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INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

**ENHANCING THE PROVISION OF QUALITY HIGHER
EDUCATION BY INSTITUTIONS IN DURBAN
METROPOLITAN AREA**

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Rosemary Mankinti Phumelele Zakwe, declare that the thesis titled “Enhancing the quality of provision by higher education institutions in Durban Metropolitan Area” submitted by me for the degree Doctor of Business Administration at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, is my independent work.

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Date: 6 November 2018

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to God Almighty my Creator, my strong pillar, my source of inspiration, wisdom, knowledge and understanding. He has been the source of my strength throughout this program and on His wings only have I soared. I also dedicate this work to my children Sbahle, Minenhle, Syamthanda who have encouraged me all the way.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis served as a pilot study that examined a set of ideas drawn from the existing literature grounded in the concept of quality and its assurance in higher education institutions. The study examined the various understandings of the concept of quality, the factors that affect the provision of quality higher education, and the important leadership quality dimensions that can strengthen and enhance the provision of quality higher education in institutions of higher education in the Durban Metropolitan area. To answer the study's research questions, a phenomenological research design was employed to eliminate or affirm the specific premises from the literature examined to identify the phenomena by soliciting for the personal knowledge, perspectives and interpretation of the concept of quality by the selected respondents of the study. In-depth interviews with 23 senior managers of the selected public and private higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area, consisting of the Deans and Heads of Schools; Quality Assurance Directors; Senior Lecturers and Academic Leaders, served as the primary method for data collection. The findings suggested that quality is a complex issue that challenges the higher education institutions, evidenced by the considerable variation in different understandings of quality and its assurance in the institutions of higher education among the participants in the study. The interviewees raised a coterie of factors that impact on the provision of quality higher education by the studied institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area. Inadequacy of internal quality standards coupled with the limited understanding of the policies and procedures were among the commonly raised factors as impacting the provision of quality education across the institutions examined. The respondents also raised concern over lack of financial resources and limited availability of other resources, such as poor quality teaching accessories and poor staffing. Students' mindsets and attitudes towards learning coupled with non-conducive teaching and learning internal environment negatively impacted the provision of quality education. The need to accommodate the poor and vulnerable social groups in the society; lack of management commitment to culture of continuous quality improvement and political undue influence, coupled by some underhand dealings were unanimously cited as the major factors that affect effective provision of quality higher education among the Durban Metropolitan institutions of higher education. There were variations in the

perceptions of the participants on what constitutes leadership quality dimensions that can strengthen and enhance the provision of quality higher education by the institutions of higher education. The findings ranged from the need for leadership ability to foster a culture of leadership influence of desired behaviour among team members to achieve quality outcomes through participatory and teamwork leadership style; visionary and strong leadership compliance with quality assurance policies and procedures; and quality value driven leadership focus. The study contributes action-based solutions to the problem relating to provision of quality education by the Durban Metropolitan institutions of higher education. The recommended actions are of managerial implications for the field, which includes the need for a balance between the internal-external dichotomy of quality and its assurance understandings and conceptualisation by the institutions of higher education in the Durban Metropolitan. There is need for a convergence in conceptualisation of quality and its assurances in line with the guidelines provided by the Council on Higher Education and other relevant statutory pronouncements in the higher education sector. The study also reiterates the need for leadership driven organisational quality and assurance policies that clearly cascade down to every team member in the institutions of higher education in the Durban Metropolitan. There is need for the leadership of the institutions to develop strategies to overcome the identified impediments to achieving quality outcomes and cultivation of a culture of compliances among the institutional team members. Recommendations for future research concluded the study.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAGE	Australian Association of Graduate Employers
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CI	Continuous improvement
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
EU	European Union
GSBL	Graduate School of Business & Leadership
HE	Higher education
HEEP	Higher education empowerment project
HEI	Higher education institutions
HEQC	Higher education quality committee
HEQF	Higher Education Qualifications Framework
HEQSF	Higher Education Qualification Sub Framework
IP	Interdisciplinary practices
ISO	International Organisation for Standardization
NAQAAE	National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Education
NDP	National Development Plan
NEASC	New England Association of Schools and Colleges
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
QA	Quality assurance
QAA	Quality assurance agency
QAM	Quality assurance mechanisms
QAO	Quality assurance office
QAS	Quality assurance systems
QE	Quality enhancement
QI	Quality improvement
QM	Quality management
QMP	Quality management principles
QP	Quality procedures
QPU	Quality promotion unit
QV	Quality variables
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
TLR	Teaching and Learning Resources

UNICEF United Nations` Children Fund

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Since about the 1970s Australian universities, American universities, and United Kingdom universities, in particular, have expressed their role as teaching, research and community development service, as if community engagement were a third role separate from (and ostensibly equal to) teaching and research in the higher education sphere (Griffith Business School Strategy, 2017-2020). The question is, is this the correct way to conceive of community engagement? Might not we think of community engagement as a way of advancing our teaching and research to enable the sustainable economic and social development of the community rather than as a separate activity? (Griffiths Business School Strategy, 2017-2020). Is the particular role that community engagement plays at Griffith central to maintaining a distinctive identity as an institution of higher learning? (Griffiths Business School Strategy, 2017-2020).

The roles of higher education in sustainable economic and social development increase year by year and this will continue over the next decades. Higher education can be seen as a focal point of knowledge and its application, and institutions which make a great contribution to the economic growth and development through fostering innovation and increasing higher skills (Marginson, 2018). It is looked as a way to improve the quality of life and address major social and global challenges. Higher education is broadly defined as one of the key drivers of growth performance, prosperity and competitiveness. UNESCO (2018) says its social role provides the link between the intellectual and educational role of universities on the one hand and the development of society on the other. Raising skills holds the key to higher living standards and well-being. Investing in knowledge creation and enabling its diffusion is the key to creating high-wage employment and enhancing productivity growth (UNESCO, 2018).

In South Africa, the emergence and growth of private higher education has also been noted (Kruss, 2017), and has been summarised regarding a demand for “different”, “better” or “more” education (Kruss, 2017, p 127). Currently, there are about 200

(conditionally) registered Public Higher Education Institutions in South Africa (Kruss, 2017). Consequently, the public higher education sector has seen a growth of 27 percent and the private higher education sector 76.8 percent since 2008 (Kruss, 2017).

To foster the achievement and success of the tripartite function and role of higher education institutions, that is teaching, research and community development engagement, quality and its assurance has become a very strong issue in higher education the world over (Marginson, 2018). Quality and its assurance have gained interest and favour in higher education institutions in developing countries as well (Elassy, 2013a). Such developments have been motivated by the challenges developing higher education institutions face, many of which relate to changes that are taking place in the higher education sector and markets the world over (Motova & Pykko, 2017), and to which these higher education institutions have to adjust.

With the implementation of the programme accreditation framework in South Africa and its criteria as published by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) in 2004, and more stringent regulation from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET, 2012), especially since 2002, there has been a greater focus on quality in higher education. International ideologies of good practices in higher education also reached the South African shores, while some other African countries are still lagging behind (Cele, 2016).

This, among many other influencing factors, highlighted numerous deficiencies within, and challenges for the private higher education sector holistically (Cele, 2016; Subotzky, 2017). It is envisaged that the adoption of the most successful and relevant strategies would help educational institutions in creating high standards of quality in education provision in South Africa. Sharing the results and methods of quality and its assurance practices will also help alleviate some of the problems such as increasing student numbers, when funding resources are becoming scarce and recognition of courses and qualifications is under the spotlight (Kruss, 2017).

The chapter provides the overview of this research study by explaining the background of the study, the problem statement, the research questions, the research objectives, and a brief literature review, clarification of key concepts, the research design and methodology, and the significance of the study.

1.2 Background to the Study

Higher education in most developing countries today is characterised by expansion, resource scarcity, increased competition, accountability to more stakeholders and the growing complexity of knowledge (Elassy, 2013c). At the same time, most developing countries have adopted policies that are in favour of mass higher education as a means of redressing past imbalances and providing national economies with the high-level skilled workforce required to enhance economic development (Elassy, 2013c). The quality of higher education must also be ensured, while policies are changed, and strategies are developed to address the challenges and changing priorities in higher education institutions. According to Elassy (2013b) quality is not a modern concept, and it has been used through the ages and by different civilisations such as Egyptian, Greek, Roman and other cultures. For instance, quality in ancient Egypt was a sign of perfection, as the Egyptians were responsible for building the pyramids and attention to the quality in architecture (Gamal, Ahmad and Elshennawy, 2004).

Of more relevance, in education, the concept of quality emerged in higher education in the early 20th century from its more familiar industrial and commercial settings (Newton, 2012). However, in that era when people spoke about quality, they spoke of it in rather lofty and abstract terms (Perry, 2007), because at that time, there was a high level of consensus about the issue of academic quality. There was the assumption that some universities throughout the world, such as Harvard or Oxford, for example, were in themselves the benchmark of quality without any further definition of the ingredients of quality (Garkick and Langworthy, 2008).

The provision of quality education in the South African higher education sector can no longer be a choice but has become an imperative (Kochung, 2011). Higher education is a multidimensional and complex process based on relationships between and among academics, learners, and stakeholders (Lewis and Smith, 2009). It is this relationship which requires that all stakeholders have confidence in the work of higher education institutions, and their products. Pillai (2011) argues that the role of higher education institutions in modern society is to strive to promote quality since higher education is the backbone of any society (UKDES, 2010). It is interesting to note that it would probably not be hard to get consensus around the proposition that universities

should aim for high quality education in both their teaching, research and community engagement. This is illustrated by the fact that some of the key policy documents on quality assurance for universities (CHE, 2007) go into great detail about the process by which quality should be assured all the time, without explaining what constitutes quality in the first place (Ballinger, 2014).

The relationship among all stakeholders is also important in promoting the quality of provision in higher education institutions (Kochung, 2011). Therefore, institutions need to make it a point that all management, leadership, teaching and learning, environment strategies, policies and standards are in place to produce quality throughout.

Since quality was originally based on Japanese (and other countries) models who have distinguished what quality embraces in the manufacturing sector (Kochung, 2011), it might be difficult to translate the manufacturing industry's understanding to perfectly fit the higher education sectors' operations. Lang and Sing (2010) argue against a simplistic adoption of quality as they believe it has been superficial and diluted by the exercise of academic freedom that higher education adopted.

Colling (2013) explains an important fact in respect to autonomy, namely, that it is a highly prized concept among higher education institutions. Colling (2013) also attests that the prevailing culture of universities is often based on individual autonomy, which is also jealously guarded, and that is why it is usually difficult to apply the features of quality as it exists in industry to higher education institutions. Boaden and Dale (2011) indicate that quality requires teamwork and differs from one context to the other. This is why an industry has its standards of quality, and higher education institutions have been grappling with definitions of quality that consider fitness of and for purpose, value for money, transformation and customer satisfaction. This context problematizes the provision of quality education by higher education institutions in the country.

Ramirez (2013) stresses the importance of the stakeholder relationships in the institution and argues that it is the relationship that requires members of the community to ensure that all stakeholders have confidence in the work of higher education institutions and their products. All stakeholders need to know and understand the roles they need to play in institutions in order to achieve quality higher education.

According to McKenna and Quinn (2012), above all, effective leadership is crucial to quality improvement. Institutional leadership and decision-making bodies have a fundamental role to play in shaping the institution's quality culture. They are often the initiators of quality teaching initiatives, and their approach directly affects the outcome of these initiatives.

The ability to influence and impart the leadership skills on institutional team members to meet organisational demands for quality outcomes, is a complex element of the overall leadership development picture. However, it is important and critical to strengthening and enhancing provision of quality higher education. Leaders are tasked with effectively guiding organisational goal achievement while considering team member skills necessary to produce the desired quality outcomes (Elmore, 2009). The importance of leadership quality dimensions or characteristics exhibition by the leadership of the institutions in forestering the culture of quality needs not to be over emphasised (Mintaz, 2017).

1.3 Problem Statement

Although the concept of "quality" is rather elusive because it expresses a relative, though noticeable difference between one thing and another, it is a universally acknowledged factor in successful business. Winning organisations are those that meet quality standards, and for whom customer services is an obsession in every single market and constituency in which they operate (Yusuff, 2011; Willey, 2011; Wickramaratne, 2012).

There is a need to understand the different philosophies which predominate quality assurance in the business sphere and public services, especially in higher education (Garkick and Langworthy, 2008). Within the industrial/business setting the philosophy over the past 50 years has focused on the training of employees to prevent problems, strengthening organisational systems, and continually improving performance. While within public service areas such as health and education, the philosophy has been based on taking a watchdog approach, relying on government controls, professional credentials, internal audits, and, more recently, external inspections to maintain standards, weed out poor performers, and solve problems (Newton, 2012; Elshennawy, 2010; Ramirez, 2013; Barnett, 2013).

The concept of quality assurance is not new, but the range of the terminology and methodologies which are now used to define, develop and apply it, are relatively recent. There are a great number of different perceptions of what is meant by quality in higher education, and the most widely accepted criterion of quality in higher education is probably “fitness for purpose” (Ramirez, 2013). Consensus about this does not solve the problem of what is meant by quality in higher education: it just takes the discussion one step further to the question of “what is the purpose of higher education?” (Garkick and Langworthy, 2008; Newton, 2012; Elshennawy, 2010; Ramirez, 2013). However, this is helpful, since to a large extent it is the different opinions about the purpose of higher education, that lie behind the varying concepts of what should be meant by quality in higher education. The different approaches to quality reflect different conceptions of higher education itself. Several overviews of current theories and practices in national systems of quality are presented in the literature review. Conceptions of quality have been categorised in different ways, showing various perspectives and illuminating various aspects (Barnett, 2013; Elshennawy, 2010; Ramirez, 2013).

What can be deduced from the above is that there are multifaceted processes and procedures that the institutions of higher learning need to follow to assure and promote quality. Thus, institutions play a vital role in developing relationships among members of the community including stakeholders (Ramirez, 2013).

Different meanings and understandings of the concept ‘quality’ impact the quality of provision in the institutions of higher learning in the Durban Metropolitan area. The institutions’ Executive members, Directors and Managers have different meanings and understanding of the concept ‘quality’ and how it should be assured and promoted (Muller, 2015).

Most individuals include parts of more than one perspective in their conception of quality. Therefore, when looked at on an individual level, there might not seem to be any significant differences between the ways different stakeholders perceive quality in higher education. Also, combining each perspective with a particular group of stakeholders should not be taken to mean that every individual in that group sees quality in the same way, in every group, there are pronounced individual differences (Nanus, 2016). However, the suggested perspectives represent fundamentally

different views of what higher education is for. It is, therefore, important to describe each perspective separately to get a clear picture of what each stands for, what the ideological basis is, and what the implications of the proposed views of quality are. It will also make it possible to discover points of agreement and disagreement, thus providing a useful starting point for negotiations about a common platform for quality work in a given situation (Wang and Ahmed, 2010; Tornow and Wiley, 2011).

Indeed, quality assurance has implicitly predominated all walks of life from industry, service centres and hospitals to education. The need for quality has therefore proved to be the decisive factor in determining the success or failure of many products and services throughout the development of society, although it has often been implied rather than explicitly analysed and measured (Tornow and Wiley, 2011). Quality is the distinguishing characteristic guiding students and higher education institutions when receiving and providing higher education (Wang and Ahmed, 2010; Tornow and Wiley, 2011).

There are of course advantages in applying more explicit measurements of quality. Among these is an increased ability to readily compare similar services and products, the development of common standards and of course wider information for the consumer. Thus, the emphasis on the need to employ explicit measures to check and monitor quality is the challenge that we in the education arena must now be dealt with.

The application of quality assurance in the sphere of higher education, while having the same base objectives of defining and recognising quality, is complicated by the important socio-economic role that education plays in developing local, national and global societies in their developmental context. As a result, mass education in developing countries cannot be judged to the same standards as quality is defined in developed countries higher education institutions. The development context plays an influential role in mapping and shaping up the standard of quality development in the higher education sector.

Given the above, this study aims to explore quality and the things that impact the quality of provision and leadership dimensions that can strengthen the quality of provision in higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area.

1.4 The Research Objectives

From the background of the study and the statement of the problem outlined above, the researcher drew the following research objectives;

- To evaluate the different perceptions of the concept of “quality” in higher education institutions within the Durban Metropolitan area
- To ascertain which factors affect the provision of quality education in higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area
- To evaluate important leadership quality dimensions that strengthen and enhance the provision of quality education in higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area

1.5 Aim of the Study

The overall aim of the study was to evaluate the different perceptions of the concept of “quality” in the higher education institutions within the Durban Metropolitan area, and determine which factors affected the provision of quality education; and evaluate the leadership quality dimensions that strengthen and enhance the provision of quality education in these higher education institutions.

1.6 The Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to explore in this study:

- What are the different perceptions of the concept of “quality” in higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area?
- What factors affect the provision of quality education in higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area?
- What are the important leadership quality dimensions that can strengthen and enhance the provision of quality higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area?

1.7 Review of Literature

In creating a context for provision of quality education by the higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area, it is important to understand how different trends at an international front have impacted the current understanding of quality and its implementation in the local higher education sector. The literature review was categorised into four critical areas as follows: international development on quality promotion and assurance; national quality assurance and promotion initiatives and quality assurance in private and public education institutions. In discussing the literature, the researcher highlighted the salient arguments that have a bearing on the phenomenon under study and also highlighted the gaps in the literature and how the study remains relevant in the jigsaw puzzle.

1.7.1 International development on quality promotion and assurance

The dominant strand of literature tends to address the internationalisation of various facets of quality assurance and promotion, especially the external evaluations or audits in a bid to improve institutional accountability (El-Khawas, 2010, Stella, 2009; Peace Lenn, 2011; Hofmann, 2009). The above literature tends to focus on the enhancement of academic standards through the various mechanisms of quality and its assurance and promotion. The prevalent methods that are preferred in quality promotion and assurance are accreditation and audits /external evaluations or reviews.

Literature tend to highlight that in Europe, the Bologna process has brought a greater regional integration and a special focus on quality assurance across various European countries and universities (International Institute for Educational Planning, 2010). The International Institute for Educational Planning report further acknowledges the growing influence of policy and management within nations and institutions to enhance academic standards and processes. The report acknowledges the diversity of the instruments that has been adopted by various countries based on their contexts and levels of development of systems that monitor and evaluate quality assurance and promotion. This has contributed to the development of national systems of quality assurance in the world. Therefore, quality provisions have gained momentum as new

contextual realities, such as the diversification and globalisation of higher education systems that make quality assurance an important function of public institutions and private institutions across the world (International Institute for Educational Planning, 2010).

At an international level, quality provisions happen in different spaces and championed by diverse organisations using a multiplicity of instruments, for example, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) (2008) in the United States of America is a regulating body, where it accredits a number of local and international universities and programs. The growing appetite for institutions to prove to the public that they meet specific minimum requirements seem to indicate that the quality provisions in higher education has gained momentum. Business schools across the world through their associations have obtained accreditation from the United States of America Associations (Billing, 2004). Literature tend to indicate that at an international level, various groupings are embracing external and internal quality assurance regimes.

Harvey (2013) brings the comparative dimension to quality at an international level as he argues that quality systems are subjected to analysis and compared with not only the theory and practice of quality management but also the systems used in this regard by higher education institutions in other countries. This literature at best is descriptive and does not interrogate the choices made by governments in respect to the quality provisions. It tended to focus at a national level in various countries and with little attention on how those national initiatives impact institutions both public and private providers of higher education (Bader, 2013; Harvey, 2013; Sikkema, 2015; Moja, Cloete and Muller, 2018). The current study looked at national policy decisions and their impact on those who are expected to provide quality.

1.7.2 National Quality Assurance and Promotion initiatives

Literature in this area (Dill, 2010; Hofmann, 2009; Ravelo and Harnandez, 2011) indicate that even at a national level there is a growing regulation of academic quality in higher education institutions. This has led to some developments in countries such as Columbia, Russia, Austria, Croatia, South Africa, Namibia, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Mauritius, Burundi, Ghana and Nigeria to roll out new systems of quality promotion and assurance (Dill, 2010). In all these countries there has been very little data on

what it means to provide quality in these contexts and limited information on how different role players at institutional levels are impacted on by the national conceptions and practices around quality assurance and promotion.

This study does acknowledge the establishment of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) in South Africa as a Quality Council for higher education institutions. This council focuses on accreditation activities of programs, institutional reviews or audits, standards development, capacity development and quality promotion. Thus, the coexistence of all these responsibilities in the same body puts the CHE in a privileged position to advance the objectives of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) within the higher education system in South Africa.

The council on higher education in South Africa has over the years focused its quality assurance mechanism on three areas. One on being a gatekeeper when it comes to the accreditation of programs for private higher education providers in the country (Ravelo and Harnandez, 2011). Literature tends to portray South Africa as one of the closed systems where private provision of higher education is closely monitored and heavily regulated through the program accreditation process (Ravelo and Harnandez, 2011). On the other hand, public higher education institutions have been subjected to external evaluations to cover institutional processes of quality management and assurance process. The prevalence of program accreditation in the private higher education space has a potential of promoting, enhancing and strengthening quality provisions compared to public, private higher education institutions that are subject to institutional evaluations and after that mandated to develop improvement plans that are monitored by the national regulator (Ravelo and Harnandez, 2011).

The current study fills an important gap as it sought to evaluate the different perceptions of the concept of quality in private and public higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area, as well as how these different perceptions of the concept of quality affect policy and practice in the private and public higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan. In addition, the study evaluated the important leadership drivers of provision of quality education in the private and public higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area.

The Council on Higher Education in South Africa has contributed in the development of institutional capacity in the public higher education institutions through its programs

geared at improving the capacity of the institutions to manage and monitor quality in their institutions (CHE, 2007).

1.7.3 Quality Assurance in private and public education institutions

In understanding the ever-changing context of higher education, the researcher explored literature on the growing social demand and expansion of systems of higher education. In a plethora of literature on demand and expansion of higher education, the following authors tend to also focus on this area (Villanueva, 2007; Bowden and Marton, 2014; Martin, 2007; Sanyal and Martin 2012; Wong, 2011; Sikkema, 2015; Moja, Cloete and Muller, 2018).

It is Vallnueva (2011); Sanyal and Martin (2012) and Martin (2007) who argue that the internationalisation of higher education has necessitated stringent measures to assure quality and also to promote it. These experts acknowledge the growth of cross border provisions and the need for regulatory regimes to protect citizens from poor quality institutions that are driven by transnational commercial motives. This has brought a rise in private higher education institutions in many countries. In South Africa alone, the Council on Higher Education spend most of its efforts as a national quality council for higher education in the area of program accreditation. Almost 80% of its resources and time were spent to regulate private higher education initiative and to introduce quality programs (CHE, 2013).

Since 2009, the Council on Higher Education has instituted a system of institutional audits to all the 23 public higher education institutions and this process was completed in 2011 (Luckert, 2010; Boughey, 2012a, 2012b; McKenna and Quinn, 2012). These authors mentioned above have emerged as voices that have questioned various facets of the audit system and its capabilities to bring real quality assurance at an institutional level, especially amongst the 23 public higher education institutions. Some of the critique centres on the purported developmental nature and the perceived assumptions of the institutional audit system.

It is Luckert (2010) and McKenna and Quinn (2012) who make critique in respect to the underlying assumptions of the audit system of quality assurance in South Africa. She exposes the limitations of the methodology and the disjuncture between what it claims to be doing, which was to assure quality when its focus is on system, process

and policies. Therefore, the mere existence of such tools cannot guarantee effective quality regimes in public higher education institutions (McKenna and Quinn, 2012). It is from this premise that this study sought to understand what quality is and how the conceptions of quality impact on the location of structures that are responsible for driving the quality in institutions of higher learning within the Durban Metropolitan area.

1.7.4 Location and positioning of the quality function in higher education institutions

In 2006, the University of Cape Town's presentation on institutional research tended to focus on how different benchmarking partners were positioning their quality function, their planning and institutional research divisions (Luckert, 2010). The majority of institutions such as University of the Witwatersrand, University of Pretoria, Stellenbosch University, University of KwaZulu-Natal and the University of Cape Town tended to have similar structures at the time, but the functions have been subdivided or enlarged in some cases as universities' internal structures continue to evolve (Luckert, 2010).

An institutional audit conducted in 2006 on the ten selected public higher education institutions that included University of the Witwatersrand, University of Pretoria, Stellenbosch University, University of KwaZulu-Natal and the University of Cape Town for example, provides information about the positioning of the quality function in these public higher education institutions and related challenges (Luckert, 2010). The findings of the institutional audit were that these institutions seem not to have properly organised structures for internal quality assurance (Luckert, 2010). They seem to have academic units that also took over the responsibility, and the reporting structures were confusing at best.

The current study identified a potential gap in this regard and also endeavoured to pay special attention to the positioning of the quality function in the private higher education institutions as well. In addition, the study aimed to enrich the understanding of what quality is and its positioning in private higher education institutions as well and descend the understanding through the data collected from the diverse private and public higher education institutions selected for the study.

1.8 Research Design and Methodology

1.8.1 The Research Design

Research design refers to the overall strategy that the researcher chooses to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way (Anam, 2014), to ensure that the research problem under investigation is well addressed. According to Creswell (2010), a research design refers to the plan of action that links the philosophical assumptions to specific methods. The function of a research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables the researcher to effectively address the research problem logically and as unambiguously as possible (Creswell, 2010).

Anam (2014) suggests that the overall strategy of a research study can be achieved through either quantitative or qualitative approaches or both that is, through a mixed research approach. The qualitative approach has an inductive, holistic, subjective and process-oriented world-view, while the quantitative approach has a positivistic, hypothetical-deductive, objective, outcome-oriented and rational world-view (Anam, 2014). The author further intimates that using a mixed methodology approach provides a broader perspective on the overall issue under investigation and helps to avoid bias.

