colleagues. In an analysis of the questionnaire results, most respondents from all but one of the participating institutions indicated that their first choice for assistance with a teaching and learning related issue was to approach a colleague in their department and thereafter the internet. At the eighth institution, approaching a colleague was rated among the top two options. This points to the significance of collegial relations. A 'toxic' departmental environment at HAU2 discouraged an academic from becoming involved in activities, including professional learning related activities, in her department.

Comments about collegial relations emanated from interviews at many of the institutions, but were more strongly connected with low morale at one HDU where lack of morale and low interest in teaching were cited. Comments about lack of collegiality and low morale were also cited with specific reference to the after-effects of the mergers:

... the institution paid enough attention to harmonising senior management levels but not nearly enough to manage change itself on the ground level of teaching where people work in completely opposing teaching ideologies, let alone political ideologies on the mergers. I think that created a massive drain of energy. We're muddling through that but it's still left a bit of rigor mortis behind it (Lecturer UoT7).

Collegial relations strongly encouraged professional learning when the collegial network was committed to teaching:

It's a great team of people and there are really exceptional educators who I learn from all the time (Lecturer UoT7).

However, when the dominant culture in a department was not supportive of teaching and learning, this could have the opposite effect:

I have never been encouraged to attend any professional learning for teaching; on the contrary, colleagues have sometimes discouraged me to attend (Questionnaire response HAU2).

Comments about high or low morale or about predominantly positive or negative cultures pertaining to teaching and learning were made across the board at HAUs and HDUs. However, in the interviews it was possible to locate an intensity of feeling about morale attitude towards teaching and learning at specific institutions. This suggests that it would be possible, given an accurate analysis of conditions at those institutions where collegial relations militate against professional learning, to effect change in this regard. One of the means to effect this change is academic leadership, which is discussed next.

Academic leadership

The data from all participating institutions signalled the crucial role of academic leadership for "creating an intellectual space and language to talk about teaching and learning" (Reflective Report HDU4) and for "shifting" the "university culture" (Reflective Report HAU1), and even the "national culture", towards "valuing teaching" (Reflective Report HAU2). Senior managers from two research-intensive universities acknowledged their responsibility to create an environment in which staff and students can perform and reach their potential. This sentiment was shared by a senior manager at a teaching-focused institution who argued that "the main thing that we can do, [is] to create the environment for people to develop themselves" (Senior Manager HDU5). At HAU1 there was also the sense that there was institutional support and recognition for teaching, but this was highlighted as a more recent phenomenon:

I think the institution is becoming more engaged with these issues – and there is now a DVC with responsibility for teaching and learning and there are teaching and learning formal committees – but this engagement is relatively new (Senior Manager HAU1).

In the reflective reports, reasons to do with structure were advanced for why, on occasion, senior managers were less likely to play a supportive role. In one HDU, it was because deans and heads of department did not rotate, leading to problems of stasis with certain managers. Conversely, in one rural HDU, the rapid turnover of DVCs meant having to reacquaint incumbents with an understanding of the importance of teaching and learning, and of supporting learning to teach each time.

The focus turns to how the role of academic leadership is experienced by academics as one of the important influences on their work environment and on their professional learning:

We have a very good head of department who is very supportive in general, and that helps, it makes a huge change from last year (Lecturer HAU1).

Heads of department were cited as providing moral support for the professional learning of academics, on occasion unlocking funding to pay for attendance at professional development opportunities, sharing experiences, or mentoring new lecturers.

There were numerous examples of deans or heads of department participating in professional development opportunities, such as diploma programmes and short courses, and the positive impact this had on other colleagues at the same institution. At HDU6 a head of department attended a PG Dip (HE) (T&L) programme at another university and implemented what she had learnt in her department:

I believe that I have been trying by all means to implement [what I learnt]. Because as we speak now, in terms of assessment and quality assurance, I have made sure that before the examination question papers were submitted to examination chapters ... they submitted the question papers to me as head of department so that I can submit them there ... I made sure that we create a day and have a meeting where we would all come together and moderate all those question papers, from the technical part of it ... (Lecturer and head of department HDU6).

Lecturers at various universities also complained about heads of department who were unsupportive of their professional learning. Respondents to the questionnaire at one research-intensive institution indicated that the language used by their line managers when referring to teaching and the professional learning for teaching was sometimes devaluing, and included words like “waste” and “an unaffordable luxury” (questionnaire response). An interviewee mentioned that her head of department told her it was “unacceptable” for her to spend so much time on her teaching and that she was not “cost-effective to the department” (Lecturer HAU2).

A misalignment between institutional structures such as policies and the role of middle management, and cultural features such as the institutional values, also resulted in situations where teaching and its related activities were highly regulated but not necessarily valued. This is discussed in more detail in relation to HAU2 in Van Schalkwyk et al. (2015). A significant finding at the three research-intensive institutions and one UoT in this research was a perceived disconnect between the views of senior management and the approaches of middle management. One of the lecturer interviewees was very clear about this:

So everything, it's like really the middle management, the middle structures, are quite problematic in the sense of, do they really understand what the goals of top management is? (Lecturer HAU2).

Conditions external to the university

Conditions external to the university directly influenced internal work environments. This point was made most emphatically by colleagues in the two rural HDUs, where inhospitable conditions discouraged colleagues from remaining long in these regions. The conditions at the two rural institutions, HDU5 and HDU6, are discussed in more detail in Ndebele, Muhuro and Nkonki (2016). These conditions included lack of amenities such as good schools, libraries or shopping centres, as well as resources such as water and electricity:

And I find sometimes the electricity goes out and [I] go, 'Oh God, how am I supposed to teach if there's no water?' and then the students obviously don't come to campus. There's no electricity because the electricity got cut and for some or other reason So these are some of the contextual factors that I ... didn't really think would impact my functioning but these are some of the things that I've had to cope with. And I have coped with it (Lecturer HDU6).

A feature not unique to universities in rural environments, but expressed more strongly in those, was having to travel across long distances to teach on campus.

Students

Students featured in lecturers' accounts as constraining as well as encouraging lecturers' professional learning. Their positive responses often encouraged lecturers to learn to teach even better. However, in some lecturers' accounts, the students were apathetic, did not attend classes, were militant, or the large class sizes or students' expectations forced the lecturers to teach in a manner that did not encourage an approach to teaching in harmony with the international literature on good teaching:

I know that from the high school students, most of the students they want to be fed with information, so that is what I really do. ... the kind of students, they force you to do that because if you don't teach them ... it will be a disaster (Lecturer HDU6).

Students were the source of many of their lecturers' inspiration and the focus of their professional or ethical responsibility. Their difficulties also encouraged some lecturers to learn how to teach them better:

So my students, yes, and some of the challenges that they face, have been the big triggers [of my professional learning] (Lecturer UOT8).

Finally, students were a source of learning for some lecturers:

I ... think that I'm as much a learner as I am a teacher because I learn from the students every day. I learn from them. I see teaching and learning as a communal enterprise between me and the students ... (Lecturer UOT7).

The responses of academics to students varied, in the same vein as responses to other aspects of the working contexts, such as workload or lack of time. In the next chapter, some of the reasons for these varied responses are discussed.

6.1.4 Lecturers' responses to their environments

Chapter 6 has thus far concentrated on the conditions in which lecturers taught, and the various structural and cultural conditions which enabled and constrained their growth as teachers – as these conditions were described by the interviewees. At this point it is necessary to focus on the manner in which academics responded to their working contexts, with a focus on the concept of agency as outlined by Margaret Archer.

A central feature in Archer's depiction of human agency is that humans respond differentially to the enablements and constraints that they face; and the greater the constraint, the greater the measures people would have to undertake

to overcome these. One of the most striking features of the interviews, especially but not solely in the HDUs, is the lengths to which some lecturers might go to overcome what they perceive as constraints:

I often buy things out of my own pocket because it's quicker, it's easier and it enables me to teach in the way that I want to teach. I don't begrudge that money because it's part of me developing the students and I'm tired of asking for things (Lecturer UOT7).

This does not imply that lecturers have free will entirely, autonomous of the conditions in which they work. An analysis of intrinsic and extrinsic sources of motivation at three of the institutions in the study, HAU2, HDU4 and HDU5, concluded that extrinsic and intrinsic motivation to learn to teach might help academics to overcome dire conditions, especially intrinsic motivation, but that this motivation itself is affected by these conditions. This point is developed further, based on a comparison of transcripts with lecturers at three of the participating institutions (Leibowitz 2016c).

