Makoya

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UMALUSI

Quality Council for General and Further Education and Training

CONTENTS

From the
Editor's Pen

Mr Biki Lepota

Welcome to the final edition of *Makoya* for the 2022/23 financial year. This edition is dedicated to the work of the Evaluation and Accreditation Unit. Each one of the eight articles in this issue addresses the topic "accreditation of institutions" from a different perspective. This is one of Umalusi's legislated areas of work.

This edition is timely in that it comes at a time when Umalusi awarded accreditation certificates to 125 institutions that met the criteria to offer the qualifications that are registered on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework (GFETQSF). These institutions comprise 120 independent schools, four private colleges and one assessment body.

Given that Umalusi is a learning organisation, two of the articles, "Exploring the use of assessment feedback and implementation of 21st-century skills in South African public schools" and "The use of the assessment and results criterion as a lever to improve learner performance in private colleges", continue the conversation that was held at a continental conference on assessment matters.

It is without a doubt that Umalusi remains a destination of choice from which other countries can learn. That could be explained, in part, by the robust and rigorous quality assurance frameworks employed. In his piece, the CEO reports on such visits.

> " March was a very busy month for Umalusi from a public relations' perspective: on both the national and the continental front. "

From the
CEO's Desk

Dr Mafu Rakometsi

March was a very busy month for Umalusi from a public relations' perspective: on both the national and the continental fronts.

In the previous issue of Makoya, we presented the various committees of the Umalusi Council and their respective roles. To continue along the same line, in the context of this issue, I want to talk briefly about the Accreditation Committee of Council (ACC). This 14-member committee considers applications received and recommends the accreditation status of institutions to the Umalusi Council.

On account of the hard work, dedication and commitment of the ACC, together with the unwavering support provided by Umalusi officials, 125 institutions were awarded accreditation certificates in March 2023. This is a significant increase from the 53 institutions that were awarded accreditation certificates in March 2022.

Through the Southern Africa Association for Educational Assessment (SAAEA) Research Forum, we hosted delegates from eight countries in the SADC region from 13 to 17 March 2023. Similarly, on 15 March, we received a delegation from the Angolan Ministry of Education for a study visit to understand the role of Umalusi in relation to accreditation and certification.

Since Makoya serves as a vehicle to inform stakeholders about organisational developments, I wish to end by informing you that, in August 2024, Umalusi will host the 40th Conference of the Association for Educational Assessment in Africa (AEAA). More details about the conference will be made available on the Umalusi website by the end of August 2023. I sincerely hope that you will support this conference.

Umalusi's approach to the accreditation of independent schools offering foreign qualifications and alternate curricula

Cindy Thomas

Umalusi's mandate is outlined in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act (No. 67 of 2008), as amended, and the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) Act (No. 58 of 2001), as amended. In addition, Umalusi must take into account any other legislation related to the institutions and qualifications that are being considered for accreditation. This includes, among other pieces of legislation, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the South African Schools Act (SASA) (No. 84 of 1996), the Continuing Education and Training Act (No. 16 of 2006), the National Education Policy Act (NEPA) (No. 27 of 1996), the National Curriculum Statement, and the policies and regulations for accreditation developed in line with the requirements of the GENFETQA Act.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, paragraph 29(3), grants everyone in South Africa "the right to establish and maintain, at their own expense, independent educational institutions that:

- do not discriminate on the basis of race;
- are registered with the state; and
- maintain standards that are not inferior to standards at comparable public educational institutions.

This right is confirmed in paragraph 45 of the South African Schools Act: "Subject to this Act and any applicable provincial law, any person may, at his or her own cost, establish and maintain an independent school."

The GENFETQA Act (paragraph 23(2)) requires any "institution that is required to register as an independent school in terms of the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996)" to comply with the accreditation policy and criteria developed by the Umalusi Council.

The NQF Act, which according to paragraph (1) of the Act applies to "education programmes or learning programmes that lead to qualifications or part-qualifications offered within the Republic by education institutions", requires every qualification or part-qualification offered in South Africa to be registered on the NQF. Umalusi is responsible for qualifications that fall within the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework (GFETQSF) of qualifications, i.e. on Level 1 to Level 4 of the NQF.

Thus, Umalusi is responsible for the quality assurance of qualifications on the GFETQSF that are offered in registered schools in South Africa. The only schools' qualification registered on the GFETQSF is the National Senior Certificate (NSC). The curriculum leading to the NSC is the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), comprising the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) for all approved subjects listed in the NCS, the National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R–12 and the National Protocol for Assessment (NPA) Grades R–12.

Umalusi considers a qualification that is offered in South Africa, but is not registered on the South African NQF, and for which certificates are issued by a body outside South Africa, to be a foreign qualification. Since the qualification is not registered on the GFETQSF of the NQF, Umalusi cannot quality assure the qualification and, as such, cannot attest to the quality of the provision of that qualification.

An alternate curriculum, on the other hand, is considered to be a curriculum or learning programme offered by an independent school that is not fully in line with the NCS. However, Grade 12 learners are prepared for and write the NSC examination.

Umalusi's definition of accreditation in relation to independent schools is "the outcome of a quality assurance process of evaluating an independent school to determine whether it has the capacity to offer a qualification or programmes leading to a qualification on the GFETQSF". The Policy and Criteria for the Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Monitoring of Independent Schools and Private Assessment Bodies (Government Gazette 41206 of 27 October 2017) stipulates the criteria for the accreditation of independent schools to offer a qualification on the GFETQSF. As a minimum compliance requirement for accreditation, a school must implement the curriculum or programme and assessment requirements of the qualification for which accreditation is sought at the required standard and in accordance with the policy requirements of the qualification that is on the NQF sub-framework.