However, the current study used the qualitative approach. The qualitative research approach is defined by Hale and Astolfi (2009) as a system of inquiry which seeks to build a holistic, largely narrative, description to inform the researcher's understanding of a social or cultural phenomenon. On the other hand, Babbie (2010) argues that qualitative research tends to be associated with the idea that social life is the product of social interaction, relationships and actions that characterise the social world.

The rationale for choosing the qualitative approach was to compensate for and supplement the limitations of the quantitative approach. According to Creswell (2009, p.9):

“The argument goes that quantitative research is weak in understanding the context or setting in which people talk. Also, the voices of participants are not directly heard in quantitative research. Further, quantitative researchers are in the background, and their own biases and interpretations are seldom discussed.”

Qualitative research makes up for these weaknesses, notwithstanding its weaknesses too. On the other hand, qualitative research is deficient because of the personal interpretations made by the researcher, the ensuing bias created by this, and the difficulty in generalising findings to a large group because of the limited number of participants studied (Creswell, 2009; Bryman, 2012).

This study made use of the Interpretivist paradigm also called the social constructivist research paradigm. It is a sociological theory of knowledge that applies the general philosophical constructivism into the social (Bryman, 2012). It is a theory that states that the individual's learning takes place because of their interaction with others or in a group (Babbie, 2010; Creswell, 2009). The goal of this paradigm is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied. Creswell (2009) stated that the more open-ended the questions, the better, as the researcher listens carefully to what people do or say in their social life setting.

The paradigm uses interviews during which participants can provide their views of the topic under study (Creswell, 2009). As the study is located within the qualitative research paradigm, the choice of the research design was meant to enable the researcher to understand the experiences and perceptions of participants in the higher education sector with regards to their understanding of the concept of quality particularly in the higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area. The research design also enabled the researcher to appreciate how the different understandings of the concept of quality affected policy and practices in the private and the public higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan, and the understanding of the important drivers of the quality of provisions in the private and the public higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area.

The constructivist approach was preferred as it facilitated the researcher to elicit and understand the perspectives and perceptions of the participants. The research design of the study helped on the elucidation of information that was critical in providing the deep, detailed, vivid and nuanced answers (Rubin and Rubin, 2015) to the study's research questions. Welman, Kruger, and Mitchell (2016) argued that a research design is the planning of how the data is collected and analysed. In this regard, this study adopted a qualitative research design. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2013), a qualitative research design is based on a situated activity which studies things in

their natural settings, in an attempt to make sense of or interpret phenomena regarding the meanings people bring to them. More so, qualitative research design focuses on description and interpretation and might lead to the development of new concepts or theories, or to an evaluation of an organisational process (Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge, 2011). Precisely, qualitative research is concerned with the qualitative phenomenon.

For this research, only open-ended questions were used. In Creswell (2009), this worldview is suitable for this study because the researcher can obtain the views of the situation they live in. This worldview uses multi-participant meaning which is derived from the experiences of the participants.

1.8.2 Population of the study

According to De-Vos (2005), a population is a set of entities where all the measurements of interest to the researcher are represented. Bryman (2014) defined a population as a universe of units from which a sample is to be selected. The population for this study was all the management staff from both the private and the public higher education institutions in the KwaZulu-Natal Province which included: University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), University of Zulu Land (UNIZULU), Durban University of Technology (DUT), Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), and Elangeni College, EThekweni College, Midlands College (Public institutions), Richfield College, Berea Technical College, Varsity College, Mancosa, Damelin and Regent Training and Business College (Private institutions).

1.8.3 Sample and sampling method

Purposive sampling, which means selecting participants according to the selected criteria relevant to the particular research question (Maree, 2012), was used in this study. In purposive sampling, the sample size may or may not be fixed before data collection and very often depends on the resources available to the researcher. This type of sampling may have its flaws as it may result in data not being saturated, and to counter the flaw, the sample size must be predetermined by theoretical saturation. Purposive sampling is most successful when data reviews and analysis are done in

conjunction with data collection (Babbie, 2010; Bryman, 2012; Maree, 2012). The researcher purposively selected a sample of 23 senior managers from selected private and public institutions of higher learning in the Durban Metropole. The researcher selected three from each of the four public higher education institutions, making a total of 12, selected two from Varsity College and one from each of the remaining nine private higher education institutions. Each interview with these selected participants took at least 45 to 90 minutes.

1.7.3 Data Collection

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with senior managers of the selected private and public higher educational institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area. Semi-structured interviews are based on an interview guide or protocol that provides a list of questions and topics that have to be covered (Flick, 2009). As such, the interviewer covered each topic by making use of open-ended questions and probes (Bernard and Ryan, 2017). Topics were derived from the research objectives and questions, as well as being informed by the statement of the problem.

The primary instrument that the researcher used to collect the data was an in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interview schedule or protocol. The face-to-face, semi-structured interviews schedule, and notes from the interviews and the written materials provided by the participants formed part of the sources of data that were used for purposes of the study. The methods of data collection helped to ensure that the accuracy of the interview transcripts captured the personal feelings of the participants about the questions that were explored. These methods facilitated the process which enabled the researcher to provide some explanations of the underlying meanings deducted from the individual interviews with each of the institutions' senior management (Bertram and Christiansen, 2017).

The interviewees were given an orientation to the study and the reasoning behind the line of questioning. The researcher endeavoured to be open and transparent with the interviewees, outlining how the information would be used. The researcher meant to obtain information relevant to the specific issues in the study.

The advantage of making use of semi-structured interviews is that they are flexible and the interviewer can modify the order and details of how topics are covered

(Bernard & Ryan, 2010). More so, in-depth semi-structured interviews allowed the collection of more extensive and detailed data from the participants through enabling them to air their views and experiences in an expanded manner using probes (Bertram and Christiansen, 2017). This means that some control can be ceded to the informant on how the interview proceeds. Since participants were asked similar questions, it was possible for the researcher to make comparisons across interviews.

The interviews assisted the researcher to understand the different perceptions of the concept of quality that were prevalent in both the private and the public higher education institutions in Durban Metropolitan. The interviews helped the researcher to appreciate how the different understandings of the concept of quality affected policy and practices in the private and the public higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area and identified the important drivers of the quality of provisions in these institutions of the KwaZulu-Natal Province.

1.7.4. Data Analysis

According to Mouton (2009) data analysis involves breaking up the data into manageable themes, patterns, trends and relationships. In this way, the collected data was operationalised and given meaning. The study generated themes from the coded data which were grouped into broad and specific categories. Broad categories were determined by the research questions and purpose of the research probes (Bertram and Christiansen, 2017). Specific categories were developed from the detailed examination of data and identification of frequent or significant themes. Thematic analysis was used to analyse data and labels were assigned to categories to identify their content and meaning. Details relating to this are discussed in Chapter 4.

The primary purpose of data analysis was to sift through the data to establish some trends and themes in the data that the researcher could use to explain the participants' perceptions and understanding of what quality is in higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan. If a new theme appeared in one institutional case, the researcher went back through the already analysed institutional cases to check for the new themes. Cross-case analysis (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011) enabled the researcher to look for themes that cut across cases and for any individual differences and

commonalities. It also helped to deepen the understanding of leading quality in South African Higher Education Institutions.

The process of defining and grouping themes continued until the researcher became convinced that the themes represented the views of the respondents and that they were organised in the clearest and most meaningful way. The data was also analysed to offer some answers to the way different participants understood quality in diverse higher education institutions. Thereafter the same data was used to explain how different understandings of the concept of quality influenced the quality provisions in the selected institutions. Data was analysed immediately after collection.

The researcher analysed and interpreted interview transcripts using the constant comparative approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). First, the researcher sorted out the transcripts by institution and then by respondent type (that is, Dean/Principal, Quality Assurance Director, Lecturer). The researcher did that to determine where one constituent group differed from others within a case: these differences were noted in the results. The researcher then, through the transcripts for each case looked for major themes, color-coded and highlighting the relevant quotations, and copied them into a separate data file. This file included all quotations relating to each theme. The researcher re-read the quotations to determine if they fitted together coherently for each of the case study sites.

If a new theme appeared in one case study, the researcher went back through the already analysed cases and checked for it. The researcher coupled or combined the themes to make the data more manageable. The process of defining and grouping themes continued until the researcher become convinced that the themes represented were the views of the respondents and that they were organised in the clearest and most meaningful way.

1.8 Ethical Considerations

As the participants of the research were human, it was seen as essential for the researcher to get the participants to sign the informed consent form. The researcher personally conducted the interviews, and before the interview, the researcher asked for permission from each participant to record the interviews using a Dictaphone. Participants were informed of the purpose, risks and benefits of involvement in the

study. Participants were also informed of the alternatives to participation. No social, psychological and financial harm could be incurred by the research participants (Polonski, 2013). Data collected from the study was strictly for academic purposes. The American Society for Quality (ASQ) addresses ethical issues and in its ethical principles covers a diverse range of research issues. Privacy, confidentiality, and acknowledgment of sources were maintained as stipulated in Section 4 of the ASQ (American Society for Quality, 2012).

An application to conduct research was completed by the researcher and was reviewed by the University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethics Committee before the research was undertaken. An ethical clearance certificate was issued to the researcher with ethical clearance number HSS/0106/0150. Thus, all ethical issues were considered and appropriately addressed.

1.9 Importance and significance of the study

The study is important and significant. It was vital and important to undertake this study because its findings are beneficial to the University Executives, the Quality Directors, Managers and Employees in general, at the country's universities and colleges so that they would have a better and common understanding of the concept 'quality'. If they understood quality correctly and share the same views regarding quality, they would be able to generate good quality of provisions, be able to address factors that affect provisions, and would be able to strengthen quality in the institutions of higher learning in Durban Metro. The focus of the study was on this constituency as the quality implementing constituency. The Council on Higher Education was regarded as an external stakeholder at policy level. In other words, the essence of the study was to assess the perceptions of the implementing constituency not the policy maker.

The study attempted to evaluate the different understandings of the concept of quality in the higher education institutions within the Durban Metropolitan, ascertain which factors affected the quality of provisions in these institutions of higher learning, and evaluate the important quality dimensions that strengthen and enhance the quality of provisions in the higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area. The increasing demands for good quality higher education by students and society imply

that higher educational institutions now face similar pressures that the business sector has been facing for decades. These implications often become even more serious for higher education institutions who lack the finance and infrastructure resources and have recognition issues, as well as facing stronger competition from local, distance and international education institutions. Some of the lessons to be learnt from industry are as follows;

- Make the desire for quality an overarching principle in every operation (creating a quality culture)
- Be knowledgeable about the needs of students and academics (the actors involved in the service)
- Creating desirability for the higher education institutions through meeting social and economic trends while maintaining high level of academic integrating and superior quality

The topic of quality assurance has always been of utmost importance, originally in business, but now also in education and other public services sectors. Quality remains the most important attribute that creates value about the product/service for the receiver. It is also the means by which business/service providers differentiate themselves from their competitors. Since businesses are leaders in quality assurance, non-business organisations such as educational institutions can benefit from the important lessons learnt by business.

Organisations that provide quality and value in the provision of their educational services are likely to grow and prosper. Such organisations gain benefits like stronger student and staff loyalty, lower vulnerability to economic changes, ability to command higher funding and more autonomy from the state in policy development. Some higher education institutions currently experience problems in retaining both academic staff and dealing with growing student needs. Some of the reasons for this may be that staff and students perceive that other institutions are offering more valuable education regarding quality or they do more active marketing than others (recognition, career development, student support and many more). It thus becomes imperative for higher education institutions to ensure that their services are in demand. Various strategies to make higher education affordable and valuable for students need to be applied on the national level to support the social role of the higher education institutions and the

growth in quality assurance methodologies and the implementation of the results of quality assurance both institutionally and socially.

1.10 Demarcation of the study

The study focused on both private and public higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area which included UKZN, DUT UNIZULU, Owen Sithole Agricultural College and MUT as a sample representing the public higher education institutions and Berea Technical College, Varsity College, Mancosa, Damelin and Regent Training and Business Colleges as a sample representing the private higher education institutions. Durban was considered an ideal setting for this study because these samples were the researcher's local Universities and Colleges.

The researcher chose to focus on both public and private higher education institutions for several reasons. Public higher education providers are institutions that have been established and funded by the state through the Department of Education (DoE). Public providers can be referred to as universities, universities of technology and comprehensive universities. Private providers, on the other hand, are owned by private organisations or individuals. Although many of them offer the same qualifications as public providers, private provider institutions are mainly privately funded or sponsored and are generally not subsidised by the state.

A private tertiary institution would be one that is under the financial and managerial control of a private body, accepting mostly fee-paying learners. A public tertiary institution can be described as an institution of higher education maintained at the expense of, serving for, or for the use of a community. Public universities are subsidised by the government and are therefore under the scrutiny of the Department of Higher Education and Training.

The pre-study survey by the researcher found that private institutions enrol a smaller share of their student body as transfers and that the gap between privates and publics significantly grew between the years 1984 and 1997. Private institutions decrease their share of transfer students more than publics in response to greater selectivity and decreasing attrition rates.

1.11 Chapter outline

Chapter 1. Discusses the overview of the study on strengthening and enhancing quality of provisions in higher education institutions in Durban Metro, that is, the background of the study, the problem statement, the research questions, the research objectives, brief literature review, clarification of key concepts, the research design and methodology, the importance and significance of the study, the demarcation of the study, chapter outline and conclusion.

Chapter 2. Focuses on the theoretical aspects of the study regarding literature review and the underpinnings of the concept of quality in organisations. The chapter also deals with what previous literature says about the challenges of different perceptions on quality, especially in the higher education sector. The review discusses issues surrounding the concept of quality and quality management, traces the evolution of quality, assurance and management. The chapter also deals with literature on the issues of quality culture, the concept of total quality management (TQM), factors affecting quality provision. Finally, the dimensions that strengthen the provisions are included.

Chapter 3. This chapter explains the research methodological approaches and the approach chosen for the study. The chapter also focuses on the research design and the method that the researcher used in collecting the data. The chapter involves a discussion on the research paradigms which incorporate the fundamental philosophical concepts and values about the nature of reality and the scientific pursuit of knowledge.

Chapter 4. The chapter features the presentation of the study's findings, the analysis of the results and the discussion of findings. The findings originated from the literature reviewed, and the primary data that was collected from the interviews. The literature review was conducted to fulfil some purposes, namely, to provide context for the study, to justify the research, to show where the research fits into the existing body of knowledge, and to enable the researcher to learn from the previous theory on the subject. The objective of this chapter was to present, analyse and discuss the study's primary findings as well.

Chapter 5. This chapter presents the recommendations and conclusion on the findings of the study that were drawn from the qualitative data that was collected using the interviews. The data was collected to achieve the study's research objectives and to answer the research questions. The chapter answers the questions posed by the study. The questions of surrounding the different perceptions on the concept of quality, the factors impacting the quality of provisions and the dimensions of quality assurance to strengthen and enhance the quality of provisions.

1.12 Clarification of key concepts of Quality

Quality is often described as the totality of features and characteristics of a service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs. Quality in higher education is a multi-dimensional concept, which should embrace all its functions and activities: teaching and academic programmes, research and scholarship, staffing, students, buildings, faculties, equipment, services the community and the academic environment (Yusuff, 2014; Elassy, 2013c). It should take the form of internal self-evaluation and external review, conducted openly by independent specialists, if possible with international expertise, which are vital for enhancing quality. Independent national bodies should be established and comparative standards of quality, recognised at international level, should be defined. An educational definition is that of an ongoing process ensuring the delivery of agreed standards. These agreed standards should ensure that every educational institution where quality is assured has the potential to achieve a high quality of content and results (Yusuff, 2014).

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is a condition that leads to the achievement of transparency. It ensures the quality of the academic (teaching, curriculum, staffing, to name a few) and structural (buildings, computers, networks, internet connectivity, and facilities, to name a few) provision of courses and allows an objective review of their quality (Elassy, 2013c). The transparency should be dialectical, meaning that the quality assurance should make institutions transparent, but also that the quality assurance in itself should be transparent, allowing the outcomes to be shared by the participants (Quinn, Lemay, Larsen and Johnson, 2009). From the students' front quality assurance particularly helps to overcome the obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement of

students, recognition of courses and qualifications and guarantees the fitness for purpose of the students' education and ensures that the outcomes of higher education meet the students' expectations. It is also the means by which an institution can guarantee with confidence and certainty, that the standards and quality of its educational provision are being maintained and enhanced (Yusuff, 2014).

Quality Control

Quality control refers to the verification procedures (both formal and informal) used by institutions to monitor quality and standards to a satisfactory standard and as intended (Anderson, 2009). Quality control is the set of measures and procedures to follow to ensure that the quality of a product or service is maintained and improved against a set of benchmarks and that any errors encountered are either eliminated or reduced. The focus of quality control is to ensure that the product and product manufacturing are not only consistent but also in line with customer requirements (Deem, Mok and Lucas, 2008).

Quality control is similar to quality assurance. One of the features of quality control is the use of well-defined controls. It brings standardisation into the process. Most organisations have a quality control/assurance department that provides the set of standards to be followed for each product. Either an internal team or a third-party team is hired to determine whether the products that are delivered meet these standards. Quality control relies on testing of products, as product inspection gives a clearer picture of the quality of the end product. There are different standards available for quality control (Deem et al., 2008).

Quality Enhancement

Quality enhancement is the process of positively changing activities to provide for a continuous improvement in the quality of institutional provision. Quality enhancement is a process of augmentation or improvement. It has two strands: first, it is the enhancement of individual learners; the augmentation or improvement of learners' attributes, knowledge, ability, skills and potential. Second, it is the improvement in the quality of an institution or programme of study (Deem et al., 2008). The use of the words 'enhancement' and 'improvement' are often interchangeable, as they are in the Oxford English Dictionary, but the terms are often used in subtly different ways.

Improvement is often used to refer to a process of bringing an activity up to standard whereas enhancement is about raising to a higher degree, intensifying or magnifying it (Kivisto, 2005).

Quality Assessment

Quality assessment is the process of external evaluation undertaken by an external body of the quality of educational provisions in institutions, in particular, the quality of the student experience. Quality assessment is the process of evaluating if educational provisions in institutions meet the educational needs of the community in specific situations (Deem et al., 2008). The process of quality assessment involves measuring the quality dimensions that are relevant to the educational provisions in institutions and comparing the resulting scores with the educational quality requirements (Kivisto, 2005). Quality assessment is rightly considered difficult, and a general criticism within the quality research field is that, despite the sizeable body of literature on conceptualising the concept of quality, relatively few researchers have tackled the problem of quantifying quality dimensions (Yusuff, 2014).

Quality Audit

Quality Audit is the process of examining institutional procedures for assuring quality and standards and whether the arrangements are implemented effectively and achieve stated objectives (Godden, 2010). The underlying purpose of continuation audit is to establish the extent to which institutions are discharging their responsibilities effectively for the standards of awards granted in their name and for the quality of education provided to enable students to attain standards. Periodic, independent, and documented examination and verification of activities, records, processes, and other elements of a quality system to determine their conformity with the requirements of a quality standard such as ISO 9000. Any failure in their proper implementation may be published publicly and may lead to a revocation of quality certification. The above is also called conformity assessment or quality system audit (Lockett, 2005).

Quality Standards

Standards describe levels of attainment against which performance may be measured. Attainment of a standard usually implies a measure of fitness for a defined purpose (Materu, 2007). A quality standard is a detail of the requirements, specifications, the

various guidelines and characteristics to be able to meet its quality by the product to meet the purpose of the product, process or the service. ISO international standards are the most widely accepted set of quality standards adopted by the majority of firms across countries (Yusuff, 2014). In case if a company failing to meet its quality standard, it may end up losing the trust of the customer and henceforth its market share. A product is said to be of quality if it is free from any manufacturing defect deficiency or significant variation. To do so, certain specific standards need to be set so that uniformity is achieved in the entire set of products being manufactured. The standard defined should be such that the features and specifications offered by the product should be capable to meet the implied need of the product (Pretorius, 2011).

Quality Culture

Quality culture is the creation of a high level of internal institutional quality assessment mechanisms and the ongoing implementation of the results. Quality culture could be regarded as the ability of the institution to consistently abide by its quality norms, beliefs and standards of its programmes (Pretorius, 2011). To develop quality assurance implicitly in the day to day work of the institution and marks a move away from periodic assessment to ingrained quality assurance. Quality culture can also be described as an organisational value system that results in an environment that is conducive to the establishment and continual improvement of quality (Letuka, 2010).

Accreditation

Accreditation is a process of validation in which colleges, universities and other institutions of higher learning are evaluated. The standards for accreditation are set by a peer review board whose members include faculty from various accredited colleges and universities (Willey, 2011). The board aids in the evaluation of each potential new school accreditation or the renewals of previously accredited colleges/schools. For potential colleges to proceed with the accreditation process smoothly, they must meet the general standards set by the peer review accreditation boards. Each college is typically assessed using the following criteria (Letuka, 2010). Accreditation is the result of a review of an education program or institution following certain quality standards agreed on beforehand. It's a kind of recognition that a program or institution fulfils by certain standards (Willey, 2011).

1.13 Conclusion

The chapter dealt with the overview of the study with regards to quality and quality assurance in both the private and public education institutions and the need for strengthening and enhancing quality of provisions in higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area, that is, chapter covered the background of the study, the problem statement, the research questions, the research objectives, brief literature review, clarification of key concepts, the research design and methodology, the importance and significance of the study, the demarcation of the study, chapter outline and conclusion. The next chapter deals with the literature review on the concept of quality concerning higher institutions of education.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The literature on quality and its assurance in higher education is silent about the underlying philosophical understandings or perceptions about the concept of quality and its assurance that shape quality assurance systems in public and private institutions of higher education. As a result, quality and its assurance tends to be treated from a somewhat simplistic perspective, where studies focus mainly on the development of policies and putting in place mechanisms that facilitate the implementation of those policies. With the exception of a few, most of the studies depict quality and its assurance as either external or internal, with the former being associated with much-resented bureaucratic and managerialistic tendencies that are constraining while the latter is reviewed as positive on the strength that it is less bureaucratic and thrives on the natural buy-in from implementers on the ground.

Such literature does little to problematise the nature of the underlying philosophical understandings of quality and its assurance between the public and private institutions of higher education and approaches to quality and its assurance because quality and its assurance takes collegiality to be a homogeneous rather than a highly different perceived phenomenon between the public and private players in the same sector. The argument is why quality and its assurance would be perceived differently by the public and private institutions of higher learning when there are policies and mechanisms such as the Council on Higher Education (CHE) in South Africa as a Quality Council for higher education institutions responsible for quality compliance.

This chapter presents the theoretical framework for the study in the form of the literature review. The chapter firstly delves into the different views and perceptions that stakeholders in higher education institutions have on the concept of quality and its assurance. Since the Council on Higher Education (CHE) (2011) acknowledges that quality is challenging and uncertain in higher education in general, there is need for a common understanding of quality and its assurance among all stakeholders in the higher education sector, particularly public and private institutions. The CHE (2008) also states that quality and its assurance is commonly conceptualised

differently and on different levels among the public and private institutions of higher education. Thus, the understanding of quality and its assurance standards at all the levels in institutions of higher education and how they operate require stakeholders' commitment to quality and its assurance dictates.

There are many different purposes for the existence of educational institutions in general and the purposes for the existence need to be considered in any decision-making processes (Cartwright, 2007). However, for any institutions' quality and its assurance systems to work, the main purpose needs to be collectively understood by all the stakeholders for them to commit to the outcomes (Elassy, 2013b).

Defining the institutions' purpose assists the stakeholders to plan and organise standards and principles that they will use to assure quality and be able to reach consensus in the decision-making processes. The appropriateness of the purpose of existence of the institution involves defining that purpose and locating the criteria to make sound judgment on quality and its assurance related issues (Cartwright, 2007). It is naturally easy to develop quality and its assurance principles for manufacturing in business than in education or other service, as the concept of quality originated in the manufacturing business. Thus, the quality standards and measures that need to be met must be realistic when discussing quality issues in education (Quinn et al., 2009). The emphasis is that people are naturally unsuitable, unassimilated, uninspired and indignant in their line of thinking. As a result, what may be considered quality by one person may be subjectively considered to be something else by the next person (Anderson, 2009). Thus, quality matters need to be discussed based on the internally institutionalised standards of practice and measured against the quality assurance and promotion external stakeholders such as the Council on Higher Education (CHE, 2011) in South Africa.

The CHE (2011) for example states that in educational settings, the appropriateness for a purpose approach to quality and its assurance should indicate the extent to which institutions of higher education meet their stated missions and mandates. For the sake of the appropriateness for purposes, it is important for stakeholders to be familiar with the mission and goals for the success of the institutions. To promote quality and its assurance, higher education institutions need to value the money paid by their customers and clients by producing or offering quality education.

Understanding quality and its assurance as 'fitness for purpose' assists in the transformation of the institutions of higher education (Deem et al., 2008). Doherty (2008) suggests that the 'suitability for purpose' is the explanation on the understanding of quality and its assurance which is mostly implemented in higher learning, as it accepts that quality has no meaning, but it depends on the purpose of which a particular process is designed. Therefore, it is important that all stakeholders understand the purpose of the programs offered by the institution to make it a point that those programs fit into the original mandate or the niche area of the institution. It is for this reason that institutions of higher education, especially universities, engage with transformation in a variety of ways, and transformation can be seen as a way of fully adding value to students throughout their learning (Deem et al., 2008). This definition is also in line with one of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC)'s approaches to quality (CHE, 2004).

2.1.1. The Southern African context

The experience of South Africa explained below, shows how the development of quality assurance systems has been intricately interwoven with and heavily influenced by the historical legacies of the institutions in Southern Africa. The South African higher education system is a case of interest regarding quality assurance policy and practice. An uneven quality assurance landscape generally characterises higher education with a range of unintegrated initiatives at national, provincial and institutional levels (DoE, 2012). This scenario can be explained mainly regarding the historical past of the country. The apartheid system of education gave rise to a wide variety of universities regarding resource provision, student profiles, staffing and support for research. All these contextual factors were significant in constituting the historical antecedents that explain the current varied levels of scholarship in the different institutions in the country.