An in-depth analysis of lecturers' responses to the so-called burden of insufficient time from the questionnaire data from one institution (Jawitz & Perez 2016) provides an example of how individuals respond differentially to constraints placed before them. Some academics cite the lack of time as a reason not to participate in professional development, whereas others say they participate, despite a lack of time, and that they 'make time' for this:

Teaching large classes and lecturing a large number of weeks as well as trying to do some research makes it difficult to find additional time to engage in professional learning for teaching. I make the time because I think it is that important (Lecturer HAU1).

A key construct that accounts for lecturers' varied responses to their contexts in the data is that of reflexivity, which was summarised in Chapter 3.5 with reference to Archer (2007), as a process of internal deliberation in which concerns, commitments and knowledgeability play a role. Concerns and commitments featured strongly in the accounts of lecturers who were very passionate about their teaching. Throughout the data, there was evidence in all institutions of some lecturers being strongly intrinsically motivated to teach well and thus to pursue some form of professional learning.

Their passion for their disciplines, for teaching and for their students' learning were sufficient impetus for them to seek and take advantage of both formal and informal professional learning opportunities:

What actually pushed me [to engage in professional learning opportunities] was seeing that sometimes students needed help that I may not be able to offer them (Lecturer HDU6).

In some instances, this concern was complemented by a concern for the social good, and the kinds of contributions students might make on graduating:

I guess I realised more and more that teaching is really what gives me a buzz. ... teaching is transformative and really making an impact on students' lives, particularly at first-year level ... I've always tried to think about producing scientists, but different kinds of scientists. So scientists who will be able to think more broadly about the wider context of science. So it's seeing it as transformative, not just for individuals, but also for society (Lecturer HDU4).

Agency is also influenced by knowledgeability and emotion (Archer 2007). Thus, a lecturer's sense of agency is also influenced by his or her own capacity. An example of this is from an interview with a lecturer at HDU5 who struggled with un conducive teaching conditions. The lecturer worked in an Education faculty and used knowledge about education to devise a solution:

... it was such a big class and we had them in ... that test venue, I realised there's no way that I'm going to be successful here. ... the first few weeks, I would try to out shout at them. Then I realised this is not going to work – and this is part of an article I'm trying to get published at the moment. I then thought to myself, these are adults, so why don't we form cooperative learning groups? ... This whole peer learning system I purely did because I knew I was not going to manage and I needed the learners in the class to help me ... (Lecturer HDU5).

The lecturer's own access to cultural resources (knowledge about teaching) enhanced her sense of success, her satisfaction becoming the emotion that might modify her goals and re-orientate her future behaviour. This is an example of the interplay between structure, culture and agency that is key to Archer's work on change.

As discussed in Chapter 3.5, agency is not exercised by individuals alone but importantly also by groups. Archer (2000, p. 11) refers to this as "corporate agency". In many lecturers' accounts, group agency featured strongly, in particular at HDU4, UOT7 and UOT8:

We are a close-knit team, four of us share an office so there's a good synergy among us. ... We are all on the same level ... two ... have PhDs, they are older, have a bit more life experience, so they invest in you but it's a cross pollination thing (Lecturer HAU1).

Corporate agency in the form of supportive groups is significant in all contexts but appears to play an even more significant role in those contexts where conditions are perceived as adverse by academics.

Conclusion

The data collected via the survey and the interviews suggest that there are varied conceptions of what is good teaching, some aligning more directly with policy and the literature on good teaching than others. These views differ amongst senior level administrators such as DVCs responsible for teaching and learning and amongst teaching academics, although senior level administrators appear more aware of policy prescriptions. There are similar forms of provision of professional development across the universities, with this provision being provided in central units as well as faculties. Financial support for professional development from state funding is ring-fenced and used directly for teaching and learning in some institutions whereas in others it is absorbed into the universities' general operational budgets.

Across the board, use of the services of centres for teaching and learning appears to be taken up by academics to a limited extent, though there is much appreciation of this support from those who use it. The data suggests that influences on teaching and learning include this professional support, but that structural and cultural conditions in the work environment are as – if not more – influential. These conditions include the material conditions in which teaching takes place, which are most strongly related to funding of institutions and good governance, and 'messages' about the importance of teaching and learning to teach. Data collected during the 2010-2011 period suggest that, at all eight institutions, teaching is signalled to be less important than research.

The final observation to be drawn from the data collected in this chapter, along with Chapter 5, is that there are clusters of factors that affect teaching and learning, and learning to teach in institutional types, but that there is not a one-to-one predictive relationship between institutional type and outcome with regard to learning to teach. One of the reasons for this is that lecturers' individual or group agency and the knowledge that they bring with them to the teaching situation affects how they strategise to teach well.

Chapter 7, the third chapter which reports on the data collected for the study, focuses on the research process itself. Chapter 8 provides a discussion on the study as a whole.

7. FINDINGS ON COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

This chapter responds to research objectives 4 and 5 concerning collaborative research. It is based primarily on analysis of the three sets of the project participants' reflective reports and a discussion at the final meeting of the project. Before establishing what factors constrained and enabled the collaboration, it is necessary to consider whether the collaboration has been successful in terms of the outcome.

Process and group composition

The coming together as a group of educational researchers was facilitated through obtaining the NRF grant. Communication was inevitably via e-mail and was sporadic, interspersed with periods of significant activity that often centred around the two- or three-day face-to-face meetings that were scheduled twice a year to facilitate planning, collaborative working sessions and writing. For those from more rural areas, these face-to-face gatherings represented significant chunks of time away from the office, as travel time could extend these meetings to a full working week.

The way in which the group was assembled could be regarded as a mix of strategic and convenience selection. The grant requirements necessitated certain selections in terms of institutions (a mix of rural and urban, HAIs and HDIs), but it is fair to say that, within that framework, the team was largely based on existing networks and former collaborations. Thus, from the start of the collaboration there were various forms of diversity. This diversity played out in many ways, including levels of expertise and experience (both as academic developers and regarding research), age, background, gender, and race. In addition, although all project members were engaged in academic development activities, they differed significantly in the roles they filled in the different institutions, their practice, and their standing in these institutions. They displayed a broad range of methodological positions and perspectives. This collaborative research project differed from many others (for example, the Griffin, Hamberg & Lundgren 2013 study on gender) in that it comprised members from a large number of institutions (eight) across one country; and although members all shared the desire to enhance teaching and learning at their institutions, they did not share an interest in the same theories (on learning and social change); and many of the members, including the principal researcher, did not have teaching or academic status.

Structural features enabling the research were the ability to work on sub-projects in smaller teams, access to resources made possible by the NRF funding, and further resources made available by some of the senior researchers' own institutions, especially where these institutions were well resourced. Structural features constraining the research were the busyness of the researchers, the demands on them by their work contexts, and the long distances some had to travel to attend research meetings, especially those members from rural university sites. Cultural features enabling the collaboration included the commitment of the team members to the idea of supporting and enhancing teaching and learning and what was described by one of the team members as a 'spirit of generosity', where team members were willing to share resources and knowledge with one another. A feature constraining the collaboration leading to a lack of clarity was the planning of the project while it was in motion, caused partly by the short notice given to apply for the grant and partly by the group leader's lack of research experience. This was in one sense an enablement, as it allowed for flexibility and openness towards the unexpected, seen by Johansson (2013) as so important in large-scale collaborative research.

The collaboration cannot claim to be unique, but certainly was rare in higher education circles in South Africa. The context is shifting as increasing numbers of academic developers obtain their PhDs – which in and of itself is an important catalyst of research – eventually leading to more senior appointments at both associate professor and professor levels, thus growing the cadre of researchers who potentially have access to the resources and standing needed to embark on larger scale studies. In addition, more colleagues in the field are obtaining NRF ratings which

enables them to submit applications for dedicated grants, including those specifically focused on teaching and learning. Given the importance of collaborative research for comparative studies on academic development and for capacity-building, it is necessary that attention is given within such projects to the structuring of the collaboration to ensure maximum sharing and capacity building.

Productivity

With regard to the outputs, reports were prepared for each participating institution. Research outputs generated are listed below, with full titles of publications in Appendix 1.

- PhDs: four registered, two complete;
- A poster by a team member working on her PhD won a runner-up prize at the Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE) student research pre-conference meeting in December 2012 and in 2014;
- One special issue of the South African Journal of Higher Education with five papers reporting on data obtained in the study (2016);
- One book with three chapters reporting on data obtained in the study (2017);
- One article in a newspaper (Mail and Guardian);
- 19 journal articles published;
- 29 conference presentations or panels;
- A one-day national colloquium reporting on the findings of the research;
- A blog on the project.

