

Institutionalising quality learning in a research intensive university

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How does one initiate and sustain conversations on quality teaching and learning in a research-intensive university? This paper discusses how Action Research is applied to introduce an online curriculum mapping software. The aim is to ensure that university-wide conversations on good curriculum principles are promoted and translated into practice.

The project is mainly two sided. On the one side it is a project that uses the concept of curriculum mapping to create opportunities for the university community to engage in meaningful conversations about the 'what, why and how' of what is being taught, learned and assessed. On the other hand, the project provides an opportunity to investigate system requirements for such an institution wide agenda and to establish what technologies are needed to support such a venture. In this 'context of action' (Bradbury Huang 2010) curriculum data is plotted into the customized (information) system through a number of phases leading to curriculum analysis. 'Action' occurs at three levels: (1) customisation of the software to incorporate quality teaching, learning and assessment principles, (2) loading of curriculum data into the system with course teams, (3) analysis of the data using the web based system. Teaching staff and curriculum practitioners discuss and shape research questions, work through identified phases and plan for improvement cycles.

Though curriculum mapping is a well-documented process (Udelhofen 2005), the paper based approach is far much limited to support the dynamics of curriculum development in higher education. The conversations that have to part of such a process are lost in the tediousness and scope of the work to be covered. The online system offers a number of features and 'affordances' (Anderson 2004) that enable curriculum analysis. The project design in this context allows for further research and development, and as such the acquired software is customised to meet institutional curriculum development needs, national legislative parameters as well as internationally recognised curriculum principles such as constructive alignment (Biggs 2001), coherence and articulation (South-African-Qualifications-Authority 2000).

The presentation will include a demonstration of selected aspects of the system in order to facilitate discussion.

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