In this context, it is clear that historically black university have had quality standards and quality assurance measures that were not only different from but also inferior to their historically white counterparts. In the absence of a unitary system of higher education, the quality assurance policies of these institutions were not co-ordinated,

nor were the contexts of the institutions similar. In historically privileged institutions, a culture of excellence has always prevailed, albeit in the absence of any external form of accountability or even explicit institutional policies. Given the high level of professional expertise and infrastructural resources concentrated in these institutions, it can be argued that excellence was, among other factors, driven by inward (professional) accountability (Lockett, 2005; Kivisto, 2005). The physical and human environment of these institutions was conducive to such high levels of scholarship by staff. Quality assurance developed and became an integral part of an institutional culture of good practice, associated with high student throughput, internationally reputable research output, access to resources, and the attraction of both international faculty and students. This happened in the absence of objective policies regulated by a central agency. The situation in the historically disadvantaged institutions was, however, very different. As Godden notes, “by contrast the historically black universities remained as they began, peripheral institutions with poor ratings on all these indices” (Godden, 2010: p.36; Lockett, 2005).

In a sense, these institutions also observed their form of quality assurance, which was different from that of their advantaged counterparts, because of the constraints of their contexts. Thus, there was a glaring gap regarding the standards of excellence between the two types of institutions (Kivisto, 2005). The challenge of post-apartheid higher education reform policy is to advance the historically disadvantaged universities without endangering the capacities and achievements of the historically white institutions. In Godden’s terms, “... this means that resources should not be redistributed to the black universities in a way and to a degree which would impair the maintenance and development of the historically white universities” (Godden, 2010: 36; Materu, 2007; Kivisto, 2005).

Regarding quality assurance, the post-apartheid unitary system of higher education entails developing a common policy and a common understanding of quality for all the universities, based on values of equity, access and relevance. The Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), a permanent committee of the Council on Higher Education (CHE), is charged with the responsibility of promoting quality assurance in the country’s higher education institutions. As the national overseer and facilitator of quality assurance in higher education, the HEQC operates within the broad legislative

and policy context that shapes and regulates the provision of higher education in South Africa (CHE, 2001). In its efforts to promote quality, the legislative committee operates by an agreed framework underpinned by:

- formulation of criteria and procedures in consultation with higher education institutions;
- a formative notion of quality assurance focused on improvement and development rather than punitive sanctions; and
- a mix of institutional self-evaluation and independent external assessment (Pretorius, 2011: p.131).

In this arrangement, quality assurance is not only an institutional matter,

... “but an essential ingredient of an emerging new relationship between the government and Higher Education in which the former steers the overall mission and the goals of the Higher Education system through sets of incentives and more regular evaluation of institutions and programmes, rather than through detailed regulation and legislation (Pretorius, 2011: p.131)”.

Trends in higher education tend more and more towards opening up the higher education market to a wider range of providers, increased provider competition and less institutional support and protection by the state (Materu, 2007; Pretorius, 2011; Godden, 2010). If this trend is true, it follows that the most successful institutions are those that approach quality assurance not so much as an externally-driven phenomenon (outward accountability), but as an internal initiative, developed and evolved by staff as professionals conscious of their professional obligations to their clients in particular, and to the wider society in general (Godden, 2010; Lockett, 2005). This typology of quality assurance is arguably self-improvement and equates to Vidovich and Slee’s (2009) professional accountability. In most Southern African universities, characteristic practices include development of institutional quality assurance policies and practices by institutions, within the broad frameworks laid down by the state or some national quality assurance agency (Lockett, 2005). These policies are manifest in the institutions’ mission statements and the university and faculties’ quality assurance structures and procedures. The experience of South Africa explained below, shows how the development of quality assurance systems has been

intricately interwoven with and heavily influenced by the historical legacies of the institutions in Southern Africa (Godden, 2010; Materu, 2007).

Such an overarching national policy should necessarily be concerned with addressing issues of quality in the institutions but at the same time allowing a high degree of flexibility to accommodate institutions that are at different levels of development, located in different social contexts and possibly with different missions (CHE, 2004). Despite the differences among the institutions, national policy should require them to develop their own comprehensive, transparent and well-co-ordinated quality assurance systems which are consistent with their mission statements and which should be known by the HEQC.

It is by such institutional policies and procedures that the HEQC makes occasional audits. What is significant about this system, at least in theory, is that the broad national framework allows institutions to consider their unique situations regarding their levels of development, their missions, their capacity and the available resources in the process of developing their quality assurance practices and procedures. This argument maintains that the South African approach to quality assurance remains what Lim (2009) refers to as instrumentalist. Such an approach involves establishing a mission for the institution, followed by developing a quality assurance system with specific functions and objectives. The institutional quality arrangements are then evaluated and validated by an external agent. Because of the undue emphasis placed on external audits and the reporting requirements to a national agency, the South African quality assurance system remains external and managerial (CHE, 2004).

It is apparent that the major role of the HEQC is to audit and validate the quality assurance policies and procedures developed by institutions, and not to audit quality itself. Auditing does not seek to measure the actual outcomes of the quality and its assurance arrangements of the institutions, but to validate the effectiveness of these arrangements. This process remains largely bureaucratic and managerial and may fall far short of addressing real quality delivery by institutions. Institutions may be preoccupied with meeting the requirements regarding putting in place the requisite policies and procedures but only at the expense of implementing measures and processes that may bring about real quality (CHE, 2004; Pretorius, 2011).

Drawing from the typologies of accountability discussed earlier, it is evident that South African higher education is in a state of flux regarding quality assurance policies. Faced with the transformation discourse dominating overall national development policies, universities have had no option but to reposition themselves accordingly regarding enrolment and staffing policies. In so far as it is a requirement for institutions to report on their staffing and student demographics, which are expected to move towards equity goals, meeting institutional quality goals can be compromised by this accountability requirement (Einslin, Pendlebury and Tjiattas, 2009). While there is even greater need for the historically advantaged universities to maintain quality service to remain internationally competitive, the large number of students now enrolled, and admittedly less capable of coping with the demands of high-level scholarship, places constraints on what the institutions can achieve regarding quality performance. This is particularly so given the broad national conception of quality that embraces high student throughput rates. It seems clear that this factor poses a major challenge to all the institutions regarding benchmarking standards of student performance and the development of institutional quality assurance policies (Einslin et al., 2009).

The South African university is becoming an increasingly hybrid organisation, with both public and private elements featuring in the institution. On the one hand, regarding developing quality assurance policies and practices, the institution faces pressure from the state through its steering mechanism and arguably from a value for money and fitness for purpose perception of quality (Letuka, 2010). On the other hand, it also has to listen to the different voices of the increasing number of stakeholders whose main discourse is that of the marketplace, and they do not necessarily share common perceptions of quality. Thus, the challenges of a socially-embedded university manifest most profoundly at the interface of quality assurance. The various stakeholders have varied perceptions of quality and how it should be assured in a university. Their expectations of university education are not only different but may also be conflicting (Letuka, 2010). Pressure from all these dimensions constitutes significant external accountability that affects both the way quality is perceived and how institutions proceed to put in place their quality assurance procedures. To the extent that quality assurance processes are conducted under the auspices of some

national agent, the quality assurance system is based on external accountability and runs the risk of being reductionistic (Pretorius, 2003). There is a sense in which it can be argued that the evolving South African model of quality and its assurance in higher education is tending more towards an externally and compliance driven one than an internal and self-improvement model (Letuka, 2010).

The researcher subscribes to the idea of quality and its assurance systems which are developed and monitored within the institutions by academic staff, which is devoid of external accountability, and which is premised on self-improvement. In this typology, the institution itself should be the locus of quality assurance policy development because it consists of academic expertise that cherishes academic freedom and autonomy (Letuka, 2010). These are professionals whose view of quality has a transformation dimension and relates to the amount of value added to the student. The “professional-artistry paradigm” of quality assurance privileges institutional self-improvement. This paradigm takes a contextualised approach to quality enhancement and places a heavy premium on the professional expertise and professional ethic of academic staff as the major motivating factors for institutional quality improvement. Such a quality assurance system is much more sustainable and enjoys ownership by the significant stakeholders operating at the cutting edge of the university system (Letuka, 2010).

It sounds paradoxical, though, to advance an argument that places the whole responsibility for quality assurance on internal staff in a context where the university is socially embedded. As state funding and control of universities decrease, the latter will increasingly enter into alliances and stronger relationships with more and more stakeholders to survive, and this has the potential to entrench market-oriented external accountability (Pretorius, 2003) further. Such accountability also leaves institutions more and more prone to the influence of globalisation forces as the university stretches its stakeholder networks beyond the national boundaries, mainly in the form of partnerships and alliances (Pretorius, 2003). There is tension, therefore, between outward-market accountability from the world external to the university community and the professional-inward accountability cherished by academic staff in universities. Outward-market discourses are more inclined to fitness for purpose perceptions of quality and emphasise current market needs. University academics value the

transformation perception of quality and seek to equip individuals with generic skills and knowledge that allow adaptation to any working demands. This tension makes it very difficult to develop a clear, coherent national policy on quality assurance in university institutions in South Africa. Drawing from the resource dependency theory, one could argue that the socially-embedded, stakeholder university still has room for overcoming the constraining effects of extra-organisational influence and privileging its priorities in the process of decision making (Pretorius, 2003).

Discussion of the resource dependency theory as propounded by Pfeffer and Salancik (2007) is outside the scope of this thesis. To clarify the argument of this chapter, only a few salient aspects of the theory with a bearing on the stakeholder university will be highlighted here. A major phenomenon of a socially-embedded, stakeholder university is that it engages in many exchanges and transactions with other groups and organisations (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2007). The exchange “may involve monetary, information, physical resources or social legitimacy”. This exchange process results in inevitable dependency by the university on external stakeholders who are sources of critical resources and who may have quite conflicting demands and expectations of the university. Thus, dependence on many stakeholders with conflicting demands is both constraining and limiting on the part of the university.

Resource dependency theory argues that an organisation’s vulnerability to extra-organisational influence is determined by the extent to which the organisation’s critical exchanges (or resources) are controlled by relatively few organisations (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2007). The more sources of critical resources for the focal institution, the less power any single one of those sources has to control and to manipulate the institution. As much as the presence of the various stakeholders may be felt in the university, their ultimate influence in the organisation’s decision making will be minimal, hence their reduced control. Thus, by broadening its stakeholder base, a socially-embedded university can still be able to have space to craft its policies, practices and culture of good practice with minimum constraining influence from outside. It is, therefore, neither ironical nor is it a misplaced argument that institutional staff can and should take full responsibility for quality assurance in a stakeholder university (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2007).

A significant point to note in debates on quality assurance in the South African higher education context is the challenge posed by the wide range of institutions regarding meeting the overall national higher education reform goals. There are bound to be both inter- and intra-institutional differences in the way relationships with the market are defined, and this, in turn, has obvious implications on how quality assurance issues are perceived and handled (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2009). This complexity probably explains why quality assurance issues have remained so uncoordinated and implicit in the universities. It is the submission of this argument that, given the varied nature of higher education institutions in South Africa, the adoption of a common quality assurance framework is not only problematic but indeed may also be undesirable. What seems critical, though, is the need for every institution to remain conscious of and to be fully committed to the overarching goals of national transformation and development, guided by some inward-professional accountability as they develop and institutionalise their quality assurance systems (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2009).

2.2. Theoretical background

The researcher found the theoretical background on how quality is viewed and perceived differently worthy reviewing in this regarding what literature says. It is important to note that this aspect of viewing quality differently by stakeholders particularly within the higher education institutions is fundamental to the research problem outlined in chapter 1.

Literature suggest that quality has various meanings, depending on who is considering it, as well as the context in which it is employed, which implies that there is no consensus on the understanding of it and its meaning. However, despite this phenomenon quality and its assurance will always remain a necessity. In simple terms, the concept of quality refers to the general integrated effort towards achieving competitive advantage through continuous improvement of every aspect of an organisation's activities (Ho, 2012). Mahajan et al. (2014) argue that the concept of quality has been widely discussed in literature and it has been described and explained in terms of conformance and compliance to statutory requirement (Crosby, 2009), fitness for use (Juran and Gryna, 2010), reducing and managing variation

(Deming, 2010), entirety of settings and looks of an invention, creation, or production (American Society of Quality, 2012).

The concept of quality entails people-focused quality management systems that are aimed at continuously increasing customer or client satisfaction at the lowest possible cost such as cost of education. It is a complete systems approach, as well as a central element of high-level organisational strategy. It should be applied across all the departments and functions, and involve all employees or organisational members, from the top to the bottom, backwards and forward. The main emphasis of quality and its assurance is learning and adaptation for continuous change and organisational success (Evans and Dean, 2013). The researchers above also argue that quality management entails the integration of the entire organisational or institutional processes and functions to improve the quality of outcomes, be it goods or services.

Quality is a concept that is not always easy to understand as it means different things to different people. Green (2010) suggests that it is also challenging to identify the absence of value since one cannot touch it, but if quality is lacking at a particular institution, there are usually complaints from different educational stakeholders including students. Pillai (2011) states that there are different explanations and interpretations of what quality means. According to Garvin (2011) the product-orientated approach, customer-oriented approach, the manufacturing-orientated approach and the value for money approach, are proffered as alternative explanations and interpretations of quality.

Harvey and Williams (2010) describe the notion of quality in higher education as having many facets and different perspectives and as a multi-faceted notion which must be interpreted regarding purpose and context. Furthermore, Newton (2012) highlights that academics at departmental levels understand quality as a ritual, a token for impressing the management. Maguire and Gibbs (2013) highlight that quality is viewed and understood differently by different stakeholders in higher education.

Lim (2008) proposes four views on quality: quality as a way of producing perfection through continuous improvement, quality as performance, quality as the ability to transform students and as the ability to provide value for money. In most propositions,

the main aspect is satisfying customers and meeting their expectations. Over time, the customer expectations or orientation has triumphed, and this is consistent with the literature on the provision of quality education (Bell and Taylor, 2013).

2.3 The traditional concept of quality

Quality as a concept did not originate in the education sector. The education sector as it is being studied here by the researcher adopted the practice of quality assurance from the manufacturing sector in business. The origin of the concept of quality can be traced back to Frederick Taylor (1920), who is regarded as the father of scientific management (Green, 2010). The concept and processes of quality emerged when manufacturing moved into big plants from the single craftsman's workshop, between the 1920s and the 1950s. During this time, emphasis was on productivity, while quality was assessed at the end. With the growing industrial plants, it became more difficult to check post-production hence, the use of statistical methods was employed to control quality. This was named reliability engineering, as it shifted quality control towards integrating quality into the design and production of the product.

These methods were pioneered by Taylor and were considered as part of classical management, as opposed to the quality management system. However, Deming and Juran also used statistical methods for quality assurance at Bell Telephone laboratories (Bell and Taylor, 2013). This is what Green (2010) calls the traditional concept of quality. Subsequently, in the 1990s, the issues concerning quality changed greatly and came to be seen as something which could be defined and measured (Perry, 2007). Parri (2006) believes that quality is provision of deliberate exceptional eminence. Salmi and Altbach (2011) quality developed a substitution for superiority, which gave benefit to the old and the rich and led artificially. Brink (2010) made a point about quality as excellent that superiority is incomparable, which imply that ranking systems needed to be considered.

2.4 Different views on quality and its meaning

The researcher conceptualises the challenge of different views on quality as fundamental to the research problem in this study. It is for that reason the researcher finds a review of literature on this aspect of different views on quality necessary.

A wealth of studies about the concept of quality and its assurance can be found in relevant literature (Cheng, 2011). Therefore, perceived that current analysis of the concept of quality discusses the issue in two interrelated sections: an evaluation of the methods of understanding the concept of quality as it is postulated in the literature is presented and the connotation of quality from the perceptions of stakeholders particularly in higher education institutions. It is therefore critical that within the institution, there is a common understanding of quality and what constitutes it. According to Saunders (2012), quality depends on the point of view of the people who are defining it. Some view it as conformance to specifications. Others view it as performance to standards or value paid for the price. For any organisation, quality should be nothing but the satisfaction of the organisation`s customers and fulfilling their requirements within a specified budget.

Quality is, therefore, one of the important key performance indicators in an organisation or institution, which may cause cost overrun and time delays. Quality control and quality assurance systems should not only be established because of prescribed requirements such as statutory in the education sector for example (Barret, 2013). In any organisation and institution, quality control should be looked at as client satisfaction, related with costs and accorded enough time and attention to achieve the anticipated quality output (Ashford, 2013). In the other sector such as business, for example, quality assurance systems have been developed by an international standard organisation (ISO) for improving quality and overcoming quality related problems. For quality, ISO 9001 series have been developed and can be applied to all types of organisations including the educational sector (Willey, 2011).

2.4.1 Understanding the concept of quality

As the literature suggests, quality is not a unitary concept, and many authors have looked at it from and through a variety of approaches (Ozturgut, 2011; Harvey, 2009, Harvey and Green, 2012). A widely cited piece of literature, Green (2010) points that quality is the “conformance to standards and this approach is recycled in facilities”. Those above further argues that “the quality of a product is dignified regarding its

conformance to the stipulations, to see if it meets the standards set". Thus, quality standards need to be adhered to by all stakeholders.

Ozturgut (2011) argues that some academics interpret quality as relating to academic standards which confirmed the importance of this approach to the definition. According to Harvey (2009) this methodological approach to quality has benefits, as it gives all the higher education institutions chance to desire for quality, principles of institutions, but the disadvantage with this approach was that it is oblique to the fact that quality could be defined regarding criterions. Policy-makers have a role to play in defining quality. This is emphasised by Ramirez (2013) who believes that "most policymakers accepted quality". However, the fitness for purpose approach has been refuted by many scholars".

Gibbs (2011) suggests an alternative approach to quality by referring to quality as presentation of good-enough practices, having superficial comparisons with "suitable for purpose". There is need for a clear understanding of the concept of 'quality' in the institutions of higher learning. However, contrasting that method where the emphasis was on similar decisive determinations (as might be the case in manufacturing), good-enough practices required that quality satisfied the outlooks of the situation group, but did not do it perfectly. The problem with the "fitness for purpose" approach is that it is not easy to define what the purposes should be, which could be:

a. Effectiveness in achieving goals

To be an effective tool for achieving goals, "fitness for purpose" should be achieved and stakeholders should play an effective role in assisting in the achievement of the goals of the institutions. Green (2010) believes that "efficacy in accomplishing goals is one of the versions of fitness for purpose". It is important to understand the institution's goal.

b. Quality as meeting customers' stated needs

This definition deals with the customers' needs and highlights the importance of knowing who the customers are, what their needs are and how to satisfy them (Cheng, 2011). In this sense, quality is critical to the functioning of the market, as customers are thought to require reliable information about the product that they are purchasing (Morley, 2005).

Green (2010, p. 16) comments that “difficulties in defining quality as meeting customers’ needs, one of which is whether the ‘student’ is the customer, the product or both”. No matter how complex the definition may be, the management of the institutions and departments’ leaders need to discuss the meaning of quality and reach a common understanding for the betterment of the institutions. Definitions which focussed on the stakeholders’ expectations are reflected in Cheng and Cheung (2003) study.

According to the CHE (2011), it is stated that “it is normally acknowledged that quality is challenging”. Thus, stakeholders need to have a common understanding of what constitutes quality. Institutions are situated among the diversified societies. Dill (2010) mentions that “institutions reply on the needs of various and excepted groups, amenities and performs and need to offer extended packages to answer to specific needs of different spaces and users”.

Dill (2006) reflects on the academics’ perceptions of quality “that scholars view quality as establishment and encumbrance”. Hence understanding that quality assists them in promoting quality teaching. Ozturgut (2011) says that “various readings absorbed on the academics’ perceptions of quality and that academics drew on notions of quality as understood within outdated academic dialogues of superiority in scholarly attempt”. Researchers have a responsibility to assure quality in their teaching. Therefore, when discussing quality with all stakeholders, there needs to be a common understanding of how it should be promoted and what will be the outcomes if it is not implemented accordingly.

Ozturgut (2011) perceives academics are managing quality by directing dialogues with frontline scholars as a means to promote quality. It was found that the universal outlines of the academic discernments of quality are that they look at quality as a “burden”. Thus, it is required that stakeholders discuss the issues of dissemination of power in the institutions.

c. Quality is a relative concept

According to Doherty (2008 p. 25) quality, like beauty “is subjective – a matter of personal judgment”. What may appear to be quality to one person may be regarded not quality by the next person. It is for this reason that there is a need for guidelines in the form of frameworks that can bring in a standard convergence in what quality is in a specific target group or constituency.

d. Quality is a matter of culture

According to Sikkema (2015), due to the pronounced differences in culture, Asian and Western students are often the subjects of culture-specific learning style and research. For example, Harvey and Green (2012) studied final year students in Hong Kong and found that culture mediates the effect of extroversion/introversion on students learning preferences. In another study, Dunn and Shome (2009) examined the ethicality of Chinese and Canadian business students and demonstrated that culture affects individual-level actions but not corporate-level actions, a phenomenon known as cultural cross-vergence.

Dunn and Shome (2009) also demonstrated that social desirability bias, or the degree to which an individual’s values match the individual’s peers, differs as a function of culture. Hu, Chand and Evans (2013) compared cultural values of Australian and Chinese accounting students and showed that student’s cultural values may changes as a result of acculturation and education. Hu et al. (2013) also highlighted a clear difference in accounting judgments that result from cultural differences. Other studies incorporated comparisons between broader international student groups.

Evans and Waring (2011) compared three distinct groups of students across cognitive styles and cultural variables and found that culture affected student feedback preferences. Also, according to Sulkowski and Deakin (2009), the application of Hofstede’s (2010) cultural dimensions is helpful for identifying cultural differences of learners but does not yield a prescriptive panacea for all

instructor actions. While these studies imply that culture does indeed impact learning styles, there is other research that contradicts this notion.

For example, Wong (2011) developed a mixed methods project that assessed Asian students' perceptions of the major challenges faced while studying at a foreign university and noted that most were able to adapt quickly to new styles of teaching and learning. Wong's (2011) results contradict the notion of culture-specific learning styles and instead suggested that learning styles may be contextual.

These contradictions are inherent in a field which is still in relative growing, as aptly noted by Eaves (2011). The underdeveloped stage of learning styles research, combined with debates over the validity and legitimacy of the terms "culture" and "learning styles", makes it very difficult to determine a single culture-specific learning style construct. So, while evidence exists that culture impacts learning styles, it is often in disparate form making it difficult to identify any particular construct.

e. Being efficient and do things effectively defines quality.

According to Shin (2011), efficiency and effectiveness can be achieved through compliance with accreditation guidelines. He further states that proficiency is required to be passionate, with commitment and ambitions. Thus, it is important to know and understand the accreditation guidelines.

2.4.2. Quality in higher education

Cheng (2011) and Pounder (2010) believe that "defining quality in higher education has been stimulating for several reasons, one being that education is a service (Chen and Hu, 2010), and like all services, there is a lack of standardization in definition with the measurement of service quality remaining a challenge for all". The problem gets overblown with multiple "customer groups" in education, each of which has its requirements that often conflict and contradict each other (Kwek, Lau and Tan, 2010).

According to Elassy (2013b), although quality was originally derived from industries and businesses, its definition in an educational context should be different from its meaning in other areas. This is because the education procedures are very complex and embrace many fundamentals, such as scholars, instructors, officers, curriculum, teaching and assessment procedures that complexly work with each other. Education deals with students' attitudes, values and minds instead of with goods, as it is the case in industry; in that process, students themselves receive and perceive teaching in different ways.

2.5. Factors affecting provision of quality education in higher education institutions

Cartwright (2007) argues that “the provision of quality outcomes is of pivotal importance to ensure efficient labour markets, but beyond this dimension, other factors are also of importance”. Labour markets suffer from a high labour supply, but a lack of jobs. Although the number of graduates entering the labour market has increased significantly over the past two decades, the chance to obtain a job which is suitable to the single individual's qualification (a “career job”, fitting expectations concerning income, no limited or part-time employment) has not increased, instead has even decreased during this period (El Zanaty and Associates, 2007; Osman, 2011).

2.5.1. Funding in institutions of higher education

Stakeholders need to explore different ways and types of funding to assure quality in their institutions. Gamboa and Mel-ao (2012) emphasise that “higher education relies heavily on government funding in many nations, the pressure is mounting on higher education institutes to make effective and efficient use of public funds, and one means to determine practical administration of these funds to relevant participants is through the use of presentation pointers”. Gamboa and Mel-ao (2012) further suggest that the performance pointers need to be considered in funding policies.

Gamboa and Mel-ao (2012) further declare that the use of Public Interest Score (PIS) “is needed to provide a basis for improved internal presentation and internal and

external communiqué”. Thus, the understanding of the implementation of the performance indicators is important to all stakeholders. Several researchers (Patrick and Stanley, 2011; Taylor, 2009, p.379), argue that “governments, funders, and sponsors are increasingly linking the funding of HEIs with PIS even HEIs that do not heavily rely on government funding need to continuously improve their performance to ensure a sustainable level of funding”. They further state that “to this end, the use of PIS is gaining recognition as an important tool for the continued survival of the HEIs”. Therefore, institutions of higher learning need to consider the use of performance indicators to promote quality.

2.5.2. Student enrolments

Shah and Jarzabkowski (2013) mention that “higher education has experienced massive expansion regarding student enrolments and the emergence of new kinds of providers. Osman (2011) believes that “the increased flexibility, new kinds of providers and new modes of education delivery all underline the need to assess the quality of provisions (graduates in this case) based on feedback from employers and industry bodies representing different professions. Thus, managing the student enrolments need greater consideration and assessment by all stakeholders.