Outcome

At the final project meeting, members reported satisfaction about the research outputs and agreed that working in such a large group across institutions allowed for a more comparative and context-sensitive approach. The comparative dimension with its broad sweep gave more authority to the findings. On the negative side was the fact that, owing to the researchers' other professional responsibilities, they were not able to deal with the findings in as much depth and nuance as might have been the case with a more intensive study or with researchers who had more time available to dedicate to the research; and by the end of the project the wealth of data had not been mined nearly as much as it could have been. It is interesting to note that the data that was analysed for scholarly publications was analysed in more depth and gave rise to more fine-tuned observations, than data that was simply analysed for institutional level or other reports.

Regarding the learning and capacitation of team members, in their reflective pieces team members reported learning about the theory of social realism, about research techniques and about professional learning. Several reported learning about collaborative research, with one member noting that, from this process, she had gained confidence to undertake a collaborative study at her own institution. From the reflections of the less experienced researchers, it would appear that they appreciated what they had learnt more than the more experienced researchers.

An interesting dimension to the project was the degree of insecurity, threat to academic identity and anxiety reported by many of the team members in the earlier years of the project (discussed in more detail in Leibowitz, Ndebele & Winberg 2015), which had abated by year six:

I experienced with time a feeling of acceptance, warmth and a sense of belonging in a community of academic development practitioners. This sense of 'belongingness' emerging from the togetherness and shared purpose is what I have grown to value as a member of the collaborative project.

With respect to the opportunity to reflect on their work, participants said they better understood the tasks in which they engaged, although this was by no means the greatest area of benefit.

The argument that inter-institutional research collaboration is important for capacity building, developed in this chapter, complements that made in Chapter 6.1.1: that inter-institutional collaboration or sharing of expertise is an important means to enhance teaching and learning in South Africa.



8. DISCUSSION

8.1. Introduction

The aims and objectives of the research and the outcomes for each are summarised here:

Table 8.1: Summary of objectives and outcomes

No.	Objective	Outcome
1	To make suggestions about how to enhance professional development with regard to teaching at each of the eight participating institutions	At the time of writing this report, presentations on the data and findings have been made in six of the participating universities.
2	To make suggestions at the national level for appropriate and context-sensitive policy to enhance teaching and learning in South Africa	These are provided in Chapter 9.
3	To contribute to the international debates on professional development with regard to teaching and learning, with specific reference to the concepts of 'structure, culture and agency' as developed in the work of social realist Margaret Archer	This is discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 and in various publications in more depth.
4	To contribute to the international debates on collaborative research	This is discussed in Chapter 7 and two journal articles.
5	To make suggestions at the national level regarding collaborative research on teaching and learning and about how to support this ¹¹	These are provided in Chapter 9.

The aim of this chapter is thus to draw together the findings and to suggest any relevant points for the various bodies of literature on which the project has drawn, then to present broad implications on the following topics:

- Approaches to professional learning;
- Approaches to the concept of context, based on the notion of the interplay of structure, culture and agency; and
- Approaches to collaborative research.

The chapter culminates with considerations of the strengths and limitations of the research design and the implications thereof for researching teaching and learning in higher education.

8.2. Professional learning

The study endorses the concept of 'professional learning' that is broader than the notion of professional development. It is lifelong and agentic, as discussed in Chapter 3.1. The lecturer is encouraged to learn by the quality of the offerings of formal learning opportunities and the credibility of the academic developers who offer these; by aspects of the working environment; by the lecturers' knowledgeability; and by their concerns and commitments. Their knowledgeability, concerns and commitments would be influenced by the lecturers' own biographies. The study does not 'pronounce' on whether participation in formal learning activities should be compulsory but it does provide some

¹¹ The last two aims were introduced in the second phase of the research.

examples where making such activities compulsory provides individuals with positive exposure to these opportunities (that might not have been the case if these were not compulsory). The question of whether offerings should be made compulsory should take into account the credibility of the programmes and those offering them, as well as the prevailing culture. The need for a credible and professionalised academic development cohort has been signalled as an important component of a conducive environment for professional learning (Quinn & Vorster 2014; Vorster & Quinn 2015).

A key finding is that the range of professional learning opportunities are all important: from formal learning opportunities, more ad hoc ones, to the most informal of all, i.e. learning from one's own ongoing practice. The relationship between the more formal and the more informal professional learning opportunities is complementary and mutually reinforcing. Another finding is, on the one hand, the need for a professionalised and well-capacitated academic development staff cohort and, on the other, for ongoing attention to the conditions in which academics work and teach. This finding, in contrast to the view of writers such as Knight, Tait and Yorke (2006) and others who maintain that the learning that occurs in the faculties and departments is 'more significant', cautions against a binary between formal and informal learning approaches. Both are necessary and important and more attention should be paid to how to enhance the relationship between the two, or between the various aspects of the institutional context, including policy, human relations prescriptions, formal learning opportunities, academic leadership, a caring environment and so on. One of the points of concern is that, where the dominant culture in a department or faculty does not provide cultural resources for lecturers to learn to teach and devalues attention to professional learning, these dominant cultures then perform a negative function. This supports the position maintained by Roxå (2104) that microcultures can maintain a defensive position against the surrounding organisational context.

Thus, instead of discussing where professional learning should be provided, managers and academic developers should be asking: 1) Is there sufficient motivation and encouragement within a particular context for academics to learn?; 2) Is there support for academics in the environment to develop critical reflection about their teaching?; 3) Are there sufficient opportunities for academics to draw on ideas and concepts about teaching and learning to enrich their teaching?; and 4) If not, what can be done about this?

The findings also support the notion of group agency (or 'corporate' agency) and suggest that the deliberate cultivation of positive collaboration is significant for professional learning. These groups occur most naturally within departments and faculties, and should be supported across faculties or disciplines as well as between institutions. There have been important developments in this regard in South Africa since the data collection for this study, including the collaboration of three Western Cape universities on the PG Dip (HE) (T&L) and the Teaching Advancement at University (TAU) Fellowships Programme, initiated in 2015. During the TAU Fellowships Programme, teaching academics from across the country have signalled appreciation for inter-university networking. This is not without its challenges, however. According to a study ancillary to this research by Quinn and Vorster (2015, listed in Appendix One) in which they examine the challenges of reproducing a PG Dip (HE) for their own institution for colleagues at other institutions, differing cultures and frames of reference pose a challenge.

Another salient finding is the valuing of research over teaching, referred to at all eight institutions. This is compounded, especially in some of the HDUs, where there is a concomitant pressure for academics to obtain postgraduate qualifications in their disciplines. The notion of the integration of the various roles of the academic, highlighted by the Boyer Commission in the United States in the 1990s (Boyer 1990), provides a way out of this unhelpful binary between research and teaching. An important area for further research and strategising in South Africa, as well as in other higher education contexts where there are competing priorities for the enhancement of scholarship and capacitation, is how academics can enhance their capabilities in a more holistic or integrated manner than is presently made feasible.

The study has shown a variety of conceptions of good teaching amongst managers and academics. Most of these conceptions are in harmony with the literature on good teaching, as outlined in Chapter 3.3, but some are not. Given that the sample of lecturers interviewed is skewed sharply in favour of those who are committed to good teaching and professional learning, this is a cause for attention and further investigation. There are various possible explanations for this variance: 1) formal and informal learning opportunities have not penetrated the cohort of academics as widely and deeply as one would hope; 2) traditional or unquestioned conceptions of good teaching remain deeply embedded, despite exposure to new conceptions; 3) actual conditions under which academics work may impede their engagement with, or full integration of, new ideas.

8.3. Institutional context from a social realist perspective

The findings of the study confirm the importance of adopting a contextualised approach to matters of professional learning, where the context is seen as the “environment in which the (‘macro’) features of the system are either reproduced or transformed” (Archer 1995, p. 11). The ‘macro’ system has been described at the national level and the institutional contexts are the settings where the macro features have been outlined. A key finding in this respect, is that the macro features of the South African society and national higher education policy environment are indeed reproduced and, on occasion, transformed, at the local university level.¹²

The study demonstrates how the agency and roles of individuals and groups, especially of teaching academics, but also of middle level and senior academics, can make a difference. However, the study provides a glimpse into how the inherent inequality in the system strongly influences what appears to be possible to achieve with regard to teaching and learning.

Archer (1996) maintains that both structure and culture are significant in accounts of social change or stasis, and that neither should be neglected. This study confirms the significance of both domains. Regarding structures, policies, academic development centres, and posts such as Deputy-Dean: Teaching, are all significant. The way material and cultural resources interact to produce teaching and learning outcomes or practices (see more detail in Leibowitz 2016b) is an important area for future investigation. The interrelationship between disadvantage and rurality as a specific socio-economic condition has been highlighted in this study and is worthy of further investigation.