The Minister of Basic Education has made regulations on the NCS Grades R–12 in terms of section 6A(1) of the South African Schools Act. The regulations apply to public schools and those independent schools that offer the NCS Grades R–12. These regulations define "minimum outcomes and standards" as "the minimum level at which a learner must attain the content and assessment requirements for all subjects listed in the NCS Grades R–12 as specified in the curriculum and assessment policy statements, which include the programme and promotion requirements for Grades R–12 as stipulated in the NCS Policy and in the CAPS of all approved subjects". The regulations specify areas of flexibility for independent schools, including that, in terms of the Foundation, Intermediate and Senior phases, independent schools may have comparable content sequencing principles in place, provided they meet the required performance targets, and may deviate from minimum progression requirements, provided they are higher and have been determined in consultation with the parents of the school. Independent schools may also determine their own management and maintenance structures regarding the assessment records that must be developed and kept at the school.

The regulations pertaining to the conduct, administration and management of the NSC examination stipulate that the qualification will be awarded to those learners who are registered for the NSC and meet the programme and promotion requirements for the qualification.

Based on supporting legislation, Umalusi's approach to schools wanting to be accredited to offer the NSC is that, to be accredited by Umalusi to offer the NSC, an independent school must adhere to the content and assessment requirements for all subjects as indicated in the NCS, as well as the programme and promotion requirements of the NCS. Independent schools may offer their own philosophy or ethos (in line with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa) and may include additional offerings in their provision over and above the minimum requirements of the NCS. However, independent schools wanting to be accredited by Umalusi must offer the NCS as a minimum. Thus, if a school offering an alternate curriculum wants to be accredited by Umalusi, it must demonstrate that it offers the minimum outcomes and standards of the NCS.

Quality assurance of diverse independent schools in a robust educational landscape

Mariette Ebersohn

Mzansi's educational landscape

Mzansi – the indigenous isiXhosa word for South Africa – has a complex and diverse educational landscape, fashioned by faith and religious education. This landscape has a strong focus on 21st-century skills, competitiveness, nurturing a love of learning, and cultivating a firm value system. In retrospect, these promises turn into schools' unique selling points when informed by labour market needs, global technological transformation, socioeconomic dispensations and innovation.

What is accreditation?

The concept of accreditation is not limited to that described in legislation such as the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) Act, 2001, as amended. In terms of Umalusi's mandate in relation to independent schools, accreditation is the outcome of a quality assurance process of evaluating an independent school to determine whether it has the capacity to offer the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). This would lead to the achievement of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) at the required standard to ensure quality education.

How does Umalusi implement an accreditation process in a diverse educational landscape?

In line with its quality assurance mandate, Umalusi uses a set of criteria to accredit independent schools to offer the NCS, which would lead to the achievement of the NSC. During the accreditation process of independent schools, Umalusi focuses on the internal quality management of education provision. Evaluating independent schools against set criteria enhances public confidence that, irrespective of their unique selling points, these independent institutions fulfil specific requirements and provide quality education.

What are the set criteria?

The criteria for the accreditation of an independent school to offer a qualification on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework (GFETQSF) are as follows:

- School ethos
- Leadership, management and communication
- Teaching and learning
- School results

By evaluating independent schools against various indicators within the predefined core criteria, Umalusi provides a common minimum standard to which schools seeking accreditation must adhere. This gives the public a measure of confidence in choosing an accredited independent school.

Ensuring trustworthiness and a public vote of confidence

School ethos

A school's ethos must promote the values of the South African Constitution, and be articulated in the school's vision and mission statement. Populating the educational landscape is a range of schools: from schools that are provided strategic direction by a head office, to schools in which parents play a pertinent role in developing and implementing the strategic direction. Each school must have a mission and vision, which guides its organisational culture. It is the responsibility of the principal to guide the school's organisational culture in line with an operational plan to ensure that the "heartbeat" of the school is well known and imparted to all stakeholders. This can be alongside growing branded education in line with the strategic direction provided by a head office, or in line with the strategic direction provided by the governing body of an independent school, constituted in line with the school's foundational constitution.

Leadership, management and communication

In this criterion, leadership, management and communication come under the microscope, while focusing – among other things – on governance structures, various policies, physical resources and financial viability. In all instances, the principal, as representative of the school's governing structure, must hold a professional teaching qualification and must be registered with the South African Council for Educators (SACE). Within Mzanzi's robust educational landscape, SACE is the professional council for educators. It aims to enhance the status of the teaching profession through appropriate registration, the management of professional development and the inculcation of a code of ethics.

As social organisms, each with their own unique characteristics, independent schools' direction and functionality are guided by various policies and the implementation of such policies. Policies such as the general school policy, the code of conduct for both staff and learners, the policy relating to fieldwork and school excursions, and the data management policy are a few of the policies verified during the quality assurance process. Processes and procedures that are implemented must attest to the successful implementation of these policies, while evidence of review to accommodate the changing needs of the independent school must also be visible.

Quality assurance also interrogates a school's financial viability and the provision of well-resourced facilities in line with the school's vision and mission statements, marketing material and its delivery of quality education. As legal guardians of the learners entrusted to them, principals, teachers and management must ensure that the premises are safe and conducive to learning. Henceforth, schools must produce a current health and safety certificate and proof that fire-fighting equipment has been serviced during the past 12 months. Independent schools with feeding schemes and/or tuckshops that prepare food must also submit a certificate of acceptability of the food premises as part of their portfolio of evidence.