Osman (2011) points out that “there are apprehensions worldwide that current graduate packages are not assisting graduates to be effective in their careers”. Therefore, it is important for higher education institutions to adhere to quality standards of teaching their programs. This is where the accreditation bodies come in handy to provide quality and its assurance standards for institutions of higher education. Peace (2004) highlights concerns about “accreditation standards”. Thus, accreditation standards need to be considered when quality planning takes place in institutions.

A large-scale study by Osman (2011) funded by the Commonwealth Government with 1,105 graduate employers in Australia, found that employers rated five skills as most important: creativity and flexibility and adaptability. Skills need to be deliberated in the formulation of the institutions’ quality policy. Previous studies in various contexts

suggest concerns raised by employers and industries about the quality of provisions in university graduates.

2.5.3. Student involvement in quality promotion

Students as stakeholders need to play their role in the quality promotion of the institution. Lange and Singh (2010) believe that “there are limitations regarding student involvement in quality assurance programs”. Therefore, there is a need for all stakeholders involved to comprehend and understand the policies about the involvement of students in the success of an institutions. Student representatives need to have a good understanding of their role and involvement in decision-making processes. Therefore, it is suggested that all students need to understand institutions’ policies before they elect their representatives. The elected student representatives need to familiarise themselves with their roles and responsibilities in their institutions. There should be discussions taking place between the institutions and the national bodies on the guidelines of student participation. Thus, for the programs of the institutions add standard value, there is a need for common legislations among all countries. The reports from the institutions whose legislation allow for student participation should be studied further. Stakeholders’ understanding of the goals and objectives of each program is important in promoting quality. Therefore, there is need for students to understand the expectations and objectives of each program.

2.6. Challenges affecting the provision of quality education

As for tertiary education, several challenges have been identified, with the general findings being that the education system provides “quantity solutions” rather than “quality solutions” (Bryk, Harding and Greenberg, 2012). Overcrowding of students in higher education is the consequence of lack of a quality focus by the institutions. Current data indicates that the number of students entering higher education institutions grows at about 6 per cent (60,000 students) per year. Furthermore, the expected increase in the higher education students’ enrolment goes up to more than 35 per cent, with the percentage of the youth population entering the working age being estimated to rise to 67 per cent by 2020 (Bryk et al., 2012).

Higher education is characterised by a lack of adequate and qualified teaching staff, affected by under-motivation and underpay, which often leads to poor quality of provisions. As a consequence, the OECD (2010) recognises the significant discrepancy between the labour demand and the skills provided by graduates and young academics. Employers claim to seek graduates who have not only “hard skills” in the sense of technical or formal knowledge but also possess “soft skills”. Graduates must have computer and information technology skills, as well as other communication and team work skills (Ahamer, 2011a). According to Coplin (2003), employers want to hire graduates with personal potential for excellence who perform well in daily business and take initiatives, no matter which grade or specialisation they acquired. Employability skills, more detailed, can be classified as “core employability skills”, which cover generic attitudinal and effective skills, and “communication skills” (for example, English language skills, written and verbal communication (Osman, 2013). In a wider sense, the definition of “employability” comprises writing and oral communication skills, skills in mathematics, research, decision-making, critical thinking, evaluation, computer work, teamwork and lifelong learning skills (Arani et al., 2014). These qualifications have to be obtained within the course of study, the curriculum itself, not after graduation. The higher education system has to equip students with these named skills to enhance their career flexibility (American Society for Quality, 2012).

2.6.1. Stakeholder involvement in quality assurance

Academics have different perceptions about the involvement of quality assurance processes in their institutions. Thus, there is need for the involvement of academics in quality assurance processes so that they promote quality teaching in their classes. International procedures and standards are important in ensuring quality assurance within the institutions. Thus, the international standards need to be communicated and understood for effective implementation. Shah and Jarzabkowski (2013) believe that “improvement procedures for creating self-assurance, delivery and attaining opportunities are necessary for the development of strategies”. Santos (2013) recognises a positive attitude in academics holding leadership positions.

2.6.2. Quality as policy issue

Redmond et al. (2008) mention that “quality has been important as a policy issue, as a focus of practice and as a concern for studies in higher education research. Quality policies assist in guiding the operations of the institutions. Like many other phenomena in our increasingly globalised world, quality practices in higher education have become increasingly internationalised; they involve branch campuses, partners in more than one country, or dual degree programs (Knight, 2007). Despite the potential that internationalisation presents, it is unsettling that much of this activity happens without extensive enough exploration of the underlying assumptions about quality present in the policies and practices that are transplanted across national settings (Law, 2010; Kells, 2008, 2010).

2.6.3. International rankings of institutions of higher education

International university rankings constitute an important example of the pervasive and contested nature of international quality practices in higher education. International rankings are documented to have both positive and negative consequences (Marginson and Van der Wende, 2007) for countries and institutions alike. The methods that ranking procedures follow have been questioned, given the extensive use of proxy measures and their lack of coherent models for quality (Marginson, 2007). Marginson and Van der Wende (2007) point out that the quality of teaching, for example, is an important measure for global rankings; however, quality of teaching is determined in many rankings by faculty-student ratios, even though such a proxy says little or nothing about what happens inside the classroom. Despite the contested methods that international rankings follow, they influence national and institutional policies and decision making. One of the core issues regarding international rankings is that they ignore the vast differences of institutional missions and traditions and established comparisons among very different institutional types (Marginson, 2007). International rankings often compare only reputation and ignore what matters in higher education quality and the quality of provisions.

Despite the rapid expansion of international rankings in recent years, some criticisms of cross-border university comparisons have surfaced (Shin and Toutkoushian, 2011).

Countries differ regarding their history, culture, educational traditions, and perspectives (Lewis, Perry and Hurd, 2009). As a result, some authors argue that even when data are available, comparing universities from different countries can be problematic because university quality is affected by socio-cultural and politico-economic forces (Jöns and Hoyler, 2013).

Consensus on the need to perform a thorough appraisal of the methodology used to produce university rankings is therefore growing (Shin and Toutkoushian, 2011). Data validity and reliability are indispensable to assessment (Hou, 2012), as they make it easy for users to compare and contrast different universities' status within academia. Nonetheless, some questions have arisen about their appropriateness and legitimacy. These questions relate to the definition and quality criteria for the indicators selected (Lukman, Krajnc and Glavic, 2010) as well as the fairness of making quantitative comparisons between universities (Huang, 2011).

Due to the wide range of functions universities have to perform, consensus on the best way to define and measure university quality has not yet been reached (Brochado, 2009; Tang and Wu, 2010). According to Huang (2011), university evaluation should have a broad scope that includes overall research activities.

2.6.6. Employability skills of graduates

As for the question of employability skills of graduates, there is no evidence that the accreditation of institutions and programs have had a positive impact so far (Amaral and Rosa, 2011). Following a small survey among employers and human resource managers in the field of engineering, carried out by Osman in 2011, only four of ten employers are "somewhat satisfied" with the employability of graduates, and most others are "not at all satisfied", while no employer in the sample was "very satisfied". The same is true for students, who do not feel properly prepared for the requirements of modern labour markets in several dimensions (Osman, 2011).

In a study by Johnson on the employability skills of graduates it was concluded that quality documentation, as an integral part of the overall quality, was perceived as

weak, reports and documentations defective and not integrated into the single faculties' daily business (Johnson, 2012). Concerning the quality of education, in particular with respect to “employability skills”, students acknowledge their performance as being enhanced to some extent because the programs have been introduced that are perceived to be of quality, mainly attributed to the improved infrastructure, staff training and the increased use of new technology (El Baday et al., 2009).

2.6.7. Quality teaching and learning

The quality enhancement of teaching tends to be both more diverse and less clearly defined than quality assurance. Examples of mechanisms for the enhancement of teaching quality are workshops, short courses, projects, grants for teaching initiatives, awards to outstanding teachers, mentoring systems for new staff, voluntary teaching and course evaluation mechanisms, and others. Given the variety of types of schemes and the wide diversity in which they operate, Kember proposes some categorisation scheme. This two-category scheme refers to the ongoing project-type initiatives and workshop-type activities (Kember, 2010).

Inquiry-based pedagogical approaches need to be improved (Deignan, 2009) to enhance students' engagement (Oliver, 2008) and positive impact of students' future grades and course selection (Kogan and Laursen, 2014); promote more critical and complex thinking (Thoron and Myers, 2012); and facilitate intrapersonal and interpersonal development among a variety of student populations (Hunter, Laursen, and Seymour, 2007; Lopatto, 2010).

El Baday et al. (2009) argue that organisations “have a burden to establish employment”. Thus, quality content should aim at assisting students to “meet the needs of the labour market”. Students support mechanisms are important. Pervin and John (2010) believe that learning support is “fundamental in the holistic approach to education”. Therefore, the mechanisms are important in creating connections among stakeholders.

2.6.8. Operational resources

Lack of financial resources and other operational resources devoted to institutions of higher education can be evidenced in many ways. Inadequate budgets; inadequate learning facilities; insufficient lecture or teaching rooms; insufficient, underpaid, and/or insufficiently trained faculty; lack of management and supervision; lack of and/or, poor quality reading materials and other learning materials; and insufficient attention to standards and quality assurance. Every one of these results of insufficient funding can act as a barrier to access to quality higher education (Cheung et al., 2011).

Resources play an important role in quality promotion. Cheung et al. (2011) state that “successful implementation of the institution’s resource policy is necessary”. According to Ahamer (2012a) “teachers use a wide range of stimulating and exciting materials to teach the concepts outlined in the curriculum to ensure that students are actively involved in their learning. In time, students and parents witness a shift from textbook-based to standards-based instruction, bringing educational practices in line with the best school systems around the world”. Thus, for effective and progressive teaching, teachers need to use a variety of teaching resources and make them available to students to support them.

2.6.9. Individual performance

Students’ attendance and their ability to be able to do their work progressively improves the quality of their work and increase their performance as they would have matured intellectually. Intellectual maturity would therefore logically be a result of having more educational experience. In support of this reasoning, a recent study found that having prior experience from higher education significantly predicted better academic outcomes among undergraduate occupational therapy students in Norway (Bonsaksen, 2016). Research suggests that study groups may also facilitate individual academic performance (Forsyth, 2006). By their nature, study groups care for their members’ emotional and relationship needs and seek to find the appropriate balance between orienting towards the tasks and the relationships in the group (Forsyth, 2006). Using the concepts of the Social Profile (Donohue, 2013), such behaviours reflect a group functioning primarily at the basic cooperative, supportive and mature levels, respectively for the good and benefit of their members.

2.6.10. Systems approach perspective

Quality in higher education may be best assessed using a systems approach. Mizikaci (2006) feels that “with educational institutions being assessed in input, processes and output stages”, this can assure quality. Total quality, therefore, serves as the basis for quality enhancement. A system consists of several components or subsystems which depend on each other. A system is defined as a unified whole or set of interrelated and interacting elements/ components. A system processes input into outputs. Therefore, each system processes input into outputs, each system consists of boundaries, components, interactions between components, inputs and outputs (Mizikaci, 2006). The systems approach emerged as scientists and philosophers identified common themes in the approach to manage and organise complex systems. Literature intimates that quality and its assurance in higher education takes the form of complex systems (McShane and Von Glinow, 2013). Organisational management systems including systems to manage quality in organisations consist of many internal subsystems that need to be continually aligned with each other. As companies grow, they develop more and more complex subsystems that must coordinate with each other in the process of transforming inputs to outputs (McShane and Von Glinow, 2013). These interdependencies can easily become so complex that a minor event in one subsystem may amplify into serious unintended consequences elsewhere in the organisation. Every organised enterprise does not exist in a vacuum. It is rather known to depend on its external environment – which is a part of a larger system, such as the industry to which it belongs, the economic system and the society (Wehrich, 2008).

2.6.11. Quality of higher education output

Quality of the output (students) of any educational institution may depend on many factors like curriculum, technology, infrastructure, assessment, students and its faculty. The most important of all these factors is faculty. If faculty members are satisfied, motivated and committed, then students’ learning is going to be much better (Rush and Hart, 2005). No matter how advanced technology and infrastructure may be, how well designed the curriculum is and how delicate the assessment mechanisms

are faculty is a variable that supersedes all. Quality matters as a core value in international higher education (Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbly, 2010). Some have argued that a research-informed concept of quality should be guided by research and practice in higher education (Harvey and Newton, 2004).

Institutional learning should contribute to the overall organisational goals by presenting a multidimensional model that attends to the organisational aspects of quality as a process rather than trying to define quality as a specific commodity (Mizikaci, 2016). Quality is a conceptual diamond of value that is composed of four cornerstones – quality, access, investment and relevance (Ramadan, Zaaba and Umemoto, 2011). Mora and Vieira (2009) argue that these elements need to be present and balance each other. In other words, quality alone is not enough – we need a process-oriented approach to increasing quality as part of value that includes an emphasis on access and relevance supported by investment. According to ISO (2011) conflict between quality for accountability and quality of teaching needs consideration. This is also emphasised by Munk School of Global Affairs (2013).

2.7. Dimensions that strengthen and enhance provision of quality education in higher education institutions

The dimensions that strengthen and enhance provisions, namely, the quality management framework, quality assurance, student involvement, accreditation, quality enhancement, quality improvement, current strategies, total quality management, quality teaching and reliable instruments and techniques will be discussed (Moitus, 2004).

Education providers such as higher learning institutions regard the importance of quality due to demand from the learners and stakeholders of high quality education (Moitus, 2004). Furthermore, an emergence of new higher education institutions has intensified competition among institutions to provide the best education to the learners (Bayraktara, Tatoglub and Zaimc, 2008). This resulted in some institutions to introduce quality assurance programs or systems to their processes to fulfil the demand of learners and stakeholders for the good quality of provisions.

According to the OECD (2010) “quality has been important as a policy issue, as a focus of practice and as a concern for study in higher education research”. As the higher education market becomes more open and competitive, however, there is an increasing clamour for information about the quality of provisions of HEIs (Coates, 2007). Moreover, funding agencies are constantly seeking assurance that funds are being spent in areas that are consistent with the goals of institutional efficiency and equality. Therefore, achieving high-quality provisions is of paramount importance (Garlick and Langworthy, 2008). The assessment of university quality has become a key issue among academics and policymakers. This is perhaps on account of an intense focus on evaluations, an increase in participation rates, and the marketisation and globalisation of universities (Dill, 2006; Shin and Harman, 2009).

Currently, the exponential growth in the media’s scope is fuelling this growing demand for assessment for quality. The pioneers of university evaluations and rankings, mass media, and commercial publishing enterprises (Bonaccorsi and Daraio, 2005; Shin and Harman, 2009) originally used this venture to expand their business horizons by entering an untapped niche market (Shin, 2011). Higher education provides the ideal setting in which to study the subject of university quality (Quinn et al., 2009). According to Mora and Vieira (2009), universities have been pursuing new ways in which to inform their stakeholders of their presentation. Classifications thus contribute to institutional quality and administrative efficacy, and they fulfil an increasing customer demand for information about academic quality. Nevertheless, controversy surrounds the methodology used to compile such evaluation tools.

Different compilers have thus adopted different methods to produce their rankings. In spite of this lack of methodological uniformity, however, university rankings are undoubtedly influencing the strategy of HEIs, and there is a widespread belief that they are here to stay (Coates, 2007; Hou, 2012). Dill (2006) believes that “many countries have shown interest in such methodologies, developing complementary ways to evaluate the eminence of their higher education methods (Dill and Soo, 2005). Spain is a prime example of this phenomenon. According to Pulido (2009) in 1989, a seminar entitled “Towards a classification of universities according to quality criteria” was held. The event was sponsored by the Spanish Secretary of State for Universities and Research. The seminar was the trigger that raised awareness about university

rankings in Spain. Since this event, many initiatives in this area have been carried out, and many others are still underway.

2.7.1. Institutional vision

According to Manasse (2007: p.5), the vision pronounces visualisation as a "goal-oriented intellectual concept that directs people's performance and as a representation of the upcoming for which people are enthusiastic to work to achieve". Communicating an institution's vision is important.

2.7.1.1. Shared vision

Bess and Dee (2008: p.79) state that "collective vision generates obligation, motivates extra determination to be accomplished. It motivates and excites workers to innovate since the overall success of the organisation affects everyone. Shared vision clarifies workers' and managers' expectations in the organisation, creating a uniform vision". Each worker in the organisation is a member of a larger team, and this inspires workers to care for one another since there is no rivalry to achieve personal interests. Owned vision improves accountability since there is no need to hide failures or pass blame to others. Workers can learn from their failures without feeling mistreated by the administration and their associated workers. This collaborative environment encourages communication between the administration and the staff, which endorses effectiveness in the whole organisation. According to Seeley (2008) shared vision is important to an organisation because it creates a common identity and purpose for all staff. It promotes teamwork between departments, which improves the operational efficiency in the organisation.

2.7.2. Integrity of graduate output

Institutions need to produce graduates that can implement theory learnt and contribute in the economic development of the country with integrity. Integrity begins while students are still engaged in an institution of higher learning. The integrity of the institution, its staff and faculty as they lead by example trickles down to the students. The character that the students portray at work is developed and moulded while they are still at university or college (Seeley, 2008). Integrity is the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles or moral uprightness. It is generally a personal choice to hold oneself to consistent moral and ethical standards (Seeley, 2008). In ethics, integrity is regarded as the honesty and truthfulness or accuracy of one's actions. Integrity can stand in opposition to hypocrisy (Hou, 2012) in that judging with the standards of integrity involves regarding internal consistency as a virtue and suggests that parties holding within themselves conflicting values should account for the discrepancy or alter their beliefs. The word integrity evolved from the Latin adjective *integer*, meaning whole or complete (Hou, 2012). In this context, integrity is the inner sense of "wholeness" deriving from qualities such as honesty and consistency of character. As such, one may judge that others "have integrity" to the extent that they act according to the values, beliefs and principles they claim to hold (Hou, 2012; Seeley, 2008; Dill and Soo, 2005).

2.7.3. Quality management systems

Garavan (2012) believes that quality management systems enrich the attractiveness and efficiency of the establishments within the institutions of higher learning and they are looking for efficacy across functions and procedures to improve the quality of provisions. Promoting quality provisions is critical to the survival of institutions of higher education. According to Elassy (2013a), some principles and concepts promote provisions, and these are the importance of provisions; forestalling prospects of the students; identifying, refining procedures and structures; executing collaboration and partnerships. Mokhtar and Yusof (2010) believes that the impact of globalisation and technology advancement has created a tremendous pressure for organisations to perform in the industry and seeks for excellence.

All organisations have their ways of doing things, with some being in the mind of the leaders, while in others, it is put on paper. In most cases, organisations mix a bit of both (Hoyle, 2007). Before ISO 9000, the inadequate and inefficient systems enabled human beings to achieve objectives which transformed the society by 1987 (Hoyle, 2007). They went on to improve these systems, making them more predictable, effective, and efficient, thereby optimising organisational performance (Kolka, 2012). ISO 9000 required organisations to launch a quality system that ensured the product met the stipulated requirements. Quality systems are meant to provide support and the mechanism for effectiveness regarding quality- related processes in an organisation. In other words, it is a systematic way of managing quality in an organisation (Kolka, 2012).

2.7.3.1. The Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF)

This section summarises the key aspects and provisions of the HEQF (2007).

The Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF), which was promulgated in October 2007 (Government Gazette No 30353 of 5 October 2007), provided for the establishment of a single qualifications framework for higher education to facilitate the development of a single national coordinated higher education system, as envisaged in Education White Paper 3, A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (1997). Its key objective was to enable the articulation of programmes and the transfer of students between programmes and higher education institutions, which the then separate and parallel qualifications structures for universities and the erstwhile technikons (now Universities of Technology) were perceived to preclude.

The implementation of the HEQF – since 1 January 2009 all new programmes submitted to the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) for accreditation have had to be compliant with the HEQF – confirmed that despite the robust nature of the design of the HEQF, there remained, as the CHE advised the then Minister of Education in April 2007, “unresolved concerns about the number, nature and purposes of the qualification types” set out in the HEQF. In addition, the accreditation process also revealed some inconsistencies and gaps in the HEQF, which had an adverse

impact on meeting national policy goals and objectives. The concerns and inconsistencies included the following:

- The appropriateness of the nine qualification types, including the designated variants, in the light of different institutional missions and labour market expectations, in particular, the lack of a degree variant unique to the Universities of Technology.
- The coherence and consistency in the designation, credit value and pegging of some qualifications in the context of the needs of different professions, in particular, the lack of 240 credit diplomas which may be required, for example, in a range of auxiliary health professions.
- The articulation pathways between undergraduate diploma and postgraduate programmes regarding the time required to complete a Master's degree; for example, a student with an undergraduate Diploma would require two additional years of study before being considered for entry into a Master's programme.
- The appropriateness of some postgraduate qualifications in different professional fields and their international comparability such as the M.Med.
- The extent to which the range of qualifications available, in particular, at levels 5 and 6 are appropriate to support the goal of expanded access (HEQF, 2007).

2.7.3.2. Accreditation and quality assurance in higher education

Most national quality assurance systems comprise accreditation of complete institutions, departments or faculties, as well as the accreditation of specific study programs as one important factor too. Promotion needs careful consideration of the objectives of the accreditation bodies. Ramadan et al. (2011) believe in objectives, as defined by the accreditation bodies, these systems rely on the 'four-stage model' of external evaluation, which comprises a coordinating agency, a self-evaluation (for example, by report), an on-site peer visit and a general report. Thus, the accreditation body aims to evaluate programs.

From a theoretical viewpoint, the merits of accreditation can be seen in the peer-control as well as in the standardisation and fixation of the targeted outcomes-quality

or at least a minimum degree of quality (Harvey and Stensaker, 2006). The question whether accreditation is always able to secure quality remains unanswered. However, there is sufficient empirical evidence that accreditation can contribute to the operational and strategic quality of the institution itself, as well as to the quality of study programs and the outcome of quality (or employability) of graduates. This was concluded in a study carried out in the USA, on more than 95 per cent of the leading higher education staff from public and private institutions (NEASC, 2006). Stigler and Hiebert (2009) believe in acknowledging the challenges that arise from the status quo, and the authors argue that several efforts to improve the quality should be undertaken, which can be classified in two large groups: approaches focusing on cooperation with foreign institutions and domestic approaches for quality assurance. As for the first group, several international partners from non-profit organisations and foreign governments have been involved in program development.

To build effective links between employers and education, the British Council (2012) has created an initiative, linking UK Sector Skills Councils and their counterparts in Egypt with the goal to assist the Egyptian bodies to facilitate effective employer-education engagement and to train students for the current and future needs of industry in Egypt. An institution of higher education is accredited when most of the standards are fulfilled and will not get an accreditation when the standards are passed, with the option of a postponement if some of the standards of accreditation (except educational effectiveness standards) are not fulfilled yet (Ramadan et al., 2011).

2.7.3.3. Quality enhancement

Quality enhancement 'is a process of augmentation or improvement'. It has two strands: first, it is the 'enhancement of individual learners; the augmentation or improvement of learners' attributes, knowledge, ability, skills and potential.' Second, it is 'the improvement in the quality of an institution or programme of study' The use of the words 'enhancement' and 'improvement' are often interchangeable, as they are in the Oxford English Dictionary, but the terms are often used in subtly different ways. Improvement is often used to refer to a process of bringing an activity up to standard

whereas enhancement is about raising to a higher degree, intensifying or magnifying it (Campbell and Rosznyai, 2011).

Several definitions of quality enhancement focus on students' learning. The UK QAA defined Quality enhancement ... as an aspect of institutional quality management that is designed to secure, in the context of the constraints within which individual institutions operate, steady, reliable and demonstrable improvements in the quality of learning opportunities (QAA, 2009a). The QAA's Handbook for Enhancement-led Institutional Review: Scotland (QAA, 2009b) defined enhancement as 'taking deliberate steps to bring about continual improvement in the effectiveness of the learning experience of students'. However, there is also an argument that enhancement can be seen as a definition of quality (Campbell and Rosznyai, 2011; Vlăsceanu, 2007; De la Harpe, Radloff and Wyber, 2012) and this is critiqued by Harvey in the Analytic Quality Glossary because, he argues, quality is more than 'the continuous search for permanent improvement'. For critics such as Collini (2012), even the notion of continuous quality improvement in higher education is 'conceptually incoherent' because he argues, there is a limit to how far an activity that is already regarded as excellent can practically be improved.

2.7.3.4. Quality improvement

Bader (2013) believes in the importance of quality promotion by illustrating strategies to be followed to improve quality in institutions of higher education. According to Rush and Hart (2005), acknowledging the challenges that arise from the status quo attempts have been undertaken within the past decade, which can be classified in two large groups: approaches focusing on cooperation with foreign institutions and domestic approaches for quality assurance. As for the first group, several international partners from non-profit organisations and foreign governments have been involved in program development. So, to build effective links between employers and education, the British Council (2012) has created an initiative, linking UK Sector Skills Councils and their counterparts in Egypt with the goal to assist the Egyptian bodies to facilitate effective employer-education engagement and to train students for the current and future needs of industry in Egypt. These international partnerships may be more relevant, as Egypt

is one of the top ten emigration countries worldwide: not only the domestic labour market but also the international labour market is of relevance when it comes to employability skills and a match of skills and employer expectations. In particular, the labour markets in the Arab Gulf, the main target of Egyptian labour migrants within the past decades, may be of relevance in this study.

In these markets with strong international competition, in particular for high-skilled labour force, which are competing with workforce trained in the USA, the EU or in education institutions in the Gulf countries, the employers' ideas of employability may differ at least partially from the Egyptian one, so that the international dimension of the challenge becomes obvious (Salmi and Altbach, 2011).