The domain of culture has been shown in the study to be extremely significant in reproducing and transforming dominant ideas about teaching and learning in higher education. This domain is salient at all institutions, historically advantaged and disadvantaged. The role of senior managers and middle managers has been highlighted as a group which plays an important part in how dominant conceptions of teaching and learning are either reproduced or transformed. The extent to which dominant ideas are either coherent or contradictory is an important aspect of the conception of culture as described by Archer (1996). She draws a distinction between the coherence of the ideas, and how this is imposed or disseminated amongst people. Indeed, in this study there was found to be a lack of coherence of ideas regarding the stature of teaching at the institutional level, but, in addition, a weak engagement with, or dissemination of these within certain institutions; and, further, a contradiction between the cultural domain and various policies and processes in the structural domain (for example, incentive policies, timetables, or performance evaluation and promotion processes). This condition might have changed since 2012, when the data was gathered. Nevertheless, this is an important area for further investigation and action. Structures advancing and incentivising research, for example the NRF, still exist. Such structures have an influence on culture, namely ideas about the importance of teaching.

¹² Although senior managers have been interviewed, the research analysis has not turned to, to what extent these role-players, or others, have succeeded in transforming universities. This work is still to be done.

According to Archer, human agency is neither autonomous (i.e. that humans possess free will) nor is it reduced to the extent that the systemic level is entirely determining. She also cautions against seeing agency as 'conflated' with the systemic level, such that one cannot separate out the workings of the systemic and of agency. In this study, the significance of agency is highlighted. Agency and reflexivity account for the variation in responses between individuals to the structural and cultural conditions they face. However, the way agency and the level of structure and culture interact is complex and nuanced, and by no means 'brute'. In other words, the interplay exists in tiny micro-interactions that academics engage in each day, rather than necessarily in grand events such as a major student protest or change in policy. This suggests once again that it would be worth complementing the theoretical framework used in this study with one focusing on ongoing practice, repetition and shared meanings.

With regard to agency, the study suggests that knowledgeability plays a significant role in advancing professional learning. Knowledge and expertise is derived from prior learning (for example, where one studied or taught previously), knowledge resources provided via networks (for example, professional or disciplinary associations) and interaction with colleagues in faculties and departments. The knowledge is also derived from professional learning opportunities, for example the PG Dip (HE) (T&L). Where there is limited expertise on a topic relating to teaching or professional learning in an institution, inter-institutional collaboration or sharing once again becomes a possible solution. In addition, the example of HAU3, where staff in the Centre for Teaching and Learning consciously took it upon themselves to capacitate their members, signals the need for support from senior managers for this capacitation, alongside attention to the identity and general academic growth, of academic developers.

The study endorses the view that agency is significant. A contribution of this project derived from the findings is the suggestion that agency and reflexivity promote the negotiation of obstacles. Agency is itself influenced by the constraining and enabling conditions in the environment. Intrinsic motivation fuels the desire to learn professionally amongst academics committed to teaching, far more so than extrinsic motivation (motivation driven by instrumentalist purposes and external drivers). This point was made in the study at three of the participating institutions, using self-regulation theory, by Leibowitz (2016c). However, the information at hand is not able to shed light on the effects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation amongst academics less interested to learn to teach (those who were less likely to respond to the questionnaire or to agree to be interviewed, and possibly the majority at many universities). Investigations into how less committed teachers can be encouraged to learn to teach requires further consideration.

8.4. Collaborative research

The study suggests that inter-institutional, large scale collaborative research within the South African higher education setting is feasible, but it faces challenges pertaining to geographical distance, busy work schedules, different levels of research experience, and under-resourcing at some of the participating institutions. A case in point regarding under-resourcing was the inter-institutional questionnaire, which was a struggle to disseminate at several of the universities, particularly at HDUs.

Furthermore, the study suggests that, although this is not necessarily easy, it is possible to cultivate a learning and sharing environment within such collaborations, a general point made about group reflexivity and sharing by Donati (2012). There are few guidelines for how to ensure successful collaborative research environments. Such information would go a long way to support this burgeoning approach. The line of enquiry on collaborative research brings together several key strands in this study: the idea that collaboration can be consciously built and that it is important; that one learns by doing with more experienced others (Wenger 1998) but that formal theoretical knowledge as well as tacit knowledge is also required; and that cultural and structural enablements and constraints are mediated by individual and group agency. Finally, this research process also points to the interrelationship between research, learning, and professional practice, thus how various forms of scholarship are interlinked.

8.5. Strengths and limitations of the research design

This research approach was not only collaborative but, to a degree, participatory, in the sense that academic developers engaged in professional development were researching their own professional contexts and searching for information that would inform their own work. This rendered the research, designed by people whose roles allowed for relatively little time for research, perhaps messier than it might have been as a more 'pure' or 'scientific' project, and entailed 'building the plane while flying'. However, the participatory nature of the design enhanced the immediate use value of the project and encouraged a measure of self-awareness and criticality amongst the research team who were able to test their own assumptions of their work against the data from their own and other institutions.

The design, involving eight simultaneous studies utilising common instruments, was helpful in allowing silences and differences to emerge that would not have emerged in single case studies. However, the multiple case studies were static and therefore did not maximise the potential of the concept of the interplay of structure, culture and agency, which usually allows for a tracing of patterns and changes as these occur over time. A further research weakness already mentioned was the difficulty of implementing a survey across the institutions.

The survey was significant in that it the first of its kind and provided a broad-sweep view of attitudes towards professional learning in the country; but it was only analysed numerically in three institutions, although the open-ended data was mined in more depth. The survey and interview data set is weighted in favour of academics who are enthusiastic about teaching and professional learning. Various findings would need to be explored and tested with a cohort that is less committed to the teaching function.

It should be noted that the data collected from the survey and interviews record research participants' perceptions only. This might lead to the interpretation that the claims and recommendations which can be made are limited, because substantive data to confirm or refute perceptions was not gathered. However, the data collected from the interviews made possible a deep understanding of people's experiences of their higher education environment. This interpretive research approach was complemented by the collection of other forms of public documentation, national trends and statistics. Furthermore, particular attention has been paid to not treating what either managers or academics have said as if this provides a picture of reality. To paraphrase critical realists, there might be a reality out there, but our knowledge of it can only be partial or "fallible" (Sayer 2011, p. 47). Related to this conflation of description with reality is the danger of reading into the accounts contained in this study as if this provides a picture of South African higher education in 2016. The data was collected in 2011 and 2012. Some of the impressions created by this report are still pertinent, whereas the influence of recent events such as the #Feesmustfall and related movements have not been traced at all.

Finally, it should be cautioned that using a particular theoretical framework determines the questions which can be asked and so both reveals and obscures insight into professional development and teaching and learning in general (Ashwin 2009). Various possible couplings of theoretical frameworks with that of structure, culture and agency have been referred to in earlier chapters of this document. The matter is of sufficient interest to several members of this team that a book arising out of this concern has been produced (see Leibowitz, Bozalek & Kahn, eds, 2017, listed in Appendix One).



9. RECOMMENDATIONS

In this report, we have described an investigation that aimed at exploring the influences of institutional context on the professional learning of academics in their roles as teachers. The dual focus of the study has enabled the depiction of the national landscape while at the same time has allowed for individual institutional case studies to be presented. In this final section several recommendations relating to issues of professional learning, including those that require attention at a national level, are proposed. These are discussed in the section that follows and are developed further into possible actions in Table 9.1. Thereafter, recommendations emanating from what has been learnt as a result of conducting the study, particularly in terms of methodology, are also shared.

9.1. Recommendations relating to professional learning

Most interviewees across different levels of seniority agreed that the discourse, science and art of teaching need to be strengthened nationally. This enhancement could be accomplished through such endeavours as professional staff development programmes for both senior and lecturer level academics. It was found that currently most professional development programmes are directed particularly at novice academics and that the middle layers of academics (such as senior lecturers, course convenors and heads of department) would benefit from capacity development as well. A further important recommendation, which is not currently implemented, would be the provision of dedicated time for academics to engage in more extensive capacity development. The results of the questionnaire indicated that much current development has limited take-up, with most academics indicating that they had only attended staff development opportunities once a year. It is therefore recommended that conditions make it possible for academics to attend more frequently. At the same time as making these deeper professional development programmes available, it would be necessary to conduct research on the impact of these. It is encouraged to fund the study on the impact these programmes have across the HEIs on a national level.