Teaching and learning

How does Umalusi quality assure learning and teaching in a robust landscape fashioned by faith and religious education, a strong focus on 21st-century skills, competitiveness, nurturing a love of learning, and the cultivation of a firm value system?

First, teachers who teach subjects within the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) must hold a professional teaching qualification and current registration with SACE. It must be evident that the school uses the CAPS to design, develop and evaluate the learning programme on offer and that its implementation ultimately ensures quality education. A third aspect of teaching and learning under scrutiny is the school's timetable. Times allocated to subjects must be aligned with the expectations

outlined in the CAPS. In South Africa, teaching and learning are synonymous with various forms of assessment, ranging from homework to the NSC examinations. The quality of the assessment programme is verified to ensure that it is of an acceptable standard. In addition, the school must provide evidence that the necessary support structures are made available to parents, as well as to learners who experience academic, physical and psycho-emotional challenges that affect their academic progress and development.

School results

School results are a double-sided coin in which one side has a clear focus on the quality of internal results and the other side has a comparative focus through benchmarking. For internal results, the focus is on both the June and December results for Grades 3, 6, 9 and 12.

The results of these exit grades must be analysed, and the school must report on the number of learners who were progressed or promoted, and the number who did not meet the requirements for progression or promotion. The analysis of the Grade 12 results must also indicate the number of learners who obtained access to tertiary education through bachelor's degree entry passes, diploma entry passes or a higher certificate entry pass. The last hurdle to cross in terms of determining the quality of provision is that the Grade 12 results must be on par with or above the national average, which, after the 2022 NSC, was fixed at 80.1% for the 2023 academic year.

Benchmarking is a process whereby schools measure their performance against that of other schools to discover how they can improve on it. The quality assurance process focuses on Grades 3, 6 and 9, and specifically English and Mathematics, when evaluating the school's performance against that of similar schools. The school must show how it uses the outcome of the comparative study to enhance quality education.

Conclusion

In evaluating schools against set criteria, which entail standardised outcomes, Umalusi attests to a qualification being provided at a required standard. Thus, independent schools populating Mzanzi's robust educational landscape can rest assured that the rigour of Umalusi's quality assurance process promotes quality education, while enhancing public trust in the education system.

Referral of private colleges to the Department of Higher Education and Training as part of Umalusi's accreditation process

Scholastic Mazibuko

Background

The General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) Act (No. 58 of 2001), as amended, mandates Umalusi to accredit private colleges that offer the National Certificate (Vocational) (NC(V)), NATED Report 190/191 Engineering Studies (N1–N3) programme and the General Education and Training Certificate: Adult Basic Education and Training (GETC: ABET) qualification. According to the Policy for the Quality Assurance of Private Colleges for Continuing Education and Training Offering Qualifications Registered on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework and the Accreditation of Private Assessment Bodies (Government Gazette 41887 of 7 September 2018), the registration of a private college is a prerequisite for accreditation. Therefore, private colleges must meet the registration requirements of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) prior to the accreditation process being completed by Umalusi.

The link between the registration and accreditation of private colleges

Registration and accreditation are both legal requirements. Each of the two processes play an important role in assuring quality, and are therefore interlinked.

Registration

The Continuing Education and Training (CET) Act (No. 16 of 2006), as amended, states that private colleges are only able to operate legally in South Africa subject to registration with the DHET. Registration is therefore a "licence to operate", issued by the DHET to private colleges that meet its requirements for registration as a private college. Section 30(1)(b)(ii) of the same Act states that "the registrar must register an applicant as a private college if the registrar has reason to believe that the applicant will comply with the requirements of Umalusi".

Accreditation

Accreditation by Umalusi is recognition of the capacity of a private college to offer a qualification on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework (GFETQSF), and the college's implementation of the curriculum in support of the qualification at the required standard. The accreditation of a private college therefore attests to the capacity and quality of the offering in the private college.

The problem

The implementation of the two processes, registration and accreditation, created a "Catch 22" situation. A private college was required to show evidence of complying with Umalusi's requirements to be registered by the DHET, and thus be able to operate. However, Umalusi can only accredit a private college that has demonstrated the capacity to offer the qualification.

The solution

After extensive consultation and engagement between officials from the DHET, a "referral" process was agreed upon to enable the registration and accreditation processes to move forward in synchrony. A private college must first apply to Umalusi for accreditation and complete the first stage of the accreditation process, which is the submission of a self-evaluation report meeting the required standard. Once this process has been successfully completed, it gives the DHET the reason to believe that it will comply with the requirements of Umalusi, as required by the CET Act.

Umalusi then refers the college to the DHET, indicating that it has met the minimum requirements at the desktop evaluation stage of the accreditation process. The college may then apply to the DHET for registration. Based on the referral from Umalusi, the DHET will conduct its processes to evaluate whether the institution meets the requirements for registration as a private college and as an examination centre. Institutions that meet the DHET's requirements are provisionally registered by the DHET, thereby allowing them to enrol students and conduct national examinations. Umalusi can then complete the accreditation process and make a pronouncement on the outcome of the private college's application for accreditation. The college's registration by the DHET is reviewed in light of the outcome of the accreditation application.

Self-evaluation

On successful completion of the Letter of Intent to apply for accreditation (LoI) and attendance of a quality promotion workshop, private colleges seeking accreditation must submit a self-evaluation report. Key to the acceptance of the LoI is that the private college application must be under its legal name as it appears on its registration certificate with the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC), as contemplated in section 10(3) of the Companies Act.