2.7.3.5. Total Quality Management

Total Quality Management may differ in meaning to different sort of people. One person may consider something to mean Total Quality Management, while the next person may disagree. One question is usually asked, is there pleasing definition for the term Total Quality Management? Total Quality Management could be a necessity. It's a journey. It will never finish. It makes Japanese trade a miracle (Ho, 2009). It's the thanks to survive and succeed. What will it entail then? Total Quality Management is that the entirely integrated effort of gaining competitive advantage by endlessly upping each aspect of an organisation's activities.

Total Quality Management may be a people-focused management system that aims at continual increase in client satisfaction at a frequently lower real value. Quality management is an aggregate frameworks approach (not a different range or program) and an essential piece of high-level procedure; it works on a level plane crosswise over capacities and divisions, includes all representatives, start to finish and stretches out in reverse and forward to incorporate the store network and the client chain. Quality Management stresses learning and adjustment to consistent change as key to hierarchical achievement (Evans and Senior member, 2012).

Ross (2011) characterises quality management as the reconciliation of all capacities and procedures inside an association, to accomplish ceaseless change of the nature of merchandise and ventures. The objective is consumer loyalty. The Contracted Administration Foundation gives the accompanying definition as taken from Mulings (2007). Quality Management is a method for overseeing which gives everybody in the association duty regarding conveying quality to the last client; quality is being portrayed as 'wellness for reason' or as 'charming the client's necessities. Quality Management sees each assignment in the association as generally a procedure, which is in a client/supply association with the following procedure. The go for each stage is to characterise and meet the client's prerequisite with the point of amplifying the fulfilment of the last client at the most reduced conceivable cost (Mulings, 2007).

While focusing on quality in education Shah and Jarzabkowski (2013) mention the need to identify and apply the Total Quality Management principle, be it in teaching, learning and administrative/staff activities. One of the approaches to study the higher education is to view it as a system with distinct input, process and output stages, and this study is based on such an approach. The various stakeholders be they the board and administration, faculty, parents, students, industry and society at large, form constituents of the input, process and output. It is clear from the literature that the concept of Total Quality Management is not a commercial businesses concept only, education institutions are expected to frame, adopt and institutionalise the practices of Total Quality Management if they are to remain competitive and relevant to the community (Shah and Jarzabkowski, 2013).

2.7.3.6. Students involvement

Students' capacity to leverage quality is immense provided that students are given the right tools at the time and clarity on the objectives of their engagement. Student engagement can take different forms (on platforms, on boards, broad student satisfaction surveys, "instant feedback" techniques etc.) (Fleming, 2013). According to Fleming (2013), the principle of involving young people in decision-making at institutions has been mainstreamed; there remains little guidance or evidence on what is feasible or acceptable. Student involvement is most powerful as a driver of quality

teaching when it involves dialogue and not only information on the student's experience. As students are the intended beneficiaries of quality teaching, they can provide crucial "customer feedback" not only on what works well but also on what they would like to be done differently and how (Fleming, 2013).

However, obtaining constructive feedback from students is not a straightforward initiative. Students may be reluctant to take up such a role, and they may be dubious about the added-value of their contributions and believe that their views will be ignored (Salmi and Altbach, 2011). These concerns may be compounded if it is difficult for them to see evidence of action as a result of the various evaluations they participate in. It is, therefore, crucial to render students' evaluations meaningful to them if they are to be useful to the institution in promoting teaching quality (Salmi & Altbach, 2011). Some students may underestimate the constraints that institutions face and expect unrealistic changes. Others may be inclined to approach evaluation as a political issue and take a more obstructive than constructive attitude to it.

From their side, the academic community might be hesitant to entrust students with a role in contributing to or critiquing academic-related matters, not least because of concerns about the reliability and fairness of some instruments for gathering student feedback (Fleming, 2013). In some settings, academia might also be concerned that some students might use evaluation of their teachers as a bargaining chip, for example, to seek a higher assessment grade.

Despite these obstacles, it is worth recalling that students everywhere in the world are continuously making their own assessments of their teaching and learning experience, whether or not they have a channel through which to express them. Such insights provide an extremely valuable input to the process of improving quality teaching, but only if collected and analysed in an appropriate way (Salmi and Altbach, 2011).

2.7.3.7. Quality teaching to strengthen provision of quality education

Quality teaching in higher education matters for student learning outcomes. But fostering quality teaching presents higher education institutions with a range of challenges at a time when the higher education sector is coming under pressure from many different directions (Bédard, Clément and Taylor, 2010). Institutions need to

ensure that the education they offer meets the expectations of students and the requirements of employers, both today and for the future. Higher education institutions are complex organisations where the institution-wide vision and strategy needs to be well-aligned with bottom-up practices and innovations in teaching and learning (Bedard, Clement & Taylor, 2010). Developing institutions as effective learning communities where excellent pedagogical practices are developed and shared also requires leadership, collaboration and ways to address tensions between innovators and those reluctant to change.

Bedard, Clement and Taylor (2010) state that quality teaching is the use of pedagogical techniques to produce learning outcomes for students. It involves several dimensions, including the effective design of curriculum and course content, a variety of learning contexts (including guided independent study, project-based learning, collaborative learning, experimentation, and more), soliciting and using feedback, and effective assessment of learning outcomes. It also involves well-adapted learning environments and student support services. Literature examined on quality teaching above give a clear understanding of the universality nature of the challenges of quality teaching in institutions of higher education. The South Africa situation cannot be expected to be different from the global experience. Therefore, the argument is: are South African institutions of higher education developing into institutions of effective learning where excellent pedagogical practices are developed and shared and collaborated (Bedard, Clement and Taylor, 2010).

2.7.3.8. Resources in provision of quality education

According to Owoko (2009), the term 'resources' refers not only to teaching methods and materials but also the time available for instruction, the knowledge and skills of teachers acquired through training and experience. This can be achieved by an increase in resources or by re-arranging available resources. Students are not required to meet the classroom standards rather the classroom meets the individual needs of all the students (Bergsma, 2011). Puri and Abraham (2013) argue that school management and teachers should make efforts to identify and attend to all students even those with special learning needs.

Teaching and Learning Resources (TLR) comprise three components: material resources, physical facilities and human resources (Kochung, 2011). Studies about availability of TLR in education reveal that TLR are not always available in schools. This inadequacy of TLR has been of serious concern to educators (Oyugi and Nyaga, 2010; Kochung, 2011). According to Oyugi and Nyaga (2010), learning is a complex activity that involves interplay of students' motivation, physical facilities, teaching resources, and skills of teaching and curriculum demands. Availability of TLR, therefore, enhances the effectiveness of schools as they are the basic resources that bring about good academic performance in the students. The necessary resources that should be available for teaching and learning include material resources, human resource such as teachers and support staff and, physical facilities such as laboratories, libraries and classrooms.

TLR help improve access and educational outcomes since students are less likely to be absent from schools that provide interesting, meaningful and relevant experiences to them. These resources should be provided in quality and quantity in schools for effective teaching-learning process. Several studies have been conducted on the impact of instructional materials on education. Kochung (2011) researched the effects of instructional resources on students' performance in West Africa School Certificate Examinations (WASCE). The achievements of students in WASCE were related to the resources available for teaching. He concluded that material resources have a significant effect on students' achievement since they facilitate the learning of abstract concepts and ideas and discourage rote-learning. When TLR are inadequate education is compromised, and this inevitably is reflected in low academic achievement, high dropout rates, problem behaviours, poor teacher motivation and unmet educational goals.

According to Lee (2010), the word 'resource' has many facets. In some uses of the word, it means a source of supply, support or aid that can be readily drawn upon. At other times we use the word resource to refer to a capability or determination to persevere. In the context of classrooms, we see resources as physical demonstration aids, students' contextual understandings, teacher subject expertise, and structured organisation of materials, ideas, and activities. The points of contact at which students

interact with these resources (noting students themselves can be a resource) are where knowledge construction can occur.

In the past, educators and policy makers believed that by providing more resources, in the form of money and materials, they could directly improve student-learning outcomes (Grubb, 2008). To their frustration, this turned out not to be entirely true. Resources themselves are not self-enacting, that is, they do not make change inevitable. Differences in their effects depend on differences in their use (Cohen, Raudenbush and Ball, 2012; Grubb, 2008).

2.7.3.9. Strategic change and leadership

According to Villanueva (2011) higher education's leadership should identify who is in a position of authority to effect significant strategic change and enforce institution-wide policies with respect to teaching and learning, clarify the ownership of pedagogical development and develop a clear-cut understanding of these responsibilities at departmental or school level, identify who is capable of successfully implementing reforms within and across departments either because of their position of authority or because of the respect of their colleagues and seek to strengthen their commitment to improving quality teaching.

As per Watty (2006) for the universities to enhance the provision of quality education and foster leadership on quality teaching, university leadership should assign institutional leaders, heads of departments, program leaders and directors of support services explicit responsibilities for fostering quality teaching and learning.

- Ensure that leadership responsibilities are matched with the resources and the tools needed to deliver results.
- Create an environment where everyone (teacher, student, support staff, and others) operates within a identifiable leadership structure (for example, program leaders).
- Foster effective leadership competencies at all levels within the institution.

- Provide attractive career paths for those taking on leadership responsibilities and ensure appropriate compensation (for example, financial support, career upgrading, diminished teaching load).

Lewis and Smith (2009) believe that leaders are role-models who influence the culture, values, thoughts and actions of the organisation and its people. The leadership style practiced by managers greatly influences the performance and productivity at the workplace. The situational leadership model encourages managers to flexibly use their leadership style based on the situation and thus achieve effective results. Both at the middle managerial level where leaders work closely with people and at higher managerial level where leaders are responsible to some people, their approach has an impact on the motivational levels of the organisation.

Situational Leadership has all the more relevance when teams work together especially across functions or locations. In these cases, the team members might be physically separated from the leaders, and the work situations might rapidly change; in such cases, maintaining the involvement and motivation level of team members become important. To create a high-performing team that works effectively, the style that the leader would have to choose may be unique for each team.

- Directing – This leadership approach is most appropriate when the followers have low willingness and low ability for the task at hand. When the followers cannot do the job and are unwilling or afraid to try, then the leader must take a highly directive role. Directing requires those in charge to define the roles and tasks of the followers, and supervise them closely. Those in charge and communication make decisions is one-way. If the leader focused more on the relationship in this situation, the followers would become confused about what must be done and what is optional. Directing is often used when the issue is serious or comes with drastic consequences if not successful. The leader maintains a directive position to ensure all required actions are completed.
- Coaching – This leadership approach is most appropriate when the followers have high willingness but low ability for the task at hand. Like Directing,

Coaching still requires leaders to define roles and tasks clearly, but the leader seeks ideas and suggestions from the follower. Decisions remain the leader's prerogative, but communication is much more two-way. Followers needing coaching require direction and supervision because they are still relatively inexperienced, but they also need support and praise to build their self-esteem, and involvement in decision making to restore their commitment. While Coaching, the leader spends time listening, advising, and helping the follower gain necessary skills to do the task autonomously next time.

- Supporting – This leadership approach is most appropriate when the followers have low willingness but high ability for the task at hand. Supportive leadership works when the follower can do the job but is refusing to do it or showing a lack of commitment. The leader need not worry about showing them what to do but instead should be concerned with finding out why the followers are refusing and work to persuade them to cooperate. The key to supportive leadership is motivating and building confidence in people. Clarification on the details of the process won't matter, as the follower already knows what to do but lacks the motivation to act. Supportive leadership involves listening, giving praise and making the followers feel good when they show the necessary commitments for success.
- Delegating – This leadership approach is most appropriate when the followers have high willingness and high ability. Leaders should rely on delegating when the follower can do the job and is motivated to do it. There is a high amount of trust that the follower will do well, and the follower requires little supervision or support. Delegating still keeps the leader involved in the decisions and problem-solving, but execution is mostly in the hands of the followers. Because the follower has the most control, he is responsible for communicating information back up to the leader. Followers at this level have less need for support or frequent praise, although as with anyone, occasional recognition is always encouraged.

2.7.3.9.1. Democratic educational leadership style and its tenants

Edwin A. Locke, a professor emeritus of leadership and motivation at the University of Maryland, offers an expanded definition of democratic leadership by adding participative to the equation. Participative leadership is any power-sharing arrangement in which workplace influence is shared among individuals who are otherwise hierarchical unequal. Locke and his colleague David Schweiger explain in *“Participation in Decision-Making: One More Look.”* The authors warn that leaders should be careful when using the participatory style because it can backfire. If people feel their input is being ignored, the democratic/participative style “can lead to lower employee satisfaction and productivity,” Locke and his colleague wrote in 1979. The key to letting subordinates take part in decision making is to build mature teams with experienced and cooperative people. Democratic/participative teams are not only capable of making good decisions, but they also support their group’s goals — even when their suggestions aren’t adopted.

Bess and Dee (2008) argue that the participatory leadership paradigm is based on respect and engagement. It constructively focuses energy in every human to human encounter. A more advanced, more democratic and more effective model of leadership, it harnesses diversity, builds community, and creates shared responsibility for action. It deepens individual and collective learning yielding real development and growth. Participatory leaders are typically post conventional leaders. Their action logic uses every organisational interaction to make meaning, life purpose, grow self, others and transform organisations. Participatory leadership is a sustainable and empowering way to create successful organisation development and change. Participatory leaders use every meeting as a key mechanism through which to release potential.

Chong and Ahmed (2012) believe that the democratic leadership style always involves participative decision-making. It empowers employees to have a strong hand in managing organisations. Democratic/participative leadership — or the “style with two names” — has become popular in recent decades. It dates to the 1930s and ’40s. That’s when noted behavioural researcher Kurt Lewin led studies that helped identify the value of the democratic/participative leadership style in organisations. The

democratic leadership style is essentially a mode of leadership that is found in participative management and human resources theory. The definition of democratic leadership from an organisational standpoint involves the redistribution of authority and power between managers and employees to provide employee involvement in the process of decision making.

Before going any further, it is important to point out that there are conceptual differences between authority and leadership. The former is formalised power that is conferred on a person to engage in particular activities sanctioned by an institution or individual who has the power to be authoritative. For example, in a case where an individual is elected to a public office, the citizens of the state effectively conferred on that individual the power of representation. In an organisational structure, certain powers are conferred on the CEO of the company by a board of directors to implement board policies. However, leadership can be considered as the power possessed by an individual, who influences the action and belief of others.

Formal authority may or may not be possessed by a leader, and an individual who has authority may or may not occupy a leadership position. In essence, leadership is behaviour and not an office or position held by an individual. Democratic principles are used to manage the democratic leadership approach. These principles include deliberation, inclusiveness, equal participation and self-determination. The democratic leadership style is characterised by the three features outlined below:

- Delegation of Responsibility

A democratic leader will delegate responsibility among members of his or her team to facilitate member participation in making decisions.

- Empowerment of Group Members

It is incumbent on leaders to empower their team members so that the members will be properly equipped to accomplish their tasks. Included in the process of empowerment is the provision of the education and training required for the completion of delegated tasks. A significant role played by the democratic leader is ensuring that democratic deliberation takes place when group

decisions are being made. This indicates that the leader is supposed to serve as a mediator and facilitator between members of the group, make sure that the members are psychologically well and there is a respectful environment at all times. Similar to every other style of leadership, there are advantages and disadvantages of democratic leadership. Some of these benefits and drawbacks are outlined below:

The techniques used in democratic leadership play a significant role in creating job satisfaction, since a sense of autonomy, control and participation is fostered within the democratic leadership style. Greater participation from employees during the decision-making process could also result in more creative solutions and greater innovation to address problems and serve the organisation better. Below are some specific advantages of democratic leadership.

Democratic leaders are typically excellent at solving complex issues. They can work collaboratively, using a consensus of opinions to get things done the right way. The democratic leader often thinks innovatively and encourages others to do the same, so that solutions to complex and strategic problems can be found.

Successful democratic leaders differ from autocratic and laissez-faire leaders in two important ways.

- Unlike autocrats, democratic leaders expect people who report to them to have in-depth experience and to exhibit self-confidence.
- Unlike the laissez-faire style, which delegates authority to experts, democratic leaders are involved in the decision-making process.

- Democratic/participative leadership

It is difficult to imagine democratic leaders accomplishing their goals without direct participation from others. Participation is key to all successful democratic enterprises. This includes:

- Attentive constituents in a congressional district

- Concerned parents of students at a school
- Active members from a nonprofit organisation
- Engaged employees at a prospering company

Democratic/participative leaders have enormous responsibilities. Educational institutions that incorporate the democratic leadership style still need strong leaders who know how to avoid the pitfalls that can trip up collaborative teams when they lose their compass (Chong and Ahmed, 2012), and the leadership depicts the following characteristics:

(i) Ensure consistent implementation of institutional teaching and learning strategy.

- Ensure that the institution's teaching and learning framework can be easily adapted by each faculty member to reflect their values, ethos and modus operandi and then applied in their teaching practice.
- Monitor progress in implementing the teaching and learning framework across each level of the institution and regularly report results to heads of departments, deans, programme leaders and institution leaders.
- Develop appropriate platforms for sharing experience and initiatives across the institution.

(ii) Strengthen coherence across policies and procedures

According to Westerheijden, Hulpiau and Waeyten (2007) universities can strengthen coherence across policies to enhance to quality of provisions by identifying the fields and processes where the impact of policies can converge and be mutually reinforcing.

- Review policies regularly and systematically to detect inconsistencies across institutional policies or between policies at program, department/school and institution levels.
- Anchor departmental or program policies into the institution-wide teaching and learning framework and ensure the consistency across levels.
- Benchmark policy coherence with similar complex organisations (for example, large service-sector companies employing high-skilled staff or operating in a high-tech environment).

2.7.3.9.2. Need for policies and standards

Institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards. They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work. Institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality. The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available. They should also include a role for students and other stakeholders.

Formal policies and procedures provide a framework within which higher education institutions can develop and monitor the effectiveness of their quality assurance systems. They also help to provide public confidence in institutional autonomy. Policies contain the statements of intentions and the principal means by which these will be achieved. Procedural guidance can give more detailed information about how the policy is implemented and provides a useful reference point for those who need to know about the practical aspects of carrying out the procedures. The policy statement is expected to include:

- the relationship between teaching and research in the institution
- the institution's strategy for quality and standards
- the organisation of the quality assurance system
- the responsibilities of departments, schools, faculties and other organisational units and individuals for the assurance of quality
- the involvement of students in quality assurance
- how the policy is implemented, monitored and revised

The standards for internal quality assurance provide a valuable basis for the external quality assessment process. It is important that the institutions' internal policies and procedures are carefully evaluated in the course of external procedures, to determine the extent to which the standards are being met. If higher education institutions are to be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their internal quality assurance processes,

and if those processes properly assure quality and standards, then external processes might be less intensive than otherwise.

2.7.3.9.3. Coordinating quality teaching with human resources policies

To coordinate quality teaching with human resources policies, Ahamer (2011b) argues that university leadership should ensure that human resources policies (recruitment, remuneration, career progression, professional development and more) support the strategic objective of quality teaching and reflect the institution's teaching and learning framework.

- Incorporate pedagogical competencies in the human resources framework for evaluating performance and determining career progression.
- Quantify the different elements affecting faculty workload (for example, assessment of students, online teaching, face-to-face tutorials, students advising, project monitoring, administrative work, professional development, corporate partnership, work-placement supervision) and their contribution to effective teaching and learning.
- Adapt the remuneration package to reflect better the full range of effective teaching and learning practices (for example, moving beyond class contact hours).
- Examine the correlation between teaching engagement and research activities, and identify how to manage the balance between the two in determining career paths and remuneration.
- Where possible and relevant, include HR staff in discussions on improvement pathways and performance-related thresholds.
- Academic Staff Development. The experiences presented aim principally at improving the academic qualifications of higher education teachers to upgrade their level of training and research.
- The ability of staff to assure excellence in a given field – mainly through advanced post-graduate qualifications – is crucial if a higher education institution is to award a degree or diploma in that discipline. This problem has important ramifications both for institutions which are launching new areas of

study and also for those in the developing world wishing to strengthen and maintain high academic standards to rank at the international level.

- Development must address: The upgrading of knowledge in a discipline via adequate sabbatical arrangements, visiting professorships and academic networking facilities; the adaptation of this knowledge to the new demands of the labour market being faced by students, thus often necessitating curricular innovation.

Hence, these requirements presuppose an institutional policy which facilitates the acquisition and updating of expertise.

➤ Correct employees for the job

Osman (2011) believed that efficient staffing management begins by hiring the right people for open positions. When you conduct in-person interviews and ask potential employees pertinent questions as they relate to your industry, you get a better feel for who will best represent your company.

Hiring efficient, knowledgeable employees will help your business attain a reputation for quality products and service. Hiring undependable or unknowledgeable employees can turn off customers and make you lose business.

➤ Good Employees = Good Service

Coplin (2013) believed that efficient staffing management begins by hiring the right people for open positions. When the interview panel conduct in-person interviews and ask potential employees pertinent questions as they relate to the institution, they get a better feel for who will best represent the institution. Hiring efficient, knowledgeable employees will help the institution to attain a reputation for quality provisions, products and service. Hiring undependable or unknowledgeable employees can turn off customers and make you lose business.

➤ **Trained Employees Perform Better**

When employers train employees on all aspects of their job and give them insight into other positions in the institution, they develop well-rounded individuals who have a working knowledge of their positions and those of their colleagues. Knowledgeable employees are better able to answer customer questions, handle problems and deliver better quality service. Untrained employees who have to find a manager or send people away without help or information can create frustrated customers (DHE, 2012).

2.7.3.9.4. Coordinating quality teaching with technology policies

To coordinate quality teaching with technology policy, Ahamer (2011a) explores the following impacts of the introduction of technology into teaching and learning practices (for example, on management process, learning outcomes, assessment, inter-activity, and more).

- Assess the added-value of the use of technology in teaching on learning outcomes and ensure this information is provided to the institution's ICT decision-makers.
- Involve IT service providers in discussions with academia and students to better match technical aspects with educational requirements.
- Consider partnering with virtual universities or other providers who have demonstrated effective use of IT in teaching and learning.
- Support faculty to develop their IT skills and prompt them to update their knowledge and digital capability as well as informing them on the opportunities that IT can provide for enhancing quality of teaching and learning.

2.7.3.9.5. Coordinate quality teaching with learning environment policies

Bess and Dee (2008) argued that it is of vital importance to ensure the values of the institution are reflected in the learning environments. For instance, the promotion of diversity should entail adequate premises and provisions amenable to every kind of students irrespective of their gender, origin, background.

- Make sure the learning environments reflect a range of teaching modes (for example, interactive learning) and ensure that they allow for experimentation and easy adaptation to changes in teaching and learning processes.
- Align construction and refurbishment projects to the teaching and learning framework of the institution and involve the institution's property planners and managers in discussions on educational matters.
- Explore how learning environments can be made more conducive to exchange of knowledge, information and ideas on and out of campus, and encourage staff and students to interact within and across disciplines to coordinate quality teaching with learning environment policies

2.7.3.9.6. Coordinate quality teaching with student support policies

For the enhancement of the quality of provisions in higher education institutions, Brink (2010: 23) believed that “institutions should embed policies on student support in the teaching and learning framework (induction, accommodation, career counselling).

- Identify special learner types (e.g. students with disabilities, deprived or at-risk students) and provide specific provisions as well as personalised study plans.
- Provide induction programs to students unfamiliar with the goals and philosophy underpinning new paradigms of teaching and learning (for example, how to become an active student in class).
- Increase institutional awareness of the learning strategies implemented in departments (for example, learning communities, student-teacher interaction, student assignments, and more) and ensure they are aligned with the institution's teaching and learning framework.
- Support the evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency of student support provisions (for example, tutorship, counselling).
- Increase responsiveness to the results of surveys and program evaluations by ensuring remedial actions are taken where needed”.

2.7.3.9.7. Coordinate quality teaching with internationalisation policies

Exploit knowledge gained by students/faculty going abroad and set ways of integrating the added-value of in-coming students/faculty on campus to capitalise on this experience to enhance quality teaching.

- Identify R&D and innovation projects that offer international teaching and learning opportunities (for example, enrolling international interns) and ensure their co-ordination with the internationalisation policies.
- Engage where possible with evolving processes of international quality assurance and external reviews, including subject benchmarking and benchmark the quality of joint programs internationally.

According to Global Studies Lund (2012), faculty have increasingly sought to strengthen the relevance of their programs to societal and economic needs, and have become more willing to re-visit their role to strengthen the students' learning and their future employability. Many explore alternative pedagogies or adapt student-support to varied student profiles. Looking across countries, there is a common trend towards institutions adopting more strategic approaches to their development.

Many institutions have established explicit strategic objectives (sometimes prompted by contractual agreements with funding agencies) – that focus their mission, streamline their activities and guide their operational planning. These strategic objectives can also be used to signal an institutional commitment to fostering quality teaching and provide an anchor for developing a coherent set of initiatives – at institution, department, school or program level – and monitoring progress towards better results.

Five areas stand out where institutional policies may need closer alignment to support policy teaching: human resources; information and computing technology; learning environments; student support; and internationalisation (Jöns and Hoyler, 2013). Other elements of the policy mix are worth scrutinising (for example, financial management, public relations and marketing, R&D management, regional/industrial

partnerships for innovations). For example, an institutional strategy to strengthen engagement in regional innovation or community development might also play a role in leveraging the quality of teaching (Jöns and Hoyler, 2013).

2.7.3.9. University culture

Boyce (2003) believes that each university has a unique and cherished culture which is born from the institution's history and is steeped in tradition. This tradition, in turn, reinforces that history and works to incorporate newcomers into the culture by instilling defined cultural values. A university's culture, tradition, and values are not only important; they are vital to the wellbeing of the institution because they provide stability and continuity.