While the findings show that more and improved professional development opportunities need to be supported, the conditions under which academics are teaching should also be investigated and ameliorated – for example, the staff-student ratios differ significantly across HEIs, faculties and disciplines. These disparities have a direct impact on the quality of teaching and learning. From the questionnaire, it is indicated that eighty percent of respondents perceived that their workload prevented them from engaging with teaching and learning development activities. In addition to this, it was found that history, geography and resources also have a direct effect on the quality of teaching and learning. For example, the higher turnover of teachers at rural universities than at better-resourced universities (which had a significantly lower turnover) is a significant factor. The stability of the academic teaching staff complement is important in ensuring continuity and maintaining standards. The increasing casualisation of staff, as in some foundational programmes, militates against the development of their identity as a university teacher and consequent investment in the academic endeavour, including reflexivity and the scholarship of teaching.

The binary tension between commitment to research and to teaching needs to be addressed. This dualism between teaching and research is not improved but further exacerbated by the suggestion for teaching-only and research-only tracks made by several members of senior management. To bring about such parity between research and teaching, it is recommended that more formal recognition be provided for professional development in teaching and learning – as is the case with research. Ways of recognising good teaching need to be re-imagined and implemented to provide mechanisms for such reward. Provision should be made institutionally for comparable allocation of time for academics to engage with teaching, as is the case for research. Senior management appeared reluctant to make teaching development compulsory. However, university management across the case studies have research performance criteria. It is recommended that there should be mechanisms at a national level to promote the status of teaching and learning so that a culture of teaching and learning, including engagement in professional learning towards the enhancement of teaching and learning, can be promoted. Similarly, it is recommended that there be institutional

policies, resources and arrangements to make teaching and learning visible and to promote its status.

Research findings also indicated that many academics learn through engagement with peers from their departments or disciplines, thus it is important for each academic department to have a 'critical mass' of scholarly and engaged teachers. This means that effective professional development should acknowledge the importance of such communities. It is recommended therefore that communities of practice should be encouraged and strengthened. The data also shows that academics learn from a variety of sources, including internet access, conferences, and Teaching and Learning Centres. It is thus recommended that online services are developed, that academics have the opportunity to attend teaching and learning conferences, and that Teaching and Centres have the resources to further the learning of their own personnel.

Infrastructural problems make it difficult for academics to engage in good teaching and need to be addressed so that academics can engage in quality teaching and professional development. Leadership (at each level within the institution) and administrative processes impact directly on teaching and thus proper attention needs to be paid to teaching and learning development at each of these levels. The roles of the incumbents at each of these levels should be made more explicit with regard to teaching and learning.

The Teaching and Learning Centres at some institutions are providing support across a variety of institutions. It is suggested that sharing this load would be helpful, as the collaborative planning and teaching of staff development activities, including formal qualifications, could be strengthened through the use of the resources (including people) at the individual HEIs. Financial support, for example, through the collaborative Teaching Development Grants, is one way to encourage the further learning of academic developers and of professionalising the field. Developmental opportunities for academic developers was also stated as a need by some interviewees. It is also recommended that opportunities are provided for academic developers (or staff in teaching and learning centres) to develop their own knowledge and skills to enable them to facilitate both formal and informal professional learning opportunities for academic staff across the disciplines in their institutions. New academic developers could be inducted into the field through mentoring, coaching, apprenticeship, fellowship programmes, workshops and/or through a formal programme such as a postgraduate diploma in higher education specifically for academic developers. Allied to this is the need for more stable working conditions for academic developers in some institutions.

Since the inception of this research project there have been a number of significant collaborative and developmental projects, some of which have received funding from the Collaborative Teaching Development Grants, which could be considered as 'good practice' examples, or which, due to their broader regional or national significance, should be considered for more permanent funding. The following are illustrative and do not cover the full range of such initiatives:

- The Teaching Advancement at Universities (TAU) Fellowship Programme (a national HELTASA initiative project currently hosted at the University of Johannesburg);
- The Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education for Academic Developers (currently hosted at Rhodes University);
- The Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education (Teaching and Learning), collaboratively developed and co-taught by three universities in the Western Cape.

Different levels of academics who were interviewed perceived teaching and learning in disparate ways. Senior management, for example, felt compelled to improve pass-rates, and constructed good teaching through this lens.

Interviews with academics suggest several adopted knowledge-transmission approaches to teaching and learning. It is recommended that opportunities are found to facilitate alternative perspectives on good teaching.

Finally, the study affirms the need for further conceptual and empirically-based research into professional learning in South Africa.

In sum, the actions suggested by this document for immediate attention at the national level are:

- 1) A policy on professional learning with regard to the teaching role (or a chapter within a broader policy document on the professionalisation of the higher education academic cohort) be written which incorporates some of the suggestions in Table 9.1;
- 2) A good practice guide for institutions, academic developers and faculty management be commissioned which, taking into account how much context influences professional learning, develops the points outlined in the final three columns in Table 9.1;
- 3) The lessons from this research be incorporated into funding policies of the DHET, for example, support for good teaching might require focused funding but, in addition, is dependent on funding and functionality of the higher education system as a whole and on funding and functionality of individual institutions.

Table 9.1 Recommendations

Recommendation	What needs to be done	Level where change needs to occur			
		National	Inter-institutional	Institutional	Faculty/ Department/ Centre
Improve status of teaching and learning	Create formal and informal opportunities for learning to teach which are accessible for academics	Policy to reinforce the necessity for both formal and informal opportunities	Inter-institutional courses and PG Dips and short courses	Policy to create impetus for formal and informal opportunities across the institution, seminars, workshops, staff development programmes	Mentoring, peer observation, departmental support for reflection on teaching and learning
	Well-resourced and well-qualified and credible teaching and learning support structures	Policy provision for centres for teaching and learning and professional development opportunities for academic developers	Bodies like CHEC and HELTASA, SIGs, CHE	Institutional resources devoted to structures for teaching and learning	Well-qualified, credible staff with academic status able to provide a range of staff development opportunities for teaching and learning
	Policies to promote teaching and learning	National policy on promoting teaching and learning	Policy rewarding inter-institutional work	Institutional strategic plans and action plans to promote teaching and learning	Faculty and departmental plans on promoting the status of teaching and learning

Recommendation	What needs to be done	Level where change needs to occur			
		National	Inter-institutional	Institutional	Faculty/ Department/ Centre
	Schemes to reward and recognise teaching and learning	National fellowships e.g. TAU, national policies rewarding teaching	Rewards for inter-institutional collaborative teaching	Rewards and recognition to promote teaching and learning e.g. tenure, probation, teaching awards, fellowships, sabbaticals	Rewards for working collaboratively across discipline and faculty, faculty and departmental awards to promote teaching
	Involvement of key stakeholders in promoting teaching and learning	Leaders of CHE, DHET, NRF, USAF actively promoting the status of teaching and learning and inter-institutional collaboration	VCs, DVCs actively promoting inter-institutional collaboration regarding teaching and learning	VCs, DVCs and AD staff visibly, actively and explicitly promoting the status of teaching and learning across the whole institution	Deans, Deputy Deans and HoDs, AD staff visibly, actively and explicitly promoting the status of teaching and learning
	Knowledgeable leadership regarding teaching and learning to establish a culture of valuing of teaching and learning and encourage staff to participate in staff development initiatives	Structures such as CHE, DHET, NRF provide knowledgeable leadership on teaching and learning	Most knowledgeable AD and other academic staff provide leadership on cross-institutional endeavours, learning from each other	VCs, DVCs, AD staff are provided with opportunities to improve their knowledge regarding teaching and learning	Deans, Deputy Deans, Teaching and Learning specialists in faculties and departments are provided with opportunities for improving their knowledge of teaching and learning
	Formal and informal opportunities for improving teaching and learning	National opportunities to improve teaching and learning - international experts, meetings including time etc.	Inter-institutional courses and opportunities for collaborative work on teaching and learning	Institutional courses and promotion of informal opportunities for improving teaching and learning including dedicated time for teaching and learning activities	Faculty and departmental formal and informal opportunities to promote teaching and learning such as peer mentoring, dedicated time for opportunities faculty and departmental formal and informal meetings etc.
Address the teaching-research binary	Improving the status of SoTL	National bodies such as the NRF to support SoTL	Funding and recognition for collaborative inter-institutional SoTL	Funding and recognition for SoTL at an institutional level	Faculty and departmental funding and recognition for SoTL
	Provide opportunities for engagement with SoTL	Opportunities to hold and attend international, national and local conferences, colloquia, symposia	Inter-institutional conferences, colloquia, symposia	Institutional conferences, colloquia, seminars to showcase SoTL	Faculty and departmental seminars, colloquia etc. to showcase SoTL
	Increase SoTL publications	Funding for SoTL research development courses and writing for publications workshops	Inter-institutional courses on developing research and writing for publication workshops	Institutional courses on developing research and writing for publication workshops	Faculty and Departmental peer mentoring on SoTL writing and encouragement to engage in action research