The LoI process also ensures that a private college selects a suitable combination of subjects that will lead to a qualification on the GFETQSF.

The process of self-evaluation is the core of the desktop evaluation process. Private colleges are required to provide evidence of meeting the minimum requirements of the four criteria for the accreditation of a private college to offer a qualification on on the GFETQSF, as gazetted in the policy (Government Gazette 41887 of 7 September 2018):

- Criterion 1: Mission-directed leadership and management
- Criterion 2: Teaching, learning and training
- Criterion 3: Assessment and results
- Criterion 4: Learner support

The self-evaluation process enables the private college to identify its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT), and to highlight areas for internal development. Colleges are required to upload evidence of specific policies, procedures and adherence to specific requirements relating to legal requirements, staffing, facilities, teaching, learning, assessment, learner support and quality control measures in place at the college.

After payment of the required fee, private colleges can submit their completed self-evaluation instrument with supporting evidence. Professionally experienced and trained evaluators and subject specialists are then assigned to evaluate the evidence submitted with the self-evaluation instrument. Evaluation is done online against the four criteria for the accreditation of private colleges indicated above. Should the submitted evidence required for the self-evaluation not meet Umalusi's minimum requirements, the self-evaluation report is returned to the applicant to correct and resubmit with accurate and relevant evidence. The college must meet the minimum requirements for accreditation in the desktop evaluation process for it to be referred to the DHET for registration purposes. This does not mean that a private college is accredited. It

means that the private college has satisfactorily completed the first step in the accreditation process, and must be registered by the DHET and offer the qualification before the accreditation process can continue.

The referral process

The requirements for the registration of private colleges are indicated in Chapter 6 (sections 27–41) of the CET Act (No. 16 of 2006).

Only private colleges that comply in all respects with Umalusi's requirements at the desktop evaluation stage of the accreditation process will be referred to the DHET for registration. Private colleges are advised of their referral to the DHET and must lodge an application for registration with the DHET. The referral letter indicates the following:

- The registered legal name of the private college as it appears on the CIPC certificate, as contemplated in section 32 of the Companies Act, section 20(1)(c)
- The physical site for which the private college is applying for accreditation and at which the registered programmes are to be offered
- The evaluated and approved programmes and subjects that the private college

applied for and are to be offered
- The conditions pertaining to the referral

Colleges have a period of 12 months to obtain registration by the DHET to offer the specific programme(s) and subjects, failing which the accreditation process will be terminated, without any refund of costs for services rendered.

It is important to note that a private college may not enrol students based on the referral of the college to the DHET. The private college may only enrol students once it is registered or provisionally registered by the DHET, and only at the beginning of an academic cycle. A college may not enrol students for examinations without conducting the full academic cycle of teaching and assessment with those students. A private college may also not enrol students in a programme for which it has applied for accreditation by Umalusi based on the registration to offer programmes falling under another quality council.

The figure below indicates the number of private colleges, according to qualification, that Umalusi referred to the DHET following successful completion of the self-evaluation process between November 2019 and November 2022.

The number of colleges by qualification, that were referred to the DHET for registration between November 2019 and November 2022
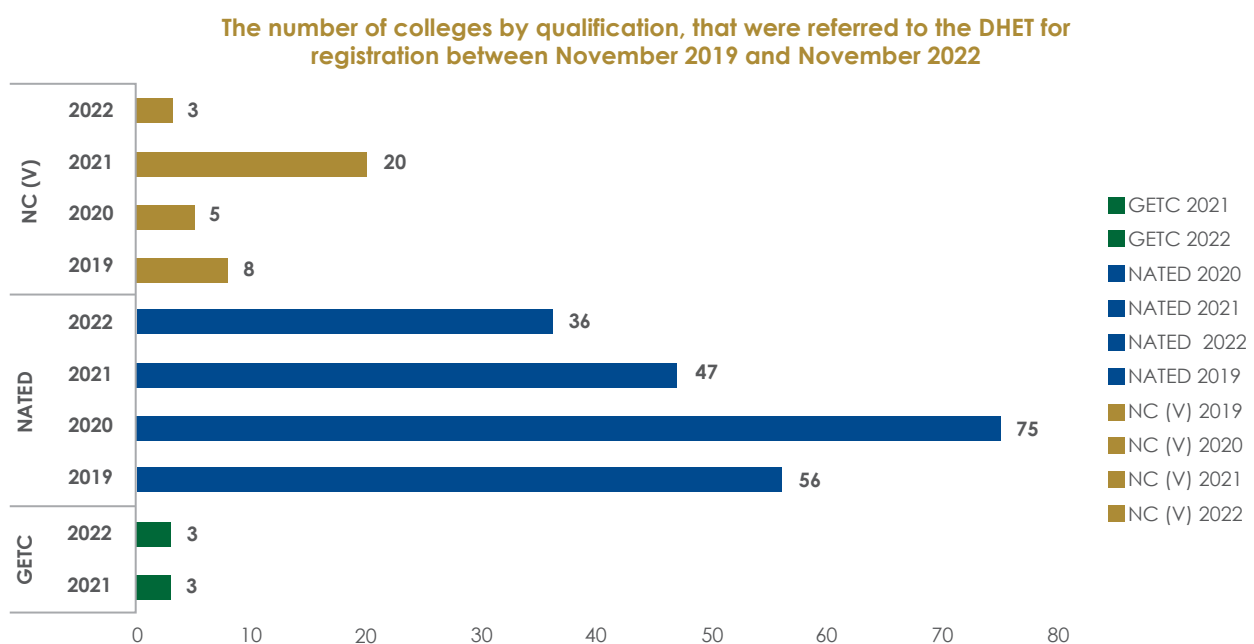