To remain viable though the campus culture must also evolve and adapt to meet change. As a living organism, it grows, adding new programs, constructing new buildings, and hiring needed personnel. At other times it is forced to modify its focus by shedding obsolete policies, eliminating outdated curricula, and adjusting short term goals. Over time a university matures, and so does its culture. It is important though that the school maintain the traditional core values that define it as an institution. Understanding the institution's culture and structure and their potential influences on your working life and career can leave you prepared (forewarned is forearmed) with strategies to make the most of opportunities that arise (Mizikaci, 2006).

2.7.3.10. Service quality

Delivering a high quality of service to clients is important to service organisations, including higher education institutions (Brochado, 2009). Service quality has been identified as a robust predictor of student satisfaction (Stevenson and Sander, 2000; Helgesen and Nasset, 2007). Consistent with findings from previous research, recent literature (Lee, 2010; Udo, Bagchi and Kirs, 2011) indicate that service quality is a key factor of customer satisfaction in the educational and e-learning setting.

Flexibility, responsiveness, interaction, student learning, technical support, and technology of online learning influence the satisfaction levels of students enrolled in

Internet-based online classes (McGorry, 2003). Rovai (2003) suggested that the quality of technology, support services, and course design and instruction must be evaluated to monitor student satisfaction and performance in online education. In evaluating the service quality of e-learning, Zhang et al. (2004) state that organisations must ensure adequate understanding of the needs and expectations of customers, and should gather customer feedback and satisfaction with the services provided.

2.8. Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the literature review on the concept of quality. The review of the literature focused on the different perceptions of the concept of quality, particularly in the higher education sector. Factors that impact on quality services delivery in the higher education sector were discussed from the viewpoint of the previous studies conducted. Finally, the dimensions that strengthen quality provisions by institutions of higher learning were comprehensively discussed. The next chapter outlines the research design and methodology employed in the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter explains the research design and the methodology that the researcher used in collecting the data to achieve the research objectives. The qualitative approach was preferred for this study because of the nature of the inquiry that was being undertaken (Bryman, 2012). The researcher meant to source people's ideas and opinions on quality and its assurance, as well as their quality practices in public and private institutions of higher education in the Durban Metropolitan area. The issue is that quality and quality assurance systems, as they apply to educational institutions, are perceived very differently by different people. In this study, the researcher aimed at understanding the situation in the studied institutions as it is constructed by the participants, which is the product of how people interpret their world. The study perceived quality and its assurance systems as social constructions which are premised on certain social values and which are necessarily affected by a multiplicity of factors within a given context (Creswell, 2009).

It was necessary to determine how the different players in each studied public and private institution of higher education "constructed their meaning" regarding quality and its assurance arrangements that are in place in their institutions. Thus, the researcher aimed to understand the feelings, motives and thoughts behind each participants' answers and views regarding quality and quality assurance systems (Creswell, 2009; Bryman, 2012). Understanding of such quality assurance systems entailed understanding the relevant socio-political environments of the studied institutions and using the qualitative approach offers the best approach to achieve this study's research objectives.

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009), the world is socially constructed, human interests drive science and the researcher as a subjective entity is part of the world he/she is observing. In describing the research design and methods used, the researcher included the advantages of a phenomenological qualitative research

method, the disadvantages, production of quality data, the research purpose, research process, sampling strategy, data collection methods, data analysis, pilot study and ethical considerations.

3.2. Research methodology

Research methodology is a process used to select the types of methods that are used to solve the research problem systematically. It describes the theoretical concepts that inform the choice of methods applied and determines how data were collected and analysed (Babbie, 2010). There are two approaches, which are commonly used in social sciences. These are qualitative and quantitative approaches. Debates about quantitative and qualitative methodologies tend to be cast as a context between innovative, socially responsible methods versus obstinately conservative and narrow-minded methods (an opinion of advocates of qualitative approaches) or precise, sophisticated techniques versus mere common sense (an opinion of supporters of quantitative approaches (Smith, 2011). A quantitative study usually ends with confirmation of the hypotheses that were tested (Kells, 2010). Quantitative researchers collect data in the form of numbers and use statistical types of data analysis. Qualitative researchers collect data by identifying and categorising themes (Seale, 2013). Bertram and Christiansen (2017) distinguish between qualitative and quantitative methodologies by stating that the quantitative research methodology relies upon measurement and uses various scales. The qualitative methodology uses words and sentences to qualify and to record the information about the world. Based on the research questions and the objectives of the study, the key underpinning of this study is the use of a humanist approach recognising that quality and its assurance in higher education often is centred on the experiences and perceptions of the participants and other stakeholders within the education sector. It was necessary for this purpose to use the qualitative approach.

The rationale for this approach was to compensate for and supplement the limitations of the quantitative approach or method. According to Creswell (2009, p.9):

“The argument goes that quantitative research is weak in understanding the context or setting in which people talk. Also, the voices of participants are not directly heard in

quantitative research. Further, quantitative researchers are in the background, and their own biases and interpretations are seldom discussed.”

Qualitative research makes up for these weaknesses. On the other hand, qualitative research is deficient because of the personal interpretations made by the researcher, the ensuing bias created by this, and the difficulty in generalising findings to a large group, because of the limited number of participants studied (Creswell, 2009; Bryman, 2012). Quantitative research, it is argued, does not have these weaknesses.

It is best to decide whether the researcher intends to acquire objective statistical data or make subjective interpretations based on the data collected (Rubin and Rubin, 2015). According to Saunders et al. (2009), the key distinctive features separating qualitative research from quantitative research are that qualitative research is conducted in a natural setting with the intent to understand a social or human problem. When the researcher begins the study using qualitative methods, the theory in question may be unknown. Qualitative research is based on inductive reasoning, and the theory will emerge as the study progresses. The distance between the subjects of the study and the researcher is kept at a minimum. The researcher naturally would interact with those being studied.

On the other hand, Steward (2009) argues that quantitative research is based on the goal of testing a theory. Before data is gathered, the features of the study are clearly defined and identified. The researcher knows in advance what he or she is looking for, and the researcher remains independent of what is being studied and separated from the subjects of the study. Smith (2011) argues that qualitative research collects data that is in the form of words, pictures, or objects and the data collected is subjective; it is derived from an individuals' interpretation of events. Data is collected through careful observation and in-depth personal interviews. Quantitative research is objective, employing numerical values to measure the collected data. Analysis of the quantitative data is conducted using statistical methods. Information is gathered through a series of questionnaires and surveys. Hypotheses are tested in a cause-effect order (Rubin and Rubin, 2015).

Qualitative methods are best applied when researching case studies, ethnographic studies, and phenomenological studies (Rubin and Rubin, 2015). Quantitative methods are employed when conducting experiments, quasi-experiments, and surveys (Smith, 2011). When assessing scientific research, it is important for the researcher to remember that the questions asked and the answers received would vary depending on whether the method used is qualitative or quantitative (Rubin and Rubin, 2015). The following sections examine the phenomenological qualitative research design that was employed for this study.

3.3. Phenomenological qualitative research

In line with Saunders et al. (2009) phenomenological qualitative research design was employed in conducting this study. The purpose of the phenomenological approach is to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how the actors in a situation perceive them. In the human sphere, this normally translates into gathering 'deep' information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions and participant observation, and representing it from the perspective of the research participants. Phenomenology is concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual, 'bracketing' taken-for-granted assumptions and usual ways of perceiving things. Epistemologically, phenomenological approaches are based in the paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity, and they emphasise the importance of personal perspective and interpretation (Saunders, 2012). As such, they are powerful for understanding subjective experiences, gaining insights into people's motivations and actions, and cutting through the clutter of taken-for-granted assumptions and conventional wisdom (Saunders, 2012).

Phenomenological research overlaps into other essentially qualitative approaches including ethnography, hermeneutics and symbolic interactionism (Cooper and Schindler, 2009). Pure phenomenological research seeks essentially to describe rather than explain and to start from a perspective free from the hypotheses or preconceptions. More recent humanist and feminist researchers refute the possibility of starting without preconceptions or bias, and emphasise the importance of making clear how interpretations and meanings have been placed on findings, as well as making the researcher visible in the 'frame' of the research as an interested and

subjective actor rather than a detached and impartial observer (Cooper and Schindler, 2009). Creswell (2010) argues that phenomenological methods are particularly effective at bringing to the fore the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their perspectives, and therefore good at challenging structural assumptions. By adding an interpretive dimension to phenomenological research, enabling it to be used as the basis for practical theory, allows it to inform, support or challenge policy and action.

3.3.1. Advantages of phenomenological qualitative research

The researcher would argue that the world is socially constructed, science is driven by human interests and the researcher, in this case, was part of the world she was observing and was a subjective entity. The findings of the study would have greater validity, and less artificiality as the process of observing phenomena in the natural, real life settings allowed the researcher to develop a more accurate understanding of those phenomena (Ventrice, 2008; Saunders, 2012). The researcher believed that phenomenological qualitative approach was the most suitable approach for this study, as it helped the researcher to solicit for specific participants` perceptions of the phenomenon that is quality and its assurance in selected higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area. As a result, the researcher was able to get the silent underlying philosophical believes of the stakeholders regarding provision of quality higher education in their institutions (Smith, 2011).

3.3.2. Disadvantages of a phenomenological quality research

The research driven by the phenomenological philosophy would sometimes be undermined by the subjectivity of the researcher, and thus create some bias (Ventrice, 2008; Saunders, 2012). Poor reliability of the findings in that, two researchers, for example, may arrive at different conclusions based on their observations of the same phenomena at the same time (Hamilton, 2003). The researcher believed that the variations in the perceptions of quality and its assurance among the participants were just a matter of semantics. Otherwise, there were no significant differences in the perceptions that could render the results of the study less objective (Hamilton, 2013; Saunders, 2012). While according to the phenomenological philosophy the researcher

is bound to be undermined by subjectivity, in this study the researcher endeavoured to maintain an objectivity disposition throughout the conduct of the study.

3.3.3. Features of the phenomenological qualitative research

The observer becomes part of what is being observed and science would be driven by human interest (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014). The focus was on the meanings, the researcher asked open-ended questions and recorded observations about the phenomena in the real-life context, searched for categories and groupings in the data, looked for patterns and recurrences in the data, interpreted the patterns into reasoned explanations of the phenomena (Saunders, 2012). As the researcher was physically part of the collection of the data through interviews, it gave her the opportunity to probe further to get in-depth appreciation of the phenomenon as elucidated by the interviewees, as they went deeper and deeper in unpacking their real-life experience with the phenomenon. Phenomenological qualitative research affords the researcher such opportunities and advantages (Merriam, 2013).

3.4. Research purpose

The purpose of research can be a complicated issue and varies across different scientific fields and disciplines. At the most basic level, science can be split, loosely, into two types, 'pure research' and 'applied research' and can be deductive or inductive (Miles et al., 2014; Saunders, 2012). The researcher used the inductive approach, aiming at capturing the silent personal feelings of the participants on the phenomenon under study. The researcher believed that the inductive approach as compared to the deductive approach allowed for more exploration and finding out what was happening and discovered the new insights about the phenomenon under study (Mason and Lind, 2014).

3.5. Research process

The research process was conducted within the phenomenological paradigm. Researcher's open-ended questions were used for interview purposes (Mason and Lind, 2014). Phenomenology is an inductive, descriptive research method. The task is to investigate and describe all phenomena including human experiences in the way

these appear (Saunders, 2012). In this present study, the researcher used exploratory, descriptive and contextual designs. The goal of phenomenological research is to describe experiences as they are lived; in other words, the “lived experiences”. Phenomenological research further examines the particular experiences of unique individuals in a given situation thus exploring not what is (reality), but what it is perceived to be as in the case with quality and its assurance in the higher education institutions (Mason and Lind, 2014). The researcher believes the phenomenological approach helped to tap into the unique experiences of the participants with the phenomenon as it became clear that there were variations, though not quite significant in the perceptions of the concept of quality and its assurance among the participants. This helped the researcher to come up with the phenomenological informed conclusions and recommendations in chapter 5.

3.6. Research design

Research designs and data collection methods are integral parts of a dissertation. As important as they are, being cognizant of strengths and limitations merit discussion (Creswell, 2014; Miles et al, 2014). Researchers must understand these ideas to help avoid pitfalls in the dissertation process.

Research design refers to the plan of action that links the philosophical assumptions to specific methods (Creswell, 2009). The function of a research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables the researcher to effectively address the research problem logically and as unambiguously as possible (Creswell, Goodchild and Turner, 2011). As indicate above this study used the qualitative research design.

Research design is the structure that holds the research together and enables the researcher to address the research questions in ways that are appropriate, efficient and effective. Research designs may be classified regarding their purpose (Saunders, 2012). The interpretive deductive approach was employed in this study to use the existing theory to shape the process of analysis. This meant that the researcher adopted a deductive approach by first establishing a theoretical framework that incorporated the main variables, components, themes and issues in the study and the presumed relationships among them. The framework acted as a means for guiding the data analysis process.

3.6.1. Phenomenological Research design

Phenomenological research is a design of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants (Creswell, 2014). A research design is the foundation and framework of a study and helps find answers to the proposed research questions (Merriam, 2013; Seale, 2013). The decision to use this type of design was based on its flexibility; allowing for more freedom during the interview to explore essences of others' experiences (Mason and Lind, 2014; Seale, 2013). Researchers may use many different techniques, but central to the heart of qualitative research is the desire to expose the human part of a story (Mason and Lind, 2014). This was the motivation for choosing a design that allowed for personal and participant expression of a lived- experiences.

Phenomenological design in qualitative research has various strengths. One strength is the ability of the researcher to use their motivation and personal interest to fuel the study. Merriam (2013) declares this an advantage when the researcher is motivated as a strong interest in the topic will support completion of the dissertation. Another strength is how data is collected. The emergent fashion of shifting during the interview process is a way of yielding data (Cooper and Schindler, 2009; Creswell, 2014). Through subjective, direct responses, the researcher can gain first-hand knowledge about what participants experience through broad and open-ended inquiry (Rubin and Rubin, 2015; Merriam, 2013; Rudestam and Newton, 2015). Revisions can be made along the way as new experiences emerge giving the researcher the ability to construct themes and patterns that can be reviewed by participants (Seale, 2013). The human factor is the greatest strength and the fundamental weakness of phenomenological qualitative inquiry and analysis—a scientific two-edged sword (Rubin and Rubin, 2015).

Though phenomenological qualitative studies provide compelling research data, there are limitations; the other side of the sword. For one, and perhaps the concern of many is bias (Creswell, 2014; Welman et al., 2016; Rubin and Rubin, 2015). The researcher's role must include the integration of biases, beliefs, and values up-front in the study (Welman et al., 2016). A second limitation that the process can be time

consuming and labour intensive (Creswell, 2014; Welman et al., 2016; The copious amount of data that has to be analysed could be a disadvantage. Researcher should understand this before assuming a phenomenological qualitative study (Creswell, 2014; Patrick and Stanley, 2011). Further, the individual circumstances that data is collected from cannot be generalised (Merriam, 2013; Patrick and Stanley, 2011). Finally, there are limitations linked to credibility and reliability; or as Rudestam and Newton (2015) advise it is the researcher's responsibility of convincing oneself and one's audience that the findings are based on critical investigation. Patrick and Stanley (2011) argue there is no straightforward tests can be applied for reliability and validity. Therefore, the researcher must do their best in the interview phase to present the data and communicate what the data reveals given the purpose of the study (Patrick and Stanley, 2011).

3.7. Phenomenological research strategies

According to Churchill (2009), the purpose of the phenomenological approach is to illuminate the specific and to identify the phenomena. In the human sphere, phenomenological approach translates into gathering 'deep' information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions and participant observation, and representing it from the perspective of the research participant (Patrick and Stanley, 2011). Phenomenology is concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual, 'bracketing' taken-for-granted assumptions and usual ways of perceiving. Epistemologically, phenomenological approaches are based in a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity and emphasise the importance of personal perspective and interpretation (Patrick and Stanley, 2011). As such they are powerful for understanding subjective experience, gaining insights into people's motivations and actions, and cutting through the clutter of taken-for-granted assumptions and conventional wisdom (Willing, 2008).

According to Willing (2008), phenomenological research has overlaps into other essentially qualitative approaches including ethnography and hermeneutics. Pure phenomenological research seeks essentially to describe rather than explain and to start from a perspective free from hypotheses or preconceptions (Patrick and Stanley, 2011). More recent humanist and feminist researchers refute the possibility of starting

without preconceptions or bias, and emphasise the importance of making clear how interpretations and meanings have been placed on findings, as well as making the researcher visible in the 'frame' of the research as an interested and subjective actor rather than a detached and impartial observer (Patrick and Stanley, 2011). Phenomenological methods are particularly effective at bringing to the fore the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their perspectives, and therefore good at challenging structural or normative assumptions. Adding an interpretive dimension to phenomenological research, enables it to be used as the basis for practical theory, and allows it to inform, support or challenge policy and action (Bochner, 2011).

3.7.1. Research methods

According to Ballinger (2014), phenomenological and associated approaches can be applied to single cases or serendipitous or deliberately selected samples. While single-case studies can identify issues, which illustrate discrepancies and system failures – and to illuminate or draw attention to 'different' situations – positive inferences are less easy to make without a small sample of participants. In multiple participant research, the strength of inference which can be made increases rapidly once factors start to recur with more than one participant. In this respect, it is important to distinguish between statistical and qualitative validity (Ballinger, 2014; Patrick and Stanley, 2011). Phenomenological research can be robust in indicating the presence of factors and their effects in individual cases but must be tentative in suggesting their extent about the population from which the participants or cases were drawn (Saunders, 2012). A variety of methods can be used in phenomenological-based research, including interviews, conversations, participant observation, action research, focus meetings and analysis of personal texts. If there is a general principle involved it is that of minimum structure and maximum depth, in practice constrained by time and opportunities to strike a balance between keeping a focus on the research issues and avoiding undue influence by the researcher (Ballinger, 2014). The establishment of a good level of rapport and empathy is critical to gaining depth of information, particularly when investigating issues where the participant has a strong personal stake (Saunders, 2012).

Interviews were conducted by the interviewer, since they are a far more personal form of research than questionnaires since the interviewer works directly with the respondents. Unlike with mail surveys, the interviewer has the opportunity to probe or ask follow up questions. Interviews are generally easier for respondents, especially if what is sought is opinions or impressions. Interviews are time consuming, and they are resource intensive (Ballinger, 2014). According to Bochner (2011), the interviewer is considered a part of the measurement instrument and interviewer has to be well trained on how to respond to any contingencies. The general interview guide approach is intended to ensure that the same general areas of information are collected from each interviewee; this provides more focus than the conversational approach, but still allows a degree of freedom and adaptability in getting the information from the interviewee. The standardised, open-ended interviews where the same open-ended questions are asked to all the interviewees; facilitates faster interviews that can be more easily analysed and compared (Bochner, 2011).

The researcher used 'action research' because of the following advantages: the researcher was able to seek for increased understanding of the researcher and the target group; and it was a cyclic process that consisted of planning, action, review of the outcomes of actions and a return to planning on the basis of the state of the outcomes.

3.8. Target population

Population of the study is the total category of subjects which is the focus of attention in a research project. It is an aggregate or totality of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications (Welman et al., 2016). Since the fulcrum of this research was to unpack the opinions and views of the participants on quality and its assurance in public and private higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan, the institutions located within the city automatically become areas of focus for the study. Given this, research participants for the study, which comprised the executive management and the lecturers were drawn from the following institutions of higher education in the Durban Metropolitan area.

All the universities and colleges in the Durban Metropolitan area constituted the target population of the study. The research focused on both private and public higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area, namely, UKZN, DUT and MUT as representatives of the public higher education institutions and Richfield Graduate Institute of Technology, Berea Technical College, Varsity College, Mancosa, Damelin and Regent Business School. Durban was considered an ideal setting for the study as it has a number of these education institutions that are diverse in their mission and business models.

3.8.1 Sampling and sampling technique

In most survey research it becomes imperative to sample because it is not usually possible to gather data from all the people, organisations or other entities which are the focus of the research (Welman et al., 2016). A sample is selected from the population through a sampling technique. Hence, Seale (2013) defines sampling as a process of selecting, without bias and with as much precision as resources allow, the elements from which or from whom data is collected. It is important, however, that the sample characteristics are as close as possible to the population.

The sampling technique affects the adequacy of the sample results. Even if more funds were available and other constraints being as minimal as possible, it is doubtful that studying the entire population would essentially solve most of the problems. Good sampling techniques maximise the degree to which samples represent the population. The results are therefore generalisable to the whole population (Mason and Lind, 2014). A total of 23 top executive managers and lecturers were purposively selected for the study from the selected private and public institutions of higher learning in the Durban Metropolitan. The researcher selected three from each of the four public higher education institutions, making a total of twelve, selected two from Varsity College and one from each of the remaining nine private higher education institutions.

3.8.2. Sample and Sampling

Deans, Principals, Head of schools, Head of Departments, Quality Assurance Directors and Lecturers were invited to participate in the study, and they accepted the

invitation to take part in the study. All the participants from the management to the selected lecturers accepted to produce data for the study.

According to Hamilton (2013,), the two main sampling methods used in survey research are probability sampling and non-probability sampling. The difference is that in probability sampling all elements of the population have a chance of being selected, and the results are more likely to reflect the entire population accurately.

Since all persons (or “units” or “elements”) have an equal chance of being selected for the survey, the researcher can randomly select the participants without missing the entire portions of the population. The researcher can generalise the results from the random sample. Probability sampling can be more expensive and time-consuming than convenience or purposive sampling. With this sampling for data collection method coupled with a decent response rate, the researcher can extrapolate the results to the entire population (Hamilton, 2013).

According to Hamilton (2013,), non-probability sampling can be used when there is not enough and exhaustive population list available. Some units are unable to be selected. Therefore the researcher has no way of knowing the size and effect of the sampling error (missed persons, unequal representation, an more). Non-random or non-probability sampling, can be effective when the researcher is trying to generate ideas and getting feedback, but cannot generalise the results to an entire population with a high level of confidence (Mason and Lind, 2014). The sampling technique is more convenient and less costly but does not hold up to the expectations of the probability theory. Non-probability purposive sampling technique was used for this study. The exact number of elements in the population will be unknown with the result that the likelihood of selecting any one member of the population is not known (Steward, 2009).

3.8.3.2.1. Advantages of non-probability sampling

According to Steward (2009), the overall aim is to select a sample that, by design, will allow the researcher to capture a wide range of the facets of the phenomenon under study. According to Mason and Lind (2014), the elements or participants are selected deliberately, consciously and in a controlled manner with prior design and purpose.

The elements of the population do not have an equal chance of being selected from the sampling frame and the results of the sample cannot be generalisable beyond the sample itself as a critical item and non-probability sampling exists in phenomenological paradigm because of its concentration on specific cases, and in-depth analysis will be of the specific cases.

The researcher undertook a qualitative study and did not intend to generalise the findings to the population from which the sample was drawn. It was convenient, judgmental, and afforded maximum variation because the researcher wanted to interview those respondents with a fairly wide experience in the field. It was an effective, and time-efficient method and was chosen because it was by the predetermined non-probability criteria (Steward, 2009; Mason and Lind, 2014).

The small purposive sample of three (3) managers (Dean or Head of School; Quality Assurance Director and a Senior Lecturer or Academic Leader) in each selected education institution was selected to participate in the study. The sample comprised 23 participants, with one of the units of analysis being represented by two participants. It was the quality rather than the quantity of the sample that mattered, that is, a small and carefully chosen sample which reflected the characteristics of the population from which it was drawn.

3.9. Data collection methods

The data collection method often used in qualitative studies is interviews, face-to-face in-depth (unstructured/structured) interview process (Creswell, 2014). Interviewing is a strategy of collecting important information need for analysis of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013; Mason and Lind, 2014). Research data is irreplaceable so having a back-up tool like an audio recorder for data management is essential (Saunders et al., 2009). The data collection method was a decision based on the study's underpinning, the participants to be studied and the research emphasis which is the essence of human uniqueness (Creswell, 2014). Interview method must reflect confidentiality while it allows for elaboration of feelings, thoughts, and experiences about the research questions (Creswell, 2014; Mason and Lind, 2014; Rubin and Rubin, 2015).

According to Willing (2008) qualitative methods are typically more flexible –that is, they allow for greater spontaneity and adaptation of the interaction between the researcher and the study participants. For example, qualitative methods ask mostly “open-ended” questions that are not necessarily worded in the same way for each participant. With open-ended questions, participants are free to respond in their own words, and these responses tend to be more complex than simply “yes” or “no.” Also, to qualitative methods, the relationship between the researcher and the participants is often less formal than in quantitative research (Mason and Lind, 2014; Rubin and Rubin, 2015). Participants have the opportunity to respond more elaborately and in greater detail than is typically the case with quantitative methods. In turn, researchers have the opportunity to respond immediately to what participants say by tailoring subsequent questions to the information that the participant would have provided (Saunders et al., 2012).

It is important to note, however, that there is a range of flexibility among methods used in both quantitative and qualitative research, and that flexibility is not an indication of how scientifically rigorous a method is. Rather, the degree of flexibility reflects the kind of understanding of the problem that is being pursued using the method (Saunders, 2009). According to Saunders et al. (2012), it is important to implement the data gathering plan because the focus of all actions during the gathering stage is the implementation of the plan of action.

3.9.1. Interviews

Strengths of using a synchronous interview process is establishing rapport and honing in the details of the interview (Creswell, 2015; Saunders, 2012; Mason & Lind, 2014). Face-to-face interviewing can monitor non-verbal cues and clarify ambiguous responses (Maxwell, 2013; Rubin and Rubin, 2015). Getting the participants involved in the process can yield positive results and large amounts of rich data (Creswell, 2015; Maxwell, 2013).

Interviewing is not a perfect method. First, enormous amounts of data are collected that will require analysis; this is time consuming (Saunders, 2012; Creswell, 2015). Next, interviewer influence can be a limitation which is why triangulation is needed to

manage biases (Creswell, 2015). Last, participants can opt out of the study leaving one to scramble for additional participants (Mason and Lind, 2014; Willing, 2008; Hamilton, 2013).