Recommendation	What needs to be done	Level where change needs to occur			
		National	Inter-institutional	Institutional	Faculty/ Department/ Centre
	Encouraging collaborative research	Research proposals to include a chapter on inter-institutional collaboration	Proposals include chapters on: supporting team members to collaborate, power relations, interpersonal relations, leadership style, commitments required from team members	Institutional rewards for collaborative research	Departmental rewards for collaborative research
	Collaborative teaching guides	CHE provide opportunities for teaching documentation	Inter-institutional guides and resources	Institutional guides and resources	Disciplinary guides and resources
Improve working conditions affecting teaching and learning	Parity in terms of workload	National audit and reparative measures regarding unequal working conditions	Inter-institutional collaborative teaching to reduce duplication and excessive workloads	Institutional audit and reparative measures regarding unequal working conditions	Faculty and departmental audits and reparative measures regarding working conditions
	Acknowledging the effect of casualisation on teaching	National audit	Inter-institutional audit		Measures taken to improve teaching and lessen casualisation of staff
	Reconfiguring funding formula regarding students' learning needs and staff-student ratios	Perhaps more of a focus on successful outcomes for funding rather than students registering			
	Acknowledging the effects of geopolitical location on teaching and learning	Examining factors such as rurality, institutional type on teaching and learning		Rural institutions are affected by the staff and students that they attract and the resources available to them, experience in research supervision	
	Acknowledging the historical legacy of education and its impact on teaching and learning in higher education				
	Acknowledging the effects of mergers on teaching and learning				
	Acknowledging the effects of marketisation on teaching and learning	Investigating increased pressure for multiple demands		Less institutional pressure on staff to accomplish multiple tasks at once	Less faculty and departmental pressure on staff to accomplish multiple tasks at once

Recommendation	What needs to be done	Level where change needs to occur			
		National	Inter-institutional	Institutional	Faculty/ Department/ Centre
	Administrative support for teaching and learning				
	Acknowledgement of effects of infrastructure on teaching and learning - ICTs, buildings, lecture rooms, transport, residences, access to food	National minimum standards and assistance to improve this if needed			
	Acknowledgement of the effects of interpersonal relationships on teaching and learning				
Knowledges regarding teaching and learning	Necessary knowledges regarding teaching and learning	Knowledge of the field of higher education and its challenges	Knowledge of the differences and commonalities between institutions	Knowledge of one's own institution and how this impacts on teaching and learning	Knowledge of faculty and disciplinary knowledge
	Conceptions of 'good' teaching, professional development etc. need clarification				
	Further research on what motivates teaching and the conditions under which teaching is done needs to be conducted				

Explanatory notes about Table 9.1

These recommendations are based on the data from the national overview, the institutional and reflective reports, the questionnaire, the interviews with senior managers, the interviews with academics and the research team members' reflective responses and discussions. Many suggest actions that are partially implemented at national level, or unevenly implemented across HEIs. Thus, the actions that are listed in the column "What needs to be done" can also be read as "What needs to be done more or better or more consistently". It should also be noted that some of the recommendations suggest approaches towards professional learning and the thinking that informs good policy, rather than actual actions. The "Level where change needs to occur" has divisions showing what should be taken into national policy, as well as what should occur at inter-institutional, institutional and faculty levels. Some of the latter three columns could have implications for national policy or could be subsumed into a 'good practice' guide for institutions.

It should be noted that this list of recommendations is not exhaustive but represents the most common recommendations that have been gleaned from the data. Furthermore, addressing one set of needs, such as

improving the status of teaching, will not necessarily translate into improved professional learning as long as the infrastructure and the inequitable workload conditions across institutions, faculties and disciplines are not addressed. Another significant factor for learning to teach in higher education is how students' learning needs and backgrounds differ from one institution to another. It is therefore apparent that the recommendations and the further explications of how to address these on various levels are entangled with one another and that it is important to bear this in mind when considering each one of these. Furthermore, since the recommendations address different issues and levels, some may be easier to address and are more likely to be addressed than others.

9.2. Recommendations relating to research methodology

The experience of conducting this research held many benefits for the researchers, particularly with regard to methodology. For this reason, we include the following recommendations that could have value for others in field:

Multi-site research into teaching and learning is of significant value, and should be encouraged by the NRF and other national bodies as it provides a wider lens into teaching and learning in higher education. To ensure comparable data across the research landscape, it is recommended that symmetrical interviews be conducted (i.e. selection of deans from comparable faculties).

The collaborative nature of the study suggests further aspects for study. Collaborative research requires a level of reflexivity comparable to that necessary for quality teaching and learning. It is suggested that reflection on (and targeted study of) aspects related to collaborative research (such as project leadership, the way in which a collaborative project is structured and managed, opportunities to work together, geographical distances, and power differentials associated with, for example, status, expertise, social location) could therefore lend insights into issues related to the professional development of university teachers. The process involved in collaboration as researchers is also recommended as an aspect for further study.

The ways in which the challenges and opportunities of delimiting a theoretical framework for a large-scale collaborative study is worthy of further investigation.



10. CONCLUSION

Internationally and in South Africa in the current era, there is much dissatisfaction with higher education and much concern over the ability of higher education to contribute towards the public good. The dissatisfaction is expressed about the resourcing of higher education (such as, in South Africa, the #Fees must fall movement), about how higher education is governed and led, especially with regard to performativity, managerialism and incentivisation. In some countries, higher education has become a narrow political instrument against or for the government in power. In many instances, however, there is concern about its ability to provide appropriate and effective education to students from a widening social base and a question regarding its ability to deliver appropriate solutions for society's problems. Given the international disquiet and the South African manifestations thereof, new, imaginative solutions are required to the various problems informing higher education. These solutions will require input from research that is rigorous, self-exacting, benefiting from international exchange, but that is locally inspired and relevant. Solutions will also benefit from teaching that is likewise rigorous, self-exacting, benefiting from local exchange, locally inspired and relevant. Two important prescriptions emerge from this: firstly, that there is need for the kind of support for teaching that encourages it to play this important role in a self-renewing manner; and secondly, that teaching is part of the matrix of forms of scholarship that characterises academia. Teaching should not be seen as separate from scholarship or research, neither as less important nor more important. This study has pointed to the negative effect of this form of polarised thinking. The study, with its account of change based on the interplay between structure, culture and agency, provides a sense of the kinds of dynamics to consider when strategising issues of change and of development.

If university teaching is to play such a dynamic role that we think it should, it too should be fresh and imaginative. Our thinking should become unfettered by stale binaries such as formal and informal learning, academic autonomy versus accountability or incentives, and compulsion versus intrinsic motivation. Finances and resourcing remain a challenge. The data in this study point to the significance of human individual and collective agency and academics' own commitments, which should be the basis of strategising how to support learning to teach in higher education. It also points to the role of non-financial elements, such as the culture in departments and faculties and official messages about teaching. Equitable resourcing is important, but so are non-financial features such as good governance or a culture of care. This study did not set out to record examples of good practice in institutions, both in central units and in faculties or departments, to support learning to teach. Several examples of this nature were uncovered in the data, and should be the focus of future strategies.

In the light of resource constraints and the varied cultures of teaching and learning that have been highlighted in the study, the need for collaboration between academic developers and disciplinary experts, as well as between academics across disciplines and institutions, becomes a necessity rather than a luxury. The large group process that undergirded this study is an example of both the challenges posed by inter-institutional collaboration, as well as the many advantages. Such collaboration can encourage forms of knowledge generation that run counter to the idea of one, hegemonic form of knowledge, or a single story, that legislates how we should be thinking or practising – in the country or internationally.

The current concern in South Africa with decolonising the curriculum suggests a need for substantial change in approaches to teaching and learning at our universities. This cannot happen without the kind of inter-institutional and interdisciplinary collaboration that has been featured in this study. It also cannot happen without understanding how change in institutions occurs, nor without understanding the role of individual and group volition in this change process. This study has used the theory of change and the 'morphogenetic' approach (formulated by Margaret Archer, based on the interplay between culture, structure and agency), and has found value in using this interplay as the lens to analyse how professional learning is promoted in South African public higher education institutions. Several ancillary studies in the project have used other frames, most notably activity theory, practice theory, sociomaterialism and self-regulation theory. These have all produced varied but useful findings, suggesting, firstly, that it is not

necessary for theoretical homogeneity in understanding and promoting change, and secondly, that theorising change is useful, but the underlying assumptions should be made clear.