Figure 1: Number of colleges Umalusi referred to the DHET for registration as a private college

Completion of the accreditation process

Once the private college is registered or provisionally registered by the DHET as a private college and an examination centre in respect of the programme and subjects for which it has applied for accreditation, and the college has completed a full academic cycle of teaching and assessment, and has conducted a national examination and analysed those results, it is required to advise Umalusi accordingly. Umalusi will then conduct a site verification visit once the college has paid the applicable fee. On completion of the site visit, the report on the evaluation process will be presented to the Accreditation Committee of Council (ACC) for a recommendation on the outcome of the application for accreditation.

Conclusion

The referral process satisfies the requirements of the CET Act (No. 16 of 2006), section 30(1)(b)(ii), that, for registration as a private college, the registrar has reason to believe that the applicant will comply with Umalusi's requirements. This enables private colleges to be registered and demonstrate to Umalusi that they have the capacity to offer a qualification on the GFETQSF so that Umalusi can make a pronouncement on their accreditation application.

A private college may not enrol students based on the referral letter issued by Umalusi. Only once the private college has been issued with a certificate of provisional registration by the registrar, stating the terms and duration of such registration, may the college enrol students towards the specific qualifications on the GFETQSF for which the private college has applied for accreditation.

It must be noted that the phasing out of the N1–N3 Engineering Studies programmes is imminent. The DHET has issued a notice to private colleges that it will only consider applications for the registration of new private colleges to offer the N1–N3 Engineering Studies programmes lodged with the DHET by 31 December 2022. Umalusi is therefore no longer accepting new applications for accreditation to offer the N1–N3 Engineering Studies programmes. Applications already in process will continue to be processed until the phasing out of the programme. Applicants must note that accreditation will lapse in line with the phasing out of the N1–N3 programmes, with no refund of costs for services rendered by Umalusi. Private colleges are encouraged to consider scaling down enrolments on N1–N3 programmes in preparation for the imminent phasing out of these programmes.

The referral process will continue to apply to private colleges seeking accreditation to offer the NC(V) and the GETC: ABET.

Dawie Oberholster

Accreditation fee rebates for independent schools

Umalusi is mandated to accredit independent schools that offer the curriculum leading to a qualification on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework (GFETQSF). The General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) Act (No. 58 of 2001), as amended, section 13(1)(c), makes provision for the Umalusi Council to charge fees in respect of services rendered. Accreditation fees are determined based on the cost to Umalusi of the service that is provided.

The profile of independent schools in South Africa is diverse, ranging from company-owned schools with large enrolments to well-established financially secure schools and small schools established to serve the community and which charge very low or even no fees. Being cognisant of this diverse profile of independent schools and the need for independent schools to comply with legislation, the Umalusi Council has approved a rebate on accreditation fees for qualifying independent schools.

The Umalusi Council's approved rebate on accreditation fees applies to qualifying not-for-profit independent schools in South Africa. The rebate categories for qualifying independent schools are based on the principle of the subsidy levels for independent schools, which are linked to the Provincial Average Expenditure per Learner (PAEPL). In addition, a special rebate has been approved for schools with a proven total annual income from fees below a specified level.

Independent schools that require a rebate on accreditation fees must apply for such rebate during the Letter of Intent (LoI) to apply for accreditation stage. This is an online process that can be found on Umalusi's website, www.umalusi.org.za (Apply for Accreditation). There is a tick box that the school must complete to indicate that it wishes to apply for a rebate on accreditation fees.

The following documents must be uploaded:
- Audited financial statements for the most recent financial year
- Proof of subsidy from the provincial education department (if applicable)
- Letter of motivation, including a detailed breakdown of school fees for the current academic year (the documents provided to parents outlining the fees)
- A copy of the non-profit company (NPC)/non-profit organisation (NPO) certificate.

Rebates for qualifying schools are based on the following principles approved by the Umalusi Council:

Fee level of the qualifying "not-for-profit" independent school	Rebate of accreditation fees by Umalusi
Special concession for independent schools with proven annual fees of R1 550 000 and less	Total applicable fee less 60%
Up to 0.5 times (50% of) the provincial average public cost per learner in ordinary public schools in the previous fiscal year	Total applicable fee less 20%
Higher than 0.5 and up to 1.0 times the provincial average public cost per learner in ordinary public schools in the previous fiscal year	Total applicable fee less 15%
Higher than 1.0 and up to 1.5 times the provincial average public cost per learner in ordinary public schools in the previous fiscal year	Total applicable fee less 10%
Higher than 1.5 and up to 2.5 times the provincial average public cost per learner in ordinary public schools in the previous fiscal year	Total applicable fee less 5%
Higher than 2.5 times the provincial average public cost per learner in ordinary public schools in the previous fiscal year	No reduction of applicable fee

Note: Details provided are applicable from 1 April 2023. The Umalusi Council reviews rebates annually.

The rebate is only applied to the desktop evaluation and site visit fees of the initial accreditation application. The rebate will apply to extension-of-scope applications as from 1 April 2023. No rebates are applied to the following:

- Reapplication after an outcome of no accreditation
- Evaluation of an improvement report after the outcome of a window period to improve or provisional accreditation
- Any other step in the accreditation process other than those listed above

If the application for a rebate is successful, the rebate amount will be indicated in the school's invoice that is generated by the online system.