According to Willing (2008), interviews in qualitative research are usually wide ranging, probing issues in detail. They seldom involve asking a set of predetermined questions, as would be the case with quantitative surveys. Instead they encourage subjects to express their views at length. The researcher may be able to obtain more detailed information on each subject, but loses the richness that can arise in a group in which people debate issues and exchange views. Interviews generally tend to make greater use of open-ended questions and associated more typically with qualitative phenomenological-interpretive research such as this study (Mason and Lind, 2014).

3.9.1.1. Semi-structured interviews

The interviewer would normally have a list of themes and areas to be covered, and there may be some standardised questions, but the interviewer may omit or add to some of these questions or areas, depending on the situation and the flow of the conversation (Hamilton, 2013). The advantages of semi-structured interviews are that the interviewer provides the list of themes and questions with opportunities for open-ended discussion of items. The interviewer enables the exploratory discussions that allow the researcher not only to understand the 'what' and the 'how' but also to grasp and explore the internal dynamics of the research topic; an excellent technique for gathering research information; interviewer and interviewee are equal partners (Saunders, 2009). This technique can be used to obtain feedback and offers the interviewer the opportunity to explore an issue or service. It allows the interviewees to express their opinions, concerns and feelings. The fact that it is semi-structured allows the conversation to flow where it needs to to deal with issues as opposed to cutting someone off because they stray from the topic (Saunders, 2009).

3.9.1.2. Research Instrument

This study used in-depth or interview protocol to collect the qualitative data that was used for the research. While questionnaires can provide evidence of patterns amongst large populations, qualitative interview data often gather more in-depth insights on the

participants` attitudes, thoughts, and actions (Saunders et al., 2009; Pervin and John, 2010). All that a researcher is generally concerned about is obtaining answers to questions, and the questions included in the questionnaire are individually and collectively, provide the data required for achievement of the research objectives (Saunders et al., 2009). The researcher has absolute clarity about the research objectives and has to always keep that in mind during the planning and the design stages so that all the items on the questionnaire are relevant, concise and efficient. The researcher has to start with similar and familiar orientation questions, proceed to content and behavioural questions and keep the personal, socio-demographic items to the end and to word these carefully to avoid offending (Saunders et al. 2009; Pervin and John, 2010).

Saunders (2009) reiterates that clear communication should be the fundamental goal of all questionnaires, the researcher also uses extreme care in avoiding wording that gives rise to misunderstanding, suggests researcher bias or gives offence. The researcher explains the purpose of the questionnaire to the participants not only to orient them to the research subject but to obtain informed participation in the study. To explain the purpose of the study, the researcher attaches the covering letter, or the questionnaire itself will have an opened section that clearly and concisely explains the basic aims of the study and the importance of the participants' involvement in the study (Saunders, 2009; Saunders, 2012). The questionnaire and interviews are data collection instruments that enable the researcher to pose questions to subjects in his/her search for answers to the research questions. Both instruments have distinct features that have a bearing on the correct and appropriate use of each for the specific data collection purposes (Saunders et al., 2012).

3.10. Data analysis

The researcher started with some general questions or topics and allowed the participants to tell their stories narratively. To get the desired information it was necessary for the researcher to guide the participants by asking them specific questions. The questions were stated in broad terms and participants presented their answers in various degrees of depth (Pervin and John, 2010).

The analysis of qualitative data concentrates on the meanings expressed through words and analysis conducted through the use of conceptualisation and reducing the data by considering the material in some systematic way to make it more manageable. The structuring of the data is usually regarding themes, patterns and interrelationships. Detextualising the data is usually done by converting the extended texts into more manageable forms (Saunders, 2012) through thematic analysis. The researcher followed a thematic analysis of the qualitative data.

3.10.1. Thematic analysis of qualitative data

Interesting themes emerged from analysis of the participants' responses to the interview questions on their views and opinions on quality and its assurance in their institutions. These are comprehensively discussed in chapter 4.

According to Pervin and John (2010) thematic analysis of qualitative data is used to identify themes or major ideas in a document or set of documents. It is a form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes become the categories or codes for analysis. The themes in this study were allowed to emerge from the data collected from the interviews.

3.10.1.1. Word frequency and word or tag clouds

The use of NVIVO software package assisted to generate key word frequencies that formed the bases for the developed themes. These were most common words used by the participants in response to the interview questions.

Word frequency or tag clouds are a graphical representation that displays up to 1000 words alphabetically in varying font sizes where frequently occurring words from the interviews are in larger fonts which assists researchers with easy technical analysis. It must, however, be noted that tag clouds only display frequently occurring words and not necessarily according to their importance (Pervin and John, 2010). Figure 3.1 below shows the frequently occurred words from the interviews conducted in this study. It is clear from the figure that quality was the most frequently occurring word, followed by provisions, people, students, education, and leadership, to mention a few.



Figure 3.1: The frequently occurring words in the interviews

3.10.1.2. Identification of themes

Thematic analysis of qualitative data leads to the identification of themes or major ideas in a document or set of documents. It is a form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes become the categories or codes for analysis (Pervin and John, 2010). Themes come from reviewing literature; themes come from the characteristics of the phenomena being studied; and they come from already-agreed-upon professional definitions and researchers' values, theoretical orientation, and personal experience with the subject matter (Pervin and John, 2010). From the inductive coding process themes or nodes emerged from the text identified but at the same time also sub-themes or sub-nodes also emerged, which were incorporated in the discussion.

As indicated above qualitative analysis software NVIVO 10 was used for detailed observations to uncover trends and words that were common in meaning according to the participants to identify word trees and tag clouds and from these main and sub-themes emerged.

Pervin and John (2010) also point out that, mostly, researchers who consider themselves part of the qualitative tradition in social science induce themes from text, a process referred to as 'open coding' by grounded theorists. For this study, much of the themes emerged from the literature review, a reality that yielded the domination of the 'deductive theoretical thematic analysis'. The literature accounted for almost all the themes that emerged in the interviews except one that was created inductively, namely, the free-sheet threat.

For the identification of the themes discussed hereunder, the researcher coded all the interview transcriptions. Also, an external, unbiased, and objective person coded the data, and, both came up with similar themes and excerpts from the data. The reliability measure was 0,56 which is between fair and good overlap. This was calculated using Nvivo. There is evidence for the identified themes in this study. Data were gathered by conducting key informant interviews among the respondents holding managerial positions in different departments. These were, Deans (4 Respondents), Quality assurance Directors (5 Respondents), Operations Managers (5 Respondents) and Academic Leaders (5 Respondents) and Lecturers (4 Respondents). With the assistance of one of Newspaper X's employees, the researcher was able to secure the most knowledgeable informants for the purposes of the study.

3.10.2. Pattern interpretation

The researcher interprets the patterns into a reasoned explanation of the phenomena to make the study reliable. As a concept, rigor is perhaps best thought of regarding the quality of the research process. In essence, a more rigorous research process will result in more trustworthy findings. According to Pervin and John (2010) in-depth interview studies, for example, are ones that are designed to:

- Ensure a credible outcome by: using the appropriate mode (preferably face – to-face), building into the interviews' necessary rapport techniques, allowing plenty of time (at least an hour) for each interview enabling interviewees to expound on their input, and integrating probes that serve to crystalise the true meaning behind each response;

- Strive for transparency by paying particular attention to sampling – who, how, where the sample is derived – and weeding out anyone not fully qualified for participation or who might bias the results;
- Maximize the ultimate usefulness of the research by insisting that interviewees think outside their comfort zone and give considered opinions. The “what if” exercise is imperative to advancing the research issue to the next level; and
- Exclude any techniques or lines of questioning that will be impossible to analyse. This includes projective exercises that require the re-interpretation of responses to understand the interviewee’s true meaning.

To ensure reliability in qualitative research, examination of trustworthiness is crucial. Good qualitative research will be in deep understanding and richness of the details.

3.10.2.1. Transparency

Transparency refers to the clarity of the process and the ability to convey specific factors that impact the process. Qualitative research should be designed with full knowledge of the contribution that each design element makes to the final results. Here researchers are providing their audience with a thorough description of the steps taken in conducting their research. They are, in effect, providing an audit trail. This accomplishes two main things (Daniels, 2009; Bryman, 2012). First, if others want to replicate the research to see whether they achieve similar results, they can. Second, it enables readers to assess whether the method chosen was the most appropriate for answering the chosen research questions.

3.10.2.2. Comparability

Comparability is yet another criterion that helps to denote the rigor of a qualitative study. In essence, researchers should be comparing the various cases with one another so that they can build a theory that represents all of the voices present in their findings. Furthermore, it is also of value to compare findings with the findings of other research scientists to relate what has been found back to the broader research context (Daniels, 2009; Bryman, 2012).

3.10.2.3. Credibility

Credibility is the first aspect or criterion, that must be established in qualitative data analysis outcomes. It is seen as the most important aspect or criterion in establishing trustworthiness. This is because credibility essentially asks the researcher to link the research study's findings with reality to demonstrate the truth of the research study's findings (Daniels, 2009; Hamilton, 2013). Credibility also has the most techniques available to establish it, compared to the other three aspects of trustworthiness. Credibility refers to the trustworthiness of the outcomes. A design goal of qualitative research is to provide results that are reasonably known to be true within the particular parameters and limitations of the qualitative method. Question-answer validity is one technique that fosters credibility (Daniels, 2009; Hamilton, 2013).

3.10.2.4. Usefulness

Usefulness refers to the ability to move the research pursuit forward, to take the researcher to the next step. That is, allowing for further generation and use of the qualitative data about the phenomenon outcomes for a variety of impacts. A useful qualitative research design results in new insights and hypotheses for further investigation (Daniels, 2009; Bryman, 2012). While quantitative or numerical data can provide a snapshot of trends in outcomes, examination of the qualitative data, including individuals' stories about their outcomes, can result in improved understanding of what works and why it works (Bryman, 2012).

3.10.2.5 Consistency

Consistency, or dependability of the results, is the criterion for assessing reliability. This does not mean that the same result would necessarily be found in other contexts but that, given the same data, other researchers would find similar patterns (Hamilton, 2013). Researchers often seek maximum variation in the experience of a phenomenon, not only to illuminate it but also to discourage fulfilment of limited researcher expectations. For example, negative cases or instances that do not fit the emerging interpretation or theory should be actively sought and explored. Qualitative researchers sometimes describe the processes by which verification of the theoretical

findings by another team member takes place (Hamilton, 2013). Consistency ensures that data items are encoded consistently with some standard (Daniels, 2009).

3.10.2.6. Uniqueness

Uniqueness depicts attributes that define singularity to a data item. A unique part number will not be shared across multiple parts trees as there will be one and only one such part number (Daniels, 2009). Normally unique part numbers are applied in the analysis of quantitative data, especially in the form of codes to differentiate and distinguish questionnaires of different categories of participants. In qualitative data analysis, use of software packages such as NVIVO automatically does the coding of the transcribed interviews material (Daniels, 2009).

3.10.2.7. Neutrality

In research, the term neutrality implies that an inquiry is free of bias or is separated from the researcher's perspectives, background, position, or conditioning circumstances (Smith, 2011). When a researcher or the research is said to be neutral, the inquiry is also implied to be trustworthy and legitimate. Although legitimacy and trustworthiness are important values in qualitative research, neutrality is often seen as an impossible goal. This entry explains why neutrality is less useful as a term to judge qualitative inquiry and suggests ways to achieve legitimacy and trustworthiness while acknowledging researcher bias (Daniels, 2009; Smith, 2011). Neutrality is a term that is often attached to research to demonstrate that it provides an objective and unbiased view of the object under study. Procedures are developed to ensure data are valid and reliable and imply that the results are trustworthy and important (Smith, 2011).

3.10.2.8. Inter-relationships

A significant portion of qualitative research involves collecting data from research participants. The kinds of information that participants disclose in a research setting depend in part on the nature and quality of their relationship with the researcher. Researcher–participant relationships may fall anywhere along a continuum from distant, detached, and impersonal to close, collaborative, and friendly (Smith, 2011).

In this study, the researcher did not have any personal relationships with any of the participants in the study.

3.10.3. Meanings to the patterns

Smith (2011) suggests that phenomenological research is a method used to establish the meaning of an event by people. The researcher would normally clarify the meanings to the patterns and interrelationships by clarifying the “phenomenological research” (Cooper and Schindler, 2009). This approach is based on the premise that there’s not a single reality but that each person embraces his or her reality. Thus, the goals of the phenomenological approach are to describe human events accurately and to unveil their essential meanings. To achieve these goals, the researcher conducts in-depth interviews and has intensive dialogues with the people experiencing the events.

The interpretive descriptive approach was used by the researcher in this study to make some effort at identification of patterns, establishing interrelationships and interpretation of these patterns and inter-relationships (Smith, 2011).

3.11. Pilot study

According to Cooper and Schindler (2009,), the pilot study is defined as a smaller version of the main or large study that is conducted to prepare for the main study. The researcher conducted the pilot study on a few selected participants, mainly to measure the extent of the reliability of the interview protocol questions. The pilot study was used to check the methods that the researcher had intended use to collect data on which the actual sample size would be based (Hall and Hord, 2011). It ensured that the intended methods to be used for the main study were feasible. The pilot study drew subjects from the target population and simulated the planned procedures for data collection and data analysis. The participants in the pilot study were subsequently eliminated from the sample of the main study. The analysis of the pilot study findings revealed some flaws in some interview questions, with some of the interview questions seemingly being not clear to the interviewees, which required the researcher to revise some of the interview questions. The researcher categorized the open-ended

questions to a reasonable degree and extent and evaluated the adequacy of the data for the research questions (Smith, 2011; Hall and Hord, 2011).

3.12. Ethical considerations

Participants were requested to sign consent forms that were meant to assure them that their identities would remain confidential. Furthermore, the consent forms guaranteed the participants that their privacy, institutional affiliation and locations would not be disclosed.

The following procedures were used to protect the identity of the participants:

1. Code names were used in any written or oral reports on the data.
2. In any written or oral report, participants were not described in sufficient detail to enable readers to determine their identity easily.
3. The researcher recorded answers through taking notes and audio-recordings when granted permission to do so by the interviewee. Taking notes allowed the researcher to highlight key points that needed further probing, and also facilitated the production of the final notes and their evaluation quicker as there was no need to wade through large files of transcripts.
4. The data was kept in a locked, secured place during and will be even after the research.
5. During the transcription, all of the security mentioned above measures were observed.
6. Recording tapes were kept in a secured safe and the transcripts filed separately.
7. The researcher allocated unique identifiers to the respondents and their transcripts or notes into the spreadsheet.

The participants are made aware of the nature and details of the research being conducted, and they were made aware of their rights to discontinue or withdraw from participating in the research study (Cooper and Schindler, 2009; Hall and Hord, 2011).

The researcher requested permission to conduct the study, and official channels were followed to obtain written permission from the organisations to conduct the study (Smith, 2011).

The researcher ensured that no harm was caused to the participants of the research project. The investigators' responsibility to the participants includes issues such as ensuring confidentiality, avoidance of harm, reciprocity and feedback of results. In ensuring confidentiality, the investigator may not report private data that identifies participants (Smith, 2011). One of the safest ways to ensure anonymity is not to record the names of the participants at all and to provide an information sheet that asks for verbal rather than signed consent.

Categories of sensitive information requiring anonymity are the following: sexual attitudes, preferences or practices; use of addictive substances; illegal conduct; information that could damage an individual's financial standing, employability, or reputation; medical record information that could lead to stigmatisation or discrimination; any information about an individual's psychological well-being or mental health (Smith, 2011; Creswell, 2009).

The risk of harm to participants should be as negligible as possible. The sum of potential benefits to the participant and the importance of the knowledge gained should outweigh the risk of harm to the participants and thus support a decision to carry out the research. Qualitative interviews on sensitive topics may provoke powerful emotional responses from participants. An appropriate referral source for professional help should be ready, should referral be necessary. Such referral may include authorities responsible for responding to cases of illegal conduct (Smith, 2011).

Ideally, there should be reciprocity in what participants give and what they receive from participation in a research project. The investigator is indebted to participants for sharing their experiences. Reciprocity may entail giving time to help out, providing informal feedback, and making coffee, tutoring or being a good listener. The reciprocity should fit within the constraints of the research and personal ethics, and within the framework of maintaining one's role as the investigator. Participants should receive feedback on research results, because this is a form of recognition and gratitude to participants for their participation in the research study (Smith, 2011; Creswell, 2009).

3.12.3. Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity

The researcher ensured that the identity of all the participants were protected. Maintaining confidentiality of data/records: ensuring the separation of data from identifiable individuals and storing the code linking data to individuals securely:

- Ensuring that those who have access to the data maintain confidentiality;
- Not discussing the issues arising from an individual interview with others in ways that might identify that individual; and
- Not disclosing what an individual has said in an interview. Anonymizing individuals and places in the dissemination of the study to protect their identity

3.12.5. Scientific validity

The research was scientifically sound and valid, by observing the following as guided by Smith (2011) and Barnett (2013).

 **Being a listener.** The subject(s) provided the majority of the research input, and the researcher's task was merely to properly interpret the responses of the subject(s) and make sure that interviewees listen attentively.

 **Recording accurately.** It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure accurate recording of all the records of information. The researcher made sure that all records are maintained in the form of detailed notes or electronic recordings. The researcher checked the responses accurately and made sure that the records were developed during rather than after the data gathering session.

 **Initiating writing early.** Initiating writing earlier is part of pre-field work planning. The researcher ensured that they prepared for the field work before by making rough draft of the study before going into the field to collect the data. This was meant for allowing for records to be made when needed. So, the researcher got more prepared to focus on the data gathering processes to collect the information that meet the specific identified needs of the research project.

 **Including the primary data in the final report.** Primary data is supposed to be included in the final report to allow the readers to see exactly the basis upon which

the researcher's conclusions were made. The researcher, therefore, included the primary information collected from the participants in the analysis of the data in chapter 4. In short, it is better to include too much detail than too little.

 **Including all data in the final report.** The researcher made sure that no piece of information was left out of the final report to be able to interpret the data collected. In these cases, the researcher had to make sure that the readers would be allowed to develop their conclusions.

 **Being candid.** The researcher did not spend too much time attempting to keep her feelings and personal reactions out of the study. Whenever there was any relevance in her feelings to the matter at hand, the researcher made sure that these feelings were revealed.

 **Seeking feedback.** The researcher objectively submits her research work or manuscript for critique by others and takes the critiques with the objectivity they deserve as part of the thesis development processes. Professional colleagues such as the supervisor and the research participants are included in this process to ensure that information is reported accurately and completely.

 **Attempting to achieve balance.** The researcher's mind was very open and attempted to achieve a balance between perceived importance and actual importance of the information and the matter dealt with. This was given the fact that often, the information reveals a difference in anticipated and real areas of the study's significance.

 **Writing accurately.** The researcher made sure that the writing of the thesis was as accurate as possible by checking for incorrect grammar, misspelled words, statement inconsistency, and more and subjected the thesis for external editing by a professional editor.

3.12.6. Verification of validity and reliability

The validity (the extent to which the data accurately measures what they were intended to measure), and reliability (the extent to which the data collection method will yield consistent findings if replicated by others), of the data collected, depends on the design of the questionnaire and the wording used. Validity, according to Creswell (2009) refers to the conclusions drawn from the research. There are three

types of validity namely: internal, external and construct. Internal validity refers to the ability of the research to identify the operating causal relationships between variables accurately. External validity refers to the extent to which the findings can be generalised. While construct validity refers to the extent to which the constructs used in the research are accurately identified and measured. Researchers need to maximise all three types of validity to ensure that the research findings accurately address the research questions (Hall and Hord, 2011). An effort was therefore made to maximise the validity in this study.

3.12.7. Recruitment of Participants

A recruitment strategy is a project-specific plan for identifying and enrolling people to participate in a research study. The plan should specify criteria for screening potential participants, the number of people to be recruited, the location, and the approach to be used (Hall and Hord, 2011). Each research team develops guidelines for the introductory comments that the staff should make to the potential participants at each site. These guidelines need to be sensitive to the social and cultural contexts from which participants will be recruited. They should also reflect the researchers' awareness that willingness to participate in an interview or focus group will depend on how well the participants understand what the study is about, what will be expected of them if they participate, and how their privacy will be respected (Creswell, 2009).

In developing the recruitment guidelines, it is important to take special care to avoid saying anything that could be interpreted as coercive. The voluntary nature of participation in research studies should always be emphasised. The researcher organised a discussion session informing all employees and managers about the research project. The aims of conducting the study were discussed. Those interested employees had an opportunity to inform the researcher during the discussion session. The researcher kept the records profile of all the interested employees (Creswell, 2009).

Informed consent is a mechanism for ensuring that people understand what it means to participate in a particular research study so they can decide in a conscious, deliberate way whether they want to participate or not. Informed consent is one of the most important tools for ensuring *respect for persons* during the conduct of the research (Creswell, 2009; Hall and Hord, 2011). The researcher attached letters for informed consent for participants to sign. The letters for consent disclosed that participation in the research as a subject was optional and voluntary and that the participants were free to decline and even withdraw from participation at any stage of the conduct of the research.

3.14. Conclusion

The researcher undertook a descriptive qualitative study as the objective was not to generalise the findings to the population from which the sample was selected. The purposive sampling method was chosen because the researcher wanted to interview those participants with fairly wide experience and knowledge of the field and the phenomenon under study. Purposive sampling was an effective, time-efficient sampling method. It was chosen because it is consistent with the predetermined non-probability criteria. The chapter discussed the research design, the research philosophies, the research strategies and methodologies. The next chapter deals with the results of the study, discussion and interpretation of the study's findings.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS – INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine and evaluate the different understandings of quality and its assurance among the Deans and Heads of Schools, the Quality Assurance Directors, the Academic Leaders, the Operations Managers and the Senior Lecturers of the selected public and private higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area. It further ascertained factors which affect the provision of quality education in higher education institutions and evaluated the important quality dimensions that can enhance the provision of quality education in higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area. The first three chapters of this thesis offered an introduction to the problem surrounding quality and its assurance, a review of the literature surrounding quality and its assurance, and the methodological design that was utilised for this study. This chapter will now present the findings, interpretation and discussion of the findings that emerged from the data collected and analysed using phenomenological qualitative methodology.

A qualitative study employing the phenomenological qualitative methodology was conducted with data collected from interviews (Saunders et al., 2009; Saunders, 2012; Cooper and Schindler, 2009; Creswell, 2010). Although actual names for the studied higher education institutions were used, no really and actual names for the participants were used to ensure that all participants' identities were kept private. The findings relating to participants will be presented in clusters of emerging themes within this chapter. First, the background of the cluster emerging theme will be presented followed by the cluster theme participants' findings about the research questions (Cooper and Schindler, 2009; Creswell, 2010). Finally, a cross-cluster themes analysis will be presented following the presentation of the findings for each cluster emerging theme. All findings presented served to answer the following research questions for this study:

- What are the different perceptions of the concept of “quality” in higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area?

- What factors affect the provision of quality higher education in the higher education institutions in Durban Metropolitan area?
- What are the important leadership quality dimensions that can strengthen and enhance the provision of quality higher education in institutions of higher education in the Durban Metropolitan area?

This chapter deals with key dimensions raised in the literature about current trends in quality and its assurance in the higher education sector. The following key themes are followed in reviewing these key dimensions: (i) the main conceptualisations of quality / different understandings of quality; (ii) the factors impacting on the provision of quality education; (iii) the impact of leadership on provision of quality education; and (iv) the provision of quality higher education that is valued by stakeholders and how these relate quality assurance.

Inductive thematic analysis was followed whereby core themes theme nodes emerged from the data that was obtained through face-to-face interviews with the percipients. This led to the development of the following themes, shown in Table 4.1 below. The table depicts the summarised themes emerged from the qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews to answer the study`s three research questions. There after the researcher discusses in detail, the core themes or central themes emerged under each research question and these are grouped into clusters where necessary.

Table 4.1: Core or central themes emerged from interviews

Categories	Central themes
1. Different perceptions of quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Accuracy and precision (ii) Continuous process of improvement (iii) Doing the best with what is available (iv) Doing the conceivable best in pursuit of excellence (v) Evidence of systems and policies and congruence between them (vi) Fitness for purpose and meets needs (vii) Holistic assessment and experience of quality (viii) Environment conducive to teaching and learning (ix) Relevance (x) Value for money
2. Factors impacting on the provision of quality education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) National policies and organisation (ii) Funding (iii) Resources (iv) Socio-economic and political factors (v) Internal environment (vi) Quality teaching accessories (vii) Staffing and other related issues (viii) Poor retention and loss of talent and skill (ix) Teaching content (x) Assessment tools (xi) Individual differences (xii) Lack of common understanding (xiii) Management and continuous improvement (xiv) Setting and communicating the precedent (xv) Understanding the institutional policies and procedures (xvi) Political and unethical influences (xvii) Institutional culture (xviii) Teamwork

<p>3. Important leadership quality dimensions that can strengthen and enhance the provision of quality higher education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Leadership abilities (ii) Democratic and participatory leadership abilities (iv) Leadership ability to steer compliance to policies and procedures (v) Leadership ability to ensuring that stakeholder needs are met (vi) Good team work and good relationships leadership abilities (vii) Influential leadership ability (viii) Leadership change facilitation and management abilities (ix) Growth and success empowering leadership abilities (x) Securing the buy-in of shared vision of quality improvement leadership abilities (xi) Quality results orientation leadership abilities (xii) Exemplary leadership abilities (xiii) Management by exception leadership abilities (xiv) Passion and value driving leadership abilities (xv) Student-centred quality leadership abilities (xvi) Quality learning environment enhancement leadership abilities
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4.2. Category-Different perceptions of quality

4.2.1 Conceptualisation of quality and its assurance

Any discourse on quality and its assurance should start by clarifying the terms “quality” and “quality assurance”. Such conceptual clarification is necessary because it enables readers to understand the focus of the discourse since different people hold different conceptions of the two terms. This is particularly so with higher education institutions where there are various stakeholders with different interests, values and expectations regarding provision of quality higher education. As Barnett argues, university institutions carry particular social and cultural identities (Barnett, 2013). The debate on quality can, therefore, be seen as a battleground where these identities are brought to the surface and pitched against each other. The way an institution perceives quality is likely to strongly influence the quality assurance policies and strategies it will adopt. Barnett contends:

Consequently, our methods of evaluating quality spring from more deep-seated beliefs as to what counts as quality. But, and more significantly, these beliefs over what counts as quality themselves derive from more fundamental assumptions as to the ideal nature of higher education.