Furthermore, it would perhaps be an appropriate time in the light of the decolonisation debates to begin to ask, 'Which theories are most appropriate to advance contextually appropriate knowledge?', or perhaps, 'How can we advance locally inspired adaptations to these theories?'

This study has pointed to the significant role played by various social and material elements such as technology, materials, buildings, time, space, rules and policies. These elements are all part of the entangled phenomenon that is teaching and learning. They all support learning to teach and good teaching. Central to these phenomena are the people that use the technologies, that inhabit the buildings, read the books, or tap on the devices. These should be acknowledged for their efforts and treated with care. They are not mere instruments. If there is anything that the account of change posited by social realism, and the interplay between culture, structure and agency can teach us, it is to pay attention to the role that human aspirations and commitments can and should play in teaching and learning, and in enhancing the role that teaching can play in imagining a better world. It is thus imperative that students enjoy the support and encouragement of their lecturers and university services. Likewise, with lecturers: the study has established that there are many committed and creative lecturers in our universities who do wonderful work, and it is imperative that they enjoy the support of their colleagues and managers.

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APPENDIX 1

Publications emanating from the project

Bozalek, V. & McMillan, W. (2017) 'Diffracting learning/teaching entanglements: A South African Vice-Chancellor's perspective' in B. Leibowitz, V. Bozalek & P. Kahn (eds.), *Theorising learning to teach* (Routledge: London).

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APPENDIX 2

Questionnaire

(The initial letter and opening statement have been deleted for purposes of brevity.)

Biographical details

1. *Please indicate your gender:*
 - Female
 - Male

2. *Please indicate your year of birth using numeric characters.*

3. *Please indicate your race:*
 - Black
 - Coloured
 - Indian
 - White
 - Other

4. *Please indicate your highest qualification:*
 - Doctorate
 - Masters
 - Honours
 - Bachelors
 - BTech
 - PG Dip
 - National Diploma
 - Other

5. *If you are currently pursuing a higher degree, please provide details.*

6. *Please indicate the type of teaching qualification(s) you have:*
 - HED
 - ACE
 - PGCE
 - PG Dip

- BEd
- MEd
- MPhil in HE
- DEd/PhD
- I am currently pursuing a teaching qualification
- None
- Other

7. *If you are currently pursuing a teaching qualification, please provide details.*

8. *Please indicate the nature of your position at your institution. Please mark all relevant options:*

- Permanent
- Contract
- Full time
- Part time
- Joint appointment e.g. University and Provincial Administration
- External lecturer
- Other

9. *What is the level of your current position? Please mark all relevant options:*

- Junior lecturer
- Lecturer
- Senior lecturer
- Associate Professor
- Professor
- Deputy Dean
- Dean
- Director
- Senior Director
- Researcher
- Other

10. Please indicate your discipline. These categories were adapted from the NRF list of primary research fields. Please select the most relevant option:

- Agriculture
- Arts
- Economic and Management Sciences
- Education
- Engineering
- Health Sciences
- Humanities
- Law
- Mathematical Sciences
- Military Sciences
- Physical Sciences
- Natural Sciences
- Social Sciences
- Theology
- Other

11. To which faculty are you affiliated?

Teaching experience

12. How many years have you been teaching in higher education? Please use numeric characters.

13. How many years have you been teaching at your current institution? Please use numeric characters.

14. What is the main area of teaching you are involved in? Please mark all the relevant options:

- Undergraduate
- Undergraduate and Postgraduate
- Postgraduate coursework
- Research supervision
- Other

15. How would you rate yourself as a teacher on a scale of 1–5?

(5 = Excellent; 3 = Acceptable; 1 = Very bad) (and space for comments)

16. How would you rate your interest in teaching on a scale of 1–5?

(5 = Passionate; 3 = Neutral; 1 = Not interested) (and space for comments)

Professional learning

(Professional learning can be defined as the numerous activities which have to do with the “academic/ educational/faculty/staff development of academics/post-compulsory, tertiary of higher education” (Brew 2004, p. 5). Johnston (1998, p. 1) adds that professional learning is “the need for professionals to continue learning as they practice and advance in their careers”.

17. *In which area(s) of your work as academic have you attended professional learning opportunities at your institution? Please mark all relevant options:*

- Teaching
- Research
- Community Interaction
- Management
- Administration
- None
- Other

18. *In which area(s) of your work as academic have you attended professional learning opportunities outside of your institution? Please mark all relevant options:*

- Teaching
- Research
- Community Interaction
- Management
- Administration
- None
- Other

19. *Please provide details of the professional learning opportunities you have attended outside of your institution. You can include information about where it took place or by whom it was organised, the date and the topic.*

20. *How often do you participate in professional learning opportunities for your teaching?:*

- Once a term or more
- Once a semester
- Once a year or less
- Never
- Other

21. *What may prompt your attendance of professional learning opportunities for your teaching? Please mark all relevant options:*

- If I am interested
- If the topic is relevant to my teaching
- If instructed by my Supervisor/Head of Department
- If I have the time
- If there is an incentive/reward
- If required by my institution
- If it will advance my career
- If it can help my teaching
- If I want to apply for promotion
- If I need CPD points
- If it speaks to a need I have at the time
- If colleagues suggest it would be worthwhile
- If I think it would be worthwhile
- If there is a positive attitude towards teaching in my department
- Other

22. *Where do you go for help/support/advice on your teaching? Please mark all relevant options:*

- Institutional Teaching and Learning Centre/Division
- Colleagues
- Mentor
- Supervisor
- Head of Department
- Conferences
- Internet
- Library
- Teaching Dean
- Dean
- Specialist in the field of Higher Education
- I do not feel the need for help
- Other

23. If you do ask for help/support/advice, in which areas do you ask for this? Please mark all relevant options:

- Teaching large classes
- Discipline in class
- Integration of technology in teaching
- Curriculum design and development
- Engaging students in class
- Facilitating interactive learning
- Encouraging class attendance
- Managing diversity in class
- Issues of language in teaching
- Using student feedback for professional learning
- Compiling a teaching portfolio
- Assessment of students
- Research on teaching
- Programme planning
- Integrating graduate attributes in my teaching
- Using small group teaching techniques
- Optimising tutorials/fieldwork/practicals
- Integrating service learning
- Teaching in clinical settings
- Work based learning
- I do not feel the need for help
- Other

Enabling or constraining factors

24. My institution provides formal recognition for engagement in professional learning for teaching (1–5, where 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) Please briefly explain your choice in the question above.

25. My institution provides resources for engagement in professional learning for teaching (1–5). Please briefly explain your choice in the question above.

26. My workload often hinders my ability to participate in professional learning for teaching (1–5). Please briefly explain your choice in the question above.

27. The topics of the professional learning opportunities for teaching are often not applicable in my own discipline (1–5). Please briefly explain your choice in the question above and give examples if possible.

28. *I can easily access information on professional learning opportunities for teaching in my institution (1–5). Please briefly explain your choice in the question above and give examples if possible.*

We value your input and feedback. If you have any comments or questions for the compilers of the questionnaire, please feel free to give these below.

The researchers would like to interview a number of respondents in order to explore certain issues in more depth. If you are willing to be interviewed, please provide your contact details below or send an email to XXX.



APPENDIX 3

Templates for institutional reports (Phase three)

1 *Institutional level report*

- Name of institution
- Date
- Authors
- Final/draft/awaiting ethical clearance

Institutional context

- a. Geographic
- b. Socio-economic
- c. Historic (including e.g. recently merged)

How the institution describes itself

- a. To external audiences (marketing; website(s); student oriented; vacancy advertisements; audit documents; Mission statements; etc.)
- b. To internal audiences? (internal communiqués; 'climate surveys'; staff orientation documents; websites)
- c. In relation to the 'research', 'teaching' and 'social responsibility' priorities? (teaching and learning/assessment policies; recognition and reward documentation; as above)

Composition

- a. Academic staff; support staff; undergraduate students; postgraduate students (provide numbers and other available information)
- b. Number of faculties and names
- c. Institutional organogram with specific reference to senior management, placement of staff development (general) function and staff development (T&L function)

References (if any used)

2 *Professional development – reflective report*

- Name of institution
- Date
- Authors
- Final/draft/awaiting ethical clearance

a. History

Provide a concise history of your unit, focusing on the nature of the provision of professional development

offered, and how it has changed in very broad terms.

b. Composition and nature of unit

Briefly describe your centre/unit with regard to: conditions which enable or constrain its functioning, e.g. size, relationship with other relevant units, staffing conditions of service (for example, academic status etc.), qualifications of professional staff, no. of support staff, physical location, resourcing.

c. Provision for the professional development of academics

Provide a description of the kinds of provision of opportunities for professional development offered by your unit. Refer to Chris Winberg's table here. Include comments on whether the opportunities are:

- Compulsory or optional
- Incentivised
- How widely or freely these are available
- How discipline specific these are

d. Monitoring

How do you monitor and evaluate your activities? How do you collect evidence? How much reflection and scholarly publication does your unit undertake?

e. Evidence of take-up

Provide a brief description of the extent of take-up of the opportunities across the institution over 2009-2011.