For further information about rebates, please submit an email to: accreditation@umalusi.org.za.

Dr Lawrence Ndou

Perspectives on the phasing out of the N1-N3 Engineering Studies programmes.

Introduction

Private colleges that intend to offer the NATED Report 190/191 Engineering Studies N1–N3 programmes are required to apply for accreditation with Umalusi as outlined in the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) Act, 2001, as amended. The N1–N3 is a trimester programme that can be completed in one year. It is mainly theoretical in nature, although some providers have workshops and provide some form of practical training. The practical training component does not form part of the examination. Entry requirements to the programme are Grade 9 or an equivalent National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Level 1 qualification for N1, an N1 pass for N2, and an N2 pass for N3.

The N1–N3 Engineering Studies programme is currently housed on the Umalusi sub-framework of qualifications, whereas the N4–N6 programmes are housed on the sub-framework of the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO). Government Gazette No. 33793 of 23 November 2010 indicates that the extension period to offer the N1–N3 Engineering Studies programme shall end after the Minister has, after consultation with the QCTO, determined policy in a published gazette on an occupational qualifications sub-framework as an integral part of the NQF. The Occupational Qualifications Sub-framework Policy was published by the QCTO in Government Gazette No. 37879 of 30 July 2014. The phasing out of the offering of N1–N3 Engineering Studies programmes has therefore been long awaited and under discussion for many years.

Announcement of the phasing out of the Engineering Studies N1–N3

The announcement that the N1–N3 Engineering Studies programmes would be phased out did not come as a shock or surprise, except for a few service providers (private colleges) that were offering or intending to offer the qualification. Many were aware, and indeed, were keenly awaiting the announcement to put to rest the uncertainty surrounding the future of the N1–N3 Engineering Studies programmes. Umalusi has long been inundated with enquiries through emails, telephone calls and during stakeholder meetings, requesting clarity on the fate of these programmes.

A circular from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) to private providers dated 5 August 2022 was followed by another dated 18 August 2022 clarifying the following:

- The phasing out would be concluded after it had been gazetted by the Minister in a government gazette.
- No new applications for registration to offer the N1–N3 programmes would be considered beyond 31 December 2022.

- The enrolment of students on the N1–N3 Engineering Studies programmes may continue until the phasing out date as published by the Minister in a government gazette.

Despite these circulars clearly indicating the way forward, there have still been a high number of queries on the phasing out of the programmes, and future enrolments from registered private colleges, would-be applicants and prospective students.

Many providers have chosen to continue to offer the N1–N3 programmes until they are phased out, possibly with the hope that the programmes will not be phased out any time soon. This is confirmed by their choice to continue with the Umalusi accreditation process, such as their continuation with the verification site visit process and submitting improvement reports. In this regard, Umalusi always seeks confirmation from the providers that they still want to proceed with the accreditation process despite the DHET circular dated 18 August 2022. Umalusi has issued a communiqué, dated 3 August 2022, which clearly specifies that

accreditation will lapse in line with the phasing out of the programmes, and that no refunds will be made for services rendered in respect of the accreditation process.

Since the DHET is no longer considering applications for the registration of new private colleges to offer the N1–N3 programmes, Umalusi is no longer accepting applications from new private colleges for accreditation to offer the N1–N3 programmes. Umalusi, however, continues to process applications that are at different stages of the accreditation process should the private college wish to continue with the process despite the imminent phasing out of the programmes.

NATED N1–N3 vis-à-vis NC(V)

Based on the number of applications for accreditation received by Umalusi, the N1–N3 programmes have been the preferred offering among private colleges compared to the National Certificate (Vocational) (NC(V)) – another qualification that Umalusi accredits private colleges to offer. The statistics in the table below support this assertion:

Table 1: Private colleges referred to the DHET for registration after completing the desktop evaluation stage of the accreditation process (from 3 February 2019 to 31 October 2022)

NATED N1–N3 (only)	NATED N1–N3 and NC(V)	NC(V) only	Total
218	7	19	**244**

The preference of the N1–N3 Engineering Studies programmes by private colleges is possibly because the N1–N3 only requires theoretical teaching and does not prescribe practical components. In comparison, the NC(V) programmes contain theoretical and practical components, and require colleges to have the prescribed resources and facilities (per programme) in place before accreditation.

Conclusion

The Umalusi brand is held in high esteem by colleges and the public at large, hence colleges would rather proceed with their applications for accreditation, receive accreditation and enjoy

the prestige that accreditation brings for as long as it lasts. Enrolment figures from accredited and provisionally accredited colleges reflect a very low intake of students in the N1–N3 programmes. The writer is of the opinion that this qualification does not sustain colleges financially. Rather, some colleges advertise themselves as Umalusi-accredited institutions to attract students for other programmes or short courses that do not fall under Umalusi's scope of accreditation. This is an unacceptable practice that Umalusi condemns. Prospective students are encouraged to seek evidence of accreditation to offer the specific programme or qualification that the private college is offering.

Exploring the use of assessment feedback and the implementation of 21st-century skills in South African public schools

Dr Gugulethu Nkambule

Background

Teachers worldwide are faced with the challenge of using effective assessment feedback, as well as equipping learners with 21st-century skills. In South Africa, this situation is exacerbated by poor learner performance in international benchmarking assessments. These include assessments such as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), and Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ). This poor performance is due to poor reading skills, and a lack of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are all 21st-century skills.