As more and more people throughout the world participate in higher education, issues of quality have begun to occupy a more central position. Even more significant has been the change in the way people perceive the quality of higher education in general and the role of a higher education institution in particular. Generally, the key stakeholders in most higher education systems are the state, the market and the academy (Barnett, 2013). These can hardly strike consensus on what purposes higher education institutions should serve and how they should operate. What constitutes quality and who should define it are highly contested issues in higher education. Analysis of the quality and its assurance systems in a given system should start by seeking to understand what it is that is to be assured (Barnett, 2013). Therefore, a brief review of the various conceptions prevalent in the literature is necessary in any discourse on the subject of quality and its assurance.

Perhaps the most comprehensive conceptualisation of quality is provided by Harvey and Green (2012). The two authors give the following five conceptualisations of quality;

- quality as exceptional (excellence)
- quality as perfection
- quality as fitness for purpose
- quality as value for money
- quality as transformational

These conceptualisations are discussed below.

4.2.1.1. Quality as excellence

In this conceptualisation, quality is perceived as something distinctive, something special, which cannot be attained by many. The notion of centres of excellence in higher education probably derives from this conception. Analyses of mission statements for most higher education institutions seem to suggest that many higher education institutions draw from the notion of excellence in benchmarking their

performance. Quality assurance policies for most of the higher education institutions, for instance, are underpinned by institutional vision and mission statements that are framed around the value of excellence (Harvey and Green, 2012). Excellence, in the sense of exceptional quality, came to be seen, not as the answer to the question “is it good?”, but as the answer to the question “is it better than the others?” With that, it became all too easy to assume that quality manifested itself essentially as a ranking on a linear scale (Brink, 2010).

4.2.1.1. Quality as perfection

As perfection, quality relates closely to the notion of “zero defect” commonly employed in industrial settings, where physical products of a production chain have to meet the exact pre-specifications of the desired product, in its perfect form, without any defects (Harvey and Green, 2012). From an educational point of view, it seems this conceptualisation may be quite problematic, for two main reasons. Firstly, the product of an educational process is multi-faceted, usually possessing some unforeseeable and unpredicted but desirable attributes. Secondly, it is impossible to define a “perfect” or “zero defect” graduate of an educational process. This is primarily because, from an epistemological point of view, no knowledge is perfectly adequate, no matter how superior it may be (Harvey and Green, 2012).

4.2.1.2. Quality as fitness for purpose and as value for money

Fitness for purpose is generally the quality conception of stakeholders external to the higher education institution community, who normally put a heavy premium on the instrumental function of higher education. The market, for instance, looks at the ability of institutions to produce graduates who are immediately functional in the world of work. Graduates have to fit into the workplace without compromising on efficiency and without prejudicing the profit benefits of an enterprise. In Lockett’s (2010) view, quality assurance approaches that are informed by rationality external to the educational institution and that regard students as clients, citizens or potential voters subscribe to this understanding of quality as fitness for purpose (Lockett, 2010). This conception of quality is often linked to governments that are concerned with aligning the output of higher education institutions with broad national goals and for using higher education institutions as an apparatus to address broader social problems. In this sense, the fitness for purpose conception of quality is closely linked to the value for money

conception, hence the accountability nature of the approach to quality and its assurance. Institutions that subscribe to this notion of quality extensively involve professional bodies and the employers of higher education institutions graduates to specify their requirements and to accredit their programmes.

The fitness for purpose conceptualisation of quality is a developmental approach to quality, and this aspect is particularly significant to higher education. As customer specifications change with time, so do the aims to be achieved by higher education institutions. Bradbery (2011) contends that the product remains a quality product by maintaining its value to the customer. The assumption here is that the quality of university delivery is not something that is static; rather it is necessarily dynamic as it is responsive to changes in the work environment (Bradbery, 2011).

4.2.1.3. Quality as transformation

Quality as transformation connotes pedagogical implications, the extent of transformation that occurs in the learner as a consequence of the learning process. Quality, in this case, is defined regarding the “value added” in the learner, and learner assessment seeks to establish the amount of such value added. The amount of value added is not tangible, and its quantification is problematic, yet this is what the academy uses to determine value (Bradbery, 2011).

The next section deals with the analysis of the participants` interview responses concerning research question 1 and the sub-themes or theme nodes generated.

Research Question 1: What are the different perceptions of the concept of “quality” in higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area?

An examination of the participants` responses to interviews revealed that when it comes to the different understandings or conceptualisation of the concept of “quality” in the higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area, the following categories were generated: accuracy and precision; continuous process of improvement; doing the best with what is available; doing the conceivable best in pursuit of excellence; evidence of systems and policies and congruence between them; fitness for purpose and meets needs; holistic assessment and experience of quality; environment conducive to teaching and learning; and relevant value for money. These define the different conceptualisation of quality among the selected

higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area. Therefore, it appears as if quality means different things to different institutions and that individual staff members are viewing it differently, even within the same institution. These differences could be due to the diversity nature of the higher education system as well as to the fact that South African institutions are still in the process of becoming acquainted with the notion of quality (Bradbery, 2011).

In education, the concept of quality emerged in higher education in the early 1980s “from its more familiar industrial and commercial settings” (Newton, 2012, p. 45). However, in that era when people spoke about quality, they spoke of it in rather “lofty and abstract terms” (Perry, 2007, p. 91) because, at that time, there was a high level of consensus about the issue of academic quality. There was an assumption that some universities throughout the world, such as Harvard or Oxford, were in themselves the benchmark of quality without any further definition of the ingredients of quality. The emerged themes are listed in the summary table 4.2 below.

(i) Accuracy and precision

Providing quality with accuracy and precision is dynamically linked to customer satisfaction. As quality rises or falls, customer satisfaction usually follows. But, when it comes to clients with whom you have continuing business, the opposite can also be true. If the customer was satisfied in the past, that will influence his or her perception of quality delivered in the present, or in the future. In other words, you get points that carry forward in your customer relationships when the quality you deliver meets the customer’s expectations with accuracy and precision (Borys and Rogalka, 2011).

According to Borys and Rogalka (2011) quality and its management consists in actions whose aim is to identify and customer needs and expectations, and subsequently introduce business activity which not only meets such requirements, but meets them with accuracy and precision and goes beyond them, and creates additional impulse for increasing customer satisfaction and the capital of his loyalty. Given the above definition, any actions aimed at improving organisations should be directed at processes which assure better satisfaction of customer needs, requirements and expectations.

Quality as meeting customers' stated needs deals with the customers' needs and highlights the importance of knowing who the customers are, what their needs are and how to satisfy them. In this sense, quality is critical to the functioning of the market, as customers are thought to require reliable information about the product that they purchasing (Morley, 2005; Borys and Rogalka, 2011).

It appears that there are some complications in defining quality as accuracy and precision, one of which is whether the "student" is the customer, the product or both? Also, the main critics of this approach asked whether students were in a position to determine what their needs were (Green, 2010).

The researcher asked participants 1 and five several questions such as, "Why do you feel the way you do about quality and providing quality education in your institution?"

Participant 1 stated that:

"Quality is about doing things accurately and with precision, I need to do things right, at the first time. Getting things done the right and correct way the first time is my motivation. I strongly believe that by doing so it serves me time, organisational resources and serves from the embarrassment of being looked at as failure. As management, I am aware that I have to lead by example. My subordinates are looking at me for direction. I have to set a good example."

This statement suggests that people need to do things right from the beginning. Commitment to quality is demonstrated by "doing things right the first time". Borys and Rogalka (2011), borrowing from Crosby's book, "Quality is Free", enumerated four fundamental principles for quality management. And on these four fundamental principles, they developed the fourteen steps to achieve a continuous improvement of quality. The fundamental principles based on Crosby's book are:

- Quality must be defined concerning the compliance of the client's requirements.
- We must prevent.
- The quality standard is "zero errors" (no defects).
- The measurement of quality is the price of non-conformity.

From these basic principles, the 14 steps for the continuous improvement of quality are revealed:

- Management must be deeply committed to improving quality
- Teams must be formed to improve quality. These teams must be formed by members of all the departments of the company.
- Establish measurements. This way you can analyse where the quality problems are.
- The cost of quality is doing it wrong. And not doing it right from the start.
- Develop a quality culture in the company.
- The necessary measures have to be taken to correct the problems that are identified.
- Plan on “zero defects”.
- Train the team to improve quality.
- Organize a “zero defects” day. This will make the team aware that a deep change in the organisation is taking place.
- Set goals to reduce errors.
- Eliminate everything that is an obstacle to the goal of “zero errors”.
- Recognize and value all those members/teams that help meet the objective. Reward them.
- Constantly inform the team with the latest tips on quality.
- Improving quality is a cycle, therefore, do not tire of applying the principles for continuous improvement.

Participant 5, however, had a different understanding and conceptualisation of quality from that of participant 1, the participant had this to say:

“Quality means meticulous in whatever you do and be so accurate. It is to go back and double-check that everything is going well, and to make sure that there is a third person to verification the work and assessment, if the assessment has been set in a Campus it is sent back to the Head Office, where we do the first verification and the second verification, and then a final verification before it is printed out, and that is how we do the quality check here”

This view by participant 5 was just semantical different from that of participant 1. From these responses the researcher drew a sub-theme, quality is all about, “accuracy and precision”.

(ii) Continuous process of improvement

In Service-focused industries or sectors, such as education, continuous improvement is implemented to improve efficiency and strengthen the quality of service delivery. That is, in higher education, for example, to strengthen the quality of higher education. From education, catering to car washes, these organisations must regularly measure customer satisfaction and observe activities to identify opportunities to improve results (Ozturgut, 2011; Green, 2010; Rogala and Borys, 2011).

Quality improvement is anything that causes a beneficial change in the performance. Quality improvement ought to raise the level of provision, no matter how good it may already be, through a continuous search for improvement (Ozturgut, 2011; Rogala and Borys, 2011).

Ozturgut (2011) cites the late quality guru, W. Edwards Deming, who suggested that managers and organisations must have a consistency of purpose and a deep and abiding dedication to constant, ongoing improvement to satisfy customers, beat the competition, and retain jobs. As he concludes that continuous improvement is way of life, not a one-time program. According to Ozturgut (2011), Deming's focus was on ensuring that continuous improvement was bred into the culture, not something that was momentary or occasional. He often criticised managers for being short-sighted and focusing on the wrong measures. He encouraged managers to invest in the long-term by focusing on meaningful measures of continuous improvement.

Organisations that excel at continuous improvement incorporate it into their values and reflect it in their hiring and training. They also incorporate it in their employee evaluation and compensation system. If you visit a firm that excels at this work, the signs of continuous improvement are visible in every aspect of the culture. Continuous improvement is a way of life, not a fad or program of the month (Ozturgut, 2011).

Participants were asked further questions, such as, “How does your philosophy of provision of quality education relate to what you have just told me?”

Participant 16 had this to say:

“Unit offering, it must be held accountable, and a willingness to enhance what is being offered. In other words, our unit cannot run away from accountability to lack or failure to enhance the quality of our offering. Continuous improvement of the quality of our education holds us accountable to successes or failure.”

The above statement appears to endorse that there is a need to be accountable and willing to enhance quality improvements. However, to enhance and reward teaching excellence, it is essential to know what constitutes good teaching. Scholars have repeatedly identified several features of the "good teacher". Feldman (2011) lists teacher sensitivity to class level and progress, clarity of course requirements, understandable explanations, respect for students and encouragement of independent thought, as the main characteristics of a good teacher.

The quality enhancement of teaching tends to be both more diverse and less clearly defined than quality assurance. Examples of mechanisms for the enhancement of teaching quality are workshops, short courses, projects, grants for teaching initiatives, awards to outstanding teachers, mentoring systems for new staff, voluntary teaching and course evaluation mechanisms, etc. Given the variety of types of schemes and the wide diversity in which they operate, Van Bruggen, Scheele and Westerheijden propose some categorisation scheme. This two-category scheme refers to the ongoing project-type initiatives and workshop-type activities (Van Bruggen et al., 2012).

Although a wide variety of functions of quality assurance are mentioned, improvement and accountability remain the dominating functions.

The elements that support improvement are:

- stress on self-assessment;
- peer-evaluation;
- operational recommendations; and
- no direct link of financial consequences to evaluation result.

The elements that support accountability are:

- public reports;
- independent experts; and

- meta-evaluation and a follow up by the government or a governmental agency (Van Bruggen et al., 2012, p. 87).

Respondent 17 had this to say:

“I believe that quality means transformation, it lands itself very well with the way that we need to do with quality, a transformational perspective, and it is not static, it is constantly evolving. To achieve continuous improvement on the quality of our programmes, we need to embrace the need for transformation. As an institution, we cannot be satisfied with the status quo, and hope that we are still relevant in the same looks that we were when we started, or ten years or so ago.”

It is clear that quality is a constantly evolving phenomenon and it is transformational by nature (Shulman, 2009). Shulman (2009) also emphasises pedagogical knowledge and full command of the curriculum. Marsh (2008) mentions appropriate workload, clear explanations, empathy with students, openness on the part of the lecturer and quality of the assessment procedures. Entwistle and Tait (2007) list clear goals, appropriate workload and level of difficulty, choice in assignments, quality of explanation, appropriate pace in lecturing, enthusiasm of lecturers and empathy with students as essential traits.

In practice, transformation implies evaluating services and products against set standards, to improvement, renewal or progress. Any evidence of poor quality would be a source of concern and a reason for transformation. Also, the search for quality implies maintaining and applying academic and educational standards, including both the compilations of minimum expectations and requirements and striving for the ideal of excellence. The latter could fluctuate from one context to the other, depending on the specific purpose pursued. Quality, therefore, is occasionally equated as ‘fitness for purpose’. About higher education, international recognition also serves as a vital normative notion in determining, transforming and assessing academic and educational standards (Warren Piper, 2009).

Participant 9 raised the following view:

“Quality is about improvement; there has to be continual improvement on the provision of quality learning to our students. I talking about an all-round improvement, i.e. facilities, quality of lecturers. It’s all about resources. Without adequate resource,s, it is difficulty to transform

our institution so that it is not only counted among the best in South Africa, but international recognition is what we are aiming for. As I mentioned that there has to be a continual improvement.”

The above sentiments imply that quality is not a once off thing to do, but it is a continual process. In other words, it is not an event. Ozturgut (2011) talks of a four-step process which includes a plan that entails people identifying somethings that need to be changed. The plan is followed by doing, that is, when institutions implement it on a small scale, from there, institutions initiate checking, this is when data is used to analyse changes and determine if the plan made any differences (Ozturgut, 2011).

If the data indicates that there was success, then institutions should implement on a broader scale and continually check for the success of the plans. If it was not a success, then the process must be started all over again. For quality improvement to have a broad and lasting impact, it must become an integral and essential part of an institution's operations, processes and procedures (Ozturgut, 2011).

(iii) Doing the best with what is available

As resources become scarcer and enrolments grow, greater efficiency is expected on the part of the higher education institutions. This calls for more careful planning and steering of such institutions if they are to meet broader social and economic development goals and they are expected to do the best with what is available regarding resources and circumstances (Warren Piper, 2009; Feldman, 2011; Shulman, 2009). There is a dialectic relationship that exists between the economy of a country and the effective functioning of its higher education system. Institutions that operate in favourable economic conditions perform better and support quality and its assurance systems better than those that operate in distressed economies (Shulman, 2009). At the same time, well-functioning higher education systems are capable of supporting the economy better by providing the requisite human resource skills and research-based innovations that enhance productivity. Quality and its assurance can only take effect where it is accorded the right resources, and where staff feel motivated to invest their full effort in their academic work (Feldman, 2011; Shulman, 2009).

Given the nature of academic work, academics and lecturers should occupy a central stage in ensuring quality and its assurance. The academic staff is best positioned for

the development of norms, standards of performance, evaluation criteria, and for defining suitable procedures and practices for driving the actual quality and its assurance processes within the given resources and circumstance (Shulman, 2009).

Devoting the available resources in doing the best to develop curriculum resources that reflect what is familiar to the student as well as introducing new and more novel learning approaches to engage each student and teaching more complex and abstract ideas and concepts can help achieve provision of quality education by the higher education institutions (Feldman, 2011; Shulman, 2009).

When probed further, Participant 1 had this to say:

“I believed that quality means doing the best, quality is when you are doing the best considering the context and the content of the curriculum and expected quality outcomes as far as the institution`s mandate is concerned. It is just achieving the best you can do. By the way, doing the best in curriculum content delivery to produce quality learners takes a lot of resources too. Resources are never enough, so the best is to do the best with what is available and strive to adhere to the standards.”

The above assertions highlight that there is a need to consider the context and the content when dealing with quality in higher education institutions. In the higher education sector, the concept of “standards” means the level of conditions and the content that is taught by the institutions or their programs need external assessment and accreditation. This is where the function of the external accreditation agencies comes in (Chea, 2011). Quality standards of higher education delivery are naturally designed and monitored and enforced from outside through the use of accreditation agencies for example and other relevant structures. These normally work with the internal structures within the institutions that are responsible for quality and its assurance, such as the quality assurance officers (Chea, 2011).

In the context of higher education quality assurance comprises administrative and procedural activities that are implemented in a quality system so that requirements and goals for higher education service or activity will be fulfilled (Papp, 2014). It is the systematic measurement, comparison with a standard, monitoring of processes and an associated feedback loop that confers error prevention (Papp, 2014). This can be

contrasted with quality control, which is focused on process output and which is also relevant to the higher education context.

Participant 13 said the following apparently in agreement with Participant 1:

“I believe that quality is about the way you do things, quality is doing what you do in the best way and doing it efficiently, doing it effectively, because you want to achieve what you can and within the time-frames that you have, using the resources that are available.”

From the above responses of the participants, the researcher deduces that the importance of being efficient and being able to achieve goals using the available resources is a major concern in conceptualisation of quality and its assurance. The quality of the output (students) of any educational institution may depend on many factors like curriculum, technology, infrastructure, assessment, students and its faculty. The most important of all these factors is faculty, and if faculty members are satisfied, motivated and committed then students' learning is going to be much better (Perry, 2007; Newton, 2012; Papp, 2014; Chea, 2011).

No matter how advanced the technology and infrastructure may be, how well designed the curriculum is, and how delicate the assessment mechanisms may be, faculty is a variable that supersedes all (Papp, 2014). Teaching, whether in conventional or distance learning, is the most important variable that can be a decisive factor in students' learning. Teaching in distance mode, where there is no or very little teacher-student contact and interaction, may become a boring, routine and unattractive job. If teachers are dissatisfied and de-motivated and have low self-esteem, can they be successful in imparting quality education? Faculty is the most important factor in learning, as stated by Williams (2006).

Participant 7, a senior lecturer in one of the institutions had this to say:

“Quality means doing the best with what you have, but we have to carry on, we need to make the best of what we have, yes there are challenges, there are constraints, resources are scarce. As faculty to remain relevant as part of the critical component or factor, we need to

strive to do the best that we can in the circumstances. Our reputation is always at stake. The institutions we serve are dependent on us. We can make or break them.”

Reflecting on the above statement, it is apparent that to produce quality, staff needs to do the best they can all the time. It is contextual as it is the best you can do given the resources and tools to work with. A person must do well to the limit of his or her abilities and resources available in any given situation. Thus, choosing the best alternative requires practical wisdom (Williams, 2006).

(iv) Doing the conceivable best in pursuit of excellence

The concept of ‘excellence’ is well established in many fields of activity, and the term is used frequently to refer to very good or outstanding performance (Harvey, 2012). In higher education, it means different things in different contexts. Excellence may be equated with the reputation and standing of institutions, but much depends on the perception of student experience and the varying missions of institutions (Bader, 2013). Numerous definitions are suiting different purposes and different areas of quality assurance and stakeholders’ involvement. The concept is vague enough to offer plentiful grounds for both theoretical and practical research. In the view of the working group, it is important to consider excellence as a social phenomenon based on theoretical and cultural considerations, but is the group also recognises that the concept has practical applications in the context of management and technological development (Bader, 2013; Ahamer, 2011; Bess et al., 2008).

There is a need to analyse excellence through the lens of different key stakeholders, including students and families, society and employers. The term has been used widely by accreditation schemes in the management field for higher education, to define the level of the quality of service provided by institutions. In this context, it is possible to define standards of performance which permit the recognition of excellence. The concept involves components which can be connected, logically and operationally, to structural and organisational issues. It is less easy to define, in the context of academic quality and standards, where excellence relates to the quality of

teaching, the capabilities of students, the scale of resource provision and the level of student achievement (Harvey, 2012; Bader, 2013; Ahamer, 2011; Bess et al., 2008).

Participant 10 had this to say concerning excellence in the provision of quality education:

“I believed achieving excellence in provision of quality education hinges on the internal factors rather than the external factors, of course benchmarking with the external best practices. However, excellence has to be driven from within by analysing the internal factors that can be leverage to achieve excellence in quality education provision. Why internal factors? It is because we can control the internal factors to make sure that we provide quality to the best of our abilities, very little we can do about the external factors, and for example, internally we can have good quality teachers to teach, and we can create good environment.”

It is clear from the sentiments of Participant 10 above that the importance of analysing the internal factors as posing weaknesses or strengths, managing and controlling them if the institution wants to promote excellence in the provision of quality education needs not to be over emphasised. Quality is doing the best, it is doing things excellently in the sense of achieving exceptional quality standards, and this comes to be seen, not as the answer to the question “is it good?”, but as the answer to the question “is it better than the others?” With that, it becomes all too easy to assume that quality manifests itself essentially as a ranking order on a linear scale (Brink, 2010, p. 140).

Participant 12 also intimated on quality as evidence of achieving excellence in offering educational services. The participant had this to say:

“Quality is excellence, striving for excellence in whatever you do and do not settle for anything less. While others are content with their achievements, some of us we strive for more by going and extra mile. I guess it all depends on ones` motivations and capabilities, of course.”

Emerging from above two participants' reflections on their conceptualisation of quality and its assurance, it is perceived that quality is about promoting excellence in everything that one does. This includes providing an excellent learning experience that supports student success, assuring the quality of teaching programs to a high level,

providing students with teaching and learning programs that reflect the distinctive experiences, provide comprehensive support for students as they prepare for lifelong learning and employment, ensuring that staff are supported to achieve high professional standards in the provision of teaching and learning, providing an excellent campus environment to support the student learning experience and developing key policies and supporting statements to inform and support the Learning for Success Plan.

In line with the thoughts by the other participants above, Participant 13 had this to say:

“Quality is doing what you do in the best way, doing it efficiently, doing it effectively because you want to achieve what you can and within the time-frames that you have, using the resources that are available. Literature in management says that efficiently means doing the right things in the right way or correct way, while effectively means doing the right things.”

From the conceptualisation of quality by participant13 above, it is noted that two dimensions are raised, that is, “efficiency” and “effectiveness”. Assuming that the importance of being efficient and doing things effectively defines quality, Green (2010) intimates that doing things efficiently and effectively creates the sense of excitement of discovery of new things and creativity in the exploration of ideas and the solutions of significant and real problems, finding ways to present appropriately challenging learning activities in an enthusiastic, interesting, enjoyable and dynamic way, fostering active participation and enthusiastic engagement in learning activities, encouraging mutual recognition of the talents, aspirations and background knowledge that learners and teachers bring to the learning environment (Green, 2010).

Participant 7 had this to say, and bringing a new dimension to the conceptualisation of quality:

“In my opinion apart from everything, quality means something is the best that is, my opinion, once you say something is the best that means there is also something that is of less quality, something inferior, something substandard may be”

Reflecting on participant 7`s conceptualisation of quality, the researcher deduces that although quality is about doing the best that one can, there is also a description whether something is of good quality or less quality. According to Green (2010, p. 15) “quality about effectiveness is associated with achieving institutional goals”. This is an

attribute for the “fitness for purpose” model that focusses on “evaluation”, as quality in this approach concentrates on the evaluation of quality in the higher education institutions. This considers a high-quality institution in higher education, as one that has a clear mission and knows how to achieve its goals (Green, 2010, p. 15).

(v) Evidence of systems and policies and congruence between them.

In higher education, attempts have been made to “benchmark” academic standards of practice universally regarding policies and systems of operation and ensuring congruence between these systems and policies. There is good effort to make the availability of these systems and policies physically evident regarding their institutionalisation by the higher education institutions worldwide (Harvey & Newton, 2007). Among the many systems and policies, the most common include externally setting and moderation of examinations, specification of the content of syllabi and external examiners to ensure inter-institutional comparability of awards by institutions of higher education (Harvey and Newton, 2007). Starting a process of developing benchmarking (discrete) standards for institutional and programme accreditation of providers by focussing on expectations at the programme level from academics, professionals and practitioners as far as teaching staff, course structure, learning and assessment, facilities and support, quality management (continuous) and faculty development are concerned.

While the focus on programme accreditation is a general and standard practice in the higher education environment worldwide, its institutionalisation should not lose sight of the larger view of the institution, that considers governance, physical facilities, financial and human resources, student services, management and more (Harvey and Newton, 2007