References (if any used)

3 Analytical considerations

- Name of institution
 - Date
 - Authors
 - Final/draft/awaiting ethical clearance
- a. Potential constraints and enablements (self-described or interpreted)
 - b. Any intended 'causal thesis' underlying the documents regarding staff development
 - c. Which of the "Generations" are evident/dominant with regard to staff development?

d. Other analytic or reflective observations?

List of appendices

Name of institution

Annotated list

Any gaps or other issues would be mentioned in the list of appendices; other relevant documents, e.g. T&L annual reports, could be added if relevant to show constraint or enablement regarding uptake of teaching and learning development opportunities.

Appendices should contain the following:

- Teaching and Learning policies/strategies/implementation plans
- T&L Professional development plan/Staff development plan
- T&L Assessment and related issues
- Institutional appointment and promotion criteria/policy
- Institutional strategic and operational plan
- Audit reports

Inclusion of statistics

Institutions may include statistics from before 2009 and 2010.



APPENDIX 4

Interview schedules

Appendix 4a Interviews with lecturers

Section One: Your attitude towards teaching

1. Tell me about yourself as a teacher

Prompts:

- a. Your discipline
- b. What is your current involvement in teaching?
- c. Do you like teaching?
- d. Are you satisfied with yourself as a teacher?
- e. How long have you been teaching?
- f. Teaching qualifications?
- g. What are your beliefs about teaching (and learning)? How did you come by it? Have they changed over time? How?

Section Two: Your professional development as a teacher

1. Does your institution have specific requirements with regard to teaching and learning staff development? Explain.
2. What steps have you taken to enhance your teaching?

Prompts:

- a. Individually driven (e.g. read up, reflect) – ask for examples
 - b. Peer support (from Dean, HOD, colleagues in department and at other universities) – ask for examples
 - c. Take-up opportunities offered by university teaching and learning centre (including, for example, PGDHE) – ask for examples
 - d. If none, why?
3. If you have made any significant attempts to improve your teaching, what prompted this?

Prompt:
 - a. Policy, your direct supervisor, student complaints, obstacles, your own curiosity
 4. If you have taken up professional development opportunities, have you implemented what you learnt on these occasions?
 5. If yes, explain and give examples of what you have implemented.
 6. If you have not taken up professional development opportunities, what kind of support would you have wanted,

and from whom, to enable you to do so?

Section Three: Relation to your environment

1. Does your environment support or hinder the quality of your teaching? Explain.

Prompt:

- a. probe for institutional and departmental level
 - b. and students
2. If it hinders, how do you respond/ have you responded?
 3. Does it support or hinder your attempts at professional development for teaching? Explain.
 4. If it hinders, how do you respond/have you responded?

Section Four: Closing

1. Do you have any suggestions about what should be done at your university to support lecturers to develop professionally with regard to their teaching role?
2. Anything else you would like to add?

Appendix 4b1 Interview with senior managers (Vice-Chancellors and Deputy Vice-Chancellors)

Give some context: 'I'd like to ask some questions about the development of academic staff for their teaching roles. The focus of the study I am involved with is on the conditions which enable or constrain this kind of development.'

1. From a teaching and learning point of view, what do you think are the strengths of your institution?
2. What is your personal vision for teaching and learning at your institution?
3. What do you feel that you have been able to accomplish with regard to this vision at this institution?
4. What are the goals and priorities for development of academic staff as teachers at your institution? What is the rationale for having these particular goals and priorities?
5. What mechanisms or systems are in place to support the development of academic staff as teachers?
 - a. Why these particular mechanisms and not others?
 - b. (If unit/centre doesn't come up here, probe – I am aware that you have a xxx What do you see as the role of this unit/centre/directorate?)
6. Under ideal circumstances, is there anything that you might like to do differently?
7. How has the restructuring aimed at unifying the higher education system from 2000 onwards impacted your institution?
 - a. More particularly, how has it affected the need for development of academic staff as teachers? (Probe from the response given e.g. What does being a research-led institution mean for undergraduate teaching?)
8. What is your sense of how academic staff members respond to academic staff development initiatives?
 - a. Do they take up opportunities for development?
 - b. Do you have any sense of why or why not?

Now probe the enabling and constraining factors...

Culture, structure and agency:

9. What factors enable staff development in relation to teaching in this institution?
10. What factors constrain staff development in relation to teaching in this institution?

Try not to prompt or put issues on the table, but if the following do not come up, ask specifically about:

- What resources are allocated to academic staff development regarding teaching and learning? Are they adequate? (e.g. money, time, people, infrastructure etc.)
- Are there issues in attracting and retaining quality teaching staff at your institution? (For example, some institutions might have great difficulty attracting staff, might have a lot of part-time staff, might have a lot of old or young staff etc. Probe the key staffing issues.)
- What are the implications of the above question for their development as teachers? (As an optional probe if it hasn't been addressed in the response).

Appendix 4b2: Interviews with Deans

Give some context: 'I'd like to ask some questions about academic staff development relating to teaching and learning in your faculty. The focus of the study I am involved in is on the conditions which enable or constrain this sort of development.'

1. From a teaching and learning point of view, what do you think are the strengths of your faculty?
2. What is your personal vision for teaching and learning in your faculty?
3. What have you been able to accomplish with regard to your vision for teaching and learning in your faculty?
4. What are the goals and priorities for development of academic staff as teachers in your faculty?
 - a. What is the rationale for having these particular goals and priorities?
5. What mechanisms or systems are in place to support the development of academic staff as teachers in your faculty?
 - a. Why these particular mechanisms and not others?
 - b. (If unit/centre doesn't come up here probe – I am aware that you have a xxx, what do you see as the role of this unit/centre/directorate?)
6. Under ideal circumstances, is there anything that you might like to do differently?
7. How has the restructuring aimed at unifying the higher education system from 2000 onwards impacted your faculty?
 - a. More particularly, how has it affected the need for development of academic staff as teachers? (probe from the response given e.g. what does being a research-led institution mean for undergraduate teaching?)
8. How do members of your faculty respond to opportunities for their development as teachers?
 - a. Do they take up opportunities for development?
 - b. Do you have any sense of why or why not?

Now probe the enabling and constraining factors...

Culture, structure and agency:

9. What factors enable development of staff in their teaching role in this faculty?
10. What factors constrain development of staff in their teaching role in this faculty?

Try not to prompt or put issues on the table, but if the following do not come up, ask specifically about:

- What resources is your faculty able to draw on for the development of staff in their teaching role? Are they adequate? (e.g. money, time, people, infrastructure etc.)
- Are there issues in attracting and retaining quality teaching staff in your faculty? (For example, some faculties might have great difficulty attracting staff, might have a lot of part-time staff, might have a lot of old or young staff etc. Probe the key staffing issues.)
- What are the implications of the above question for their development as teachers? (As an optional probe if it hasn't been addressed in the response)

APPENDIX 5

Prompts for reflective responses from team members on research process

December 2011

Please write a few paragraphs on the collaborative process.

August 2013

- What have been the outputs and outcomes of your participation for you thus far?
- What have the challenges been for you in achieving these or any outputs or outcomes?
- What has facilitated your participation
 - o In your work context/institution?
 - o By the project itself?
 - o By you?
- What has hindered your participation
 - o In your context/institution?
 - o By the workings of the project itself?
 - o By you?

May 2016

Write a comment on the collaborative nature of the research. Here are some headings. You can add references if you wish. You can also decide which of the subheadings to concentrate on, in more depth:

1. Depth/duration of my involvement in the project
2. What I gained or learnt during and from the project
3. What I could have gained or learnt, and what would have needed to be different, for me to have done so
4. What I feel the gains for the project itself have been, due to its collaborative nature
5. What I feel the gains for the project could have been, if matters internal to the project, or external to it, were different
6. What I have learnt, in retrospect, about collaborative research



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