Assessment feedback

Assessment feedback includes "all feedback exchanges generated within assessment design, occurring within and beyond the immediate learning context, being overt or covert (actively and/or passively sought and/or received), and importantly drawing from a range of sources" (Evans, 2013: 71).

In a nutshell, assessment feedback refers to the use of the assessment results to improve subsequent learning. The main objectives of assessment feedback are to "justify to students how their marks or grades were derived; identify and reward specific qualities in student work; guide students on what steps to take to improve;

motivate them to act on their assessment; develop their capability to monitor, evaluate and regulate their own learning" (Nicol, 2010). The diagram below shows the interrelatedness of the three processes: teaching and learning, assessment and assessment feedback.
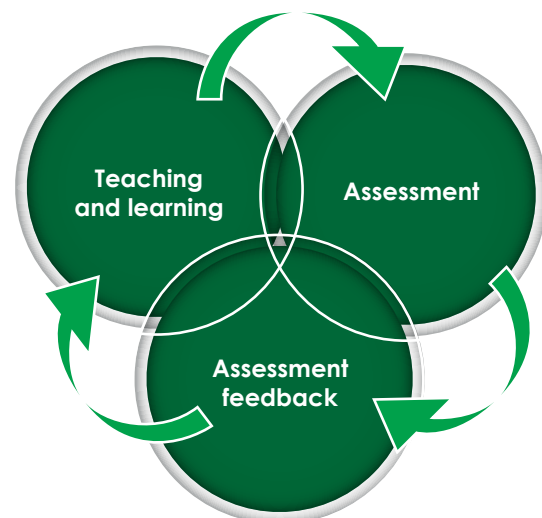

Figure 1: A model representing the interrelatedness of teaching and learning, assessment and assessment feedback

Therefore, there is a need to ensure that the feedback loop is effectively implemented in this ecosystem.

Advantages of assessment feedback

Literature indicates three advantages of assessment feedback:

- Assessment feedback provides students with knowledge about the quality of the

cognitive process and assists them to reflect on their learning (Pereira et al., 2016:9).

- Effective feedback clarifies good performance, and motivates and encourages students to know the gap between knowledge and understanding (Colbran et al., 2016).
- Effective feedback should highlight the strengths and weaknesses, indicate how the student can improve, target individual needs, be linked to specific assessment criteria, and be received by a student in time to benefit subsequent work (Nicol, 2010).

The 21st-century skills relevant to teaching and learning

The four 21st-century skills relevant to teaching and learning are critical thinking, creativity, communication and collaboration. These are known as the 4Cs. The diagram below illustrates the 4Cs of 21st-century learning as follows:
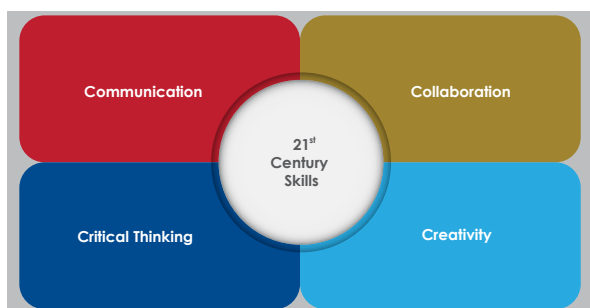

Figure 2: The 4Cs of 21st-century learning skills

Education providers have the responsibility to incorporate 21st-century skills into the curriculum, teaching methods and assessment procedures.

Practices and gaps in the use of assessment feedback in South African schools

- Teachers in South African public schools do not provide detailed or regular descriptive assessment feedback that is capable of improving learner performance (Cereseto, 2019).
- The current feedback mode of mostly a mark and raw scores does not provide learners with information to improve in future assessments or assist teachers to

develop intervention strategies to improve the system (Kanjee & Moloi, 2016: 30).

- Neither the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) nor the National Protocol for Assessment (NPA) provide detailed information on the use of assessment data to identify and address learning gaps.
- Learners are not afforded an opportunity for self-reflection on their experience of learning (Cereseto, 2019).
- Written assessment feedback is difficult to implement because it is time consuming and difficult to implement in overcrowded classes (Naudé & Meier, 2019: 2).

Implementation of 21st-century skills in South African public schools

- To date, there is no empirical evidence indicating how 21st-century skills should be implemented in South African public schools. Neither the CAPS nor NPA indicate how 21st-century skills should be incorporated into the curriculum, teaching methods and assessment procedures.
- The current assessment models do not address the cross-curricular and complex nature of 21st-century skills. To date, the 21st-century skills expected at different grades that focus on teaching and assessment have not been identified.
- The Department of Basic Education (DBE)'s draft policy of the General Education Certificate (GEC) acknowledges that the assessment of 21st-century skills ought to be integrated into the context of subject skills, but that has not yet been implemented.
- The current assessment tasks are administered within the artificial environment of assessment rather than reflecting learners' efforts to complete real-life tasks.
- Few learners have access to computers and the internet to leverage the implementation of 21st-century skills.

Recommendations

This article provides five recommendations for the effective use of assessment feedback and

the implementation of 21st-century skills:

- Specific guidelines, documents and templates should be developed to guide teachers on the effective use of assessment feedback to identify and address learning gaps.
- Teachers should provide regular and descriptive feedback to learners.
- Learners should be given an opportunity for self-reflection on their experience of learning.
- The 21st-century skills should be clearly indicated in every subject and incorporated into the curriculum, teaching methods and assessment procedures.
- Every learner should have access to a computer, laptop or tablet, and a reliable internet connection to leverage the implementation of 21st-century skills, which require learners to be technically and technologically literate.

Conclusion

There is a need for the development of detailed documents to guide teachers on the effective use of assessment feedback in South African public schools. Similarly, there is a need to integrate 21st-century skills into the curriculum, teaching methods and assessment tasks in each subject.

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The use of the assessment and results criterion as a lever to improve learner performance in private colleges

Vani Chatty

Introduction and background

As the Quality Council for General and Further Education and Training, in line with the provisions of the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) Act (No. 51 of 2008), as amended, one of the functions of Umalusi is to accredit and monitor private providers of education and training to ensure that they have the capacity to deliver and assess qualifications and learning programmes.

It does this by ensuring that private colleges meet certain standards and criteria against which they are measured. This article focuses on one of the criteria: assessment and results. The indicators within this criterion require private colleges to analyse their results and use the information to improve their teaching and learning.

By using the criterion "analysis of results", Umalusi expects institutions to analyse their results and use the analysis to inform teaching and learning. Analysing the results, especially in continuous assessment, will signal to lecturers in advance where the problems are so that they may be addressed, and learning supported before the final assessment.

This article reflects on an investigation that was done using a small sample of private colleges that went through the accreditation process to see the extent to which lecturers use the performance of students in assessments to improve teaching and learning, i.e. to reflect on the use of the assessment and results criterion as a lever to improve learner performance in private colleges.

A sample of nine institutions evaluated in 2019 was chosen to see whether the indicators of the criterion had been met or not. From the nine sampled private colleges, only one met the indicators. Although the sample was small, the findings can be generalised. Based on the reports submitted to the Accreditation Committee of Council, about 80% of the private colleges do not satisfy the requirements of this criterion.

Literature review

The accreditation model that Umalusi uses to grant accreditation to private educational institutions is theoretically framed by the Baldrige Model (Faulkner, 2002) and the importance of a system (Baath, 1992).

The accreditation model is premised on evaluating evidence of the institution per indicator of the approved criterion. The approved criteria for the accreditation of a private college are as follows:
- Criterion 1: Mission-directed leadership and management
- Criterion 2: Teaching, learning and training
- Criterion 3: Assessment and results
- Criterion 4: Learner support

Accreditation attests to the quality of provisioning. Provisioning requires teaching at the required standard with the required resources and tools, and ensuring that learning takes place.

As a quality council, Umalusi is accountable to ensure continuous improvement in the standard of education. Improvement in learner performance, as well as institutional performance, has to be encouraged. Through the approved criteria and indicators to be met, the Council propels continuous improvement. This assertion is informed by the notion of colleges as self-renewing communities or centres of change (West, 1998).

Assessment for learning uses information to lead the pedagogical process from what has been learned to what needs to be learned next. Assessment, teaching and learning are inextricably linked as each informs the other (Lombard).

Gronlund (2006) argues that the monitoring of student performance through various assessment methods can signal to the teacher what kind of learning took place. It furthermore indicates what possible pedagogical changes are needed to achieve better learning and results. Traditionally, assessments have been used to measure how much students have learned up to a particular point in time. This is called "assessment of learning". Assessment for learning includes formative assessments that support learning during the learning process (Nitko, 1995). Continuous assessment provides day-to-day feedback about the learning and teaching processes.

Students who are experiencing difficulties in learning may benefit from the administration of a diagnostic test, which will identify learning challenges such as reading comprehension problems, an inability to remember written or spoken words, hearing or speech difficulties, and problems with hand–eye coordination.

Formative assessment ensures that the teacher

becomes aware of the current stage of knowledge and ability, which will inform the teachers' teaching plan. Awareness of the context, learners' prior knowledge, the diversity of learners in the teaching-learning situation, outcomes and the purpose of assessment direct the choice of teaching strategies, and the approach to content and concepts (Booyse, 2017).

The importance of internal assessment as a yardstick to measure the extent of learning and the areas where improvement is needed, and that supports quality teaching and learning, cannot be underestimated. Learners must be given the means and opportunities to work with evidence of their difficulties (Booyse, 2017).

Findings

From the nine reports on private colleges sampled, eight of the colleges did not complete any kind of analysis of results, nor did they see the benefit of the process.

The document analysis revealed that the majority of private colleges do not utilise student performance to inform teaching and learning. This means that colleges are not evaluating themselves on whether they are actually teaching, how well they are teaching, whether learners are learning, and what corrective action is needed to improve teaching and learning.

Lecturers presented incomplete or no analysis grids for their respective subjects. No indication could be found that academic heads monitor results or whether results are used to provide feedback that could contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning.

Most colleges only have spreadsheets on which they record learners' results, and could not explain how the institutional performance and achievement would be reviewed based on an analysis of the results. There was no evidence of academic heads discussing performance, nor any reference to improvements that are needed

based on the analysis of results. Lecturers gave rudimentary explanations of how assessment results are returned to students; in fact, most write the marks in percentages and there are no comments on the learners' scripts.

Lecturers are not trained in the use of templates to complete analysis. No constructive feedback is given to learners after assessments are conducted.

Concluding remarks

From the literature review that frames this study, it is clear that analysing student performance and providing constructive feedback will enhance teaching, and thereby improve learning. The findings that emanated from this study point to a lack of insight in the advantage of analysing results, and the benefit of providing constructive feedback. The findings further signal that colleges either do not understand what is expected, or are not analysing or do not know how to analyse the results. They do not realise the impact and benefit of analysing the results as an indicator of what needs to be improved to support better performance by learners and institutions.

The study recommends that colleges provide training workshops to inform lecturers on how to analyse and use the results to feed into improving the quality of teaching and learning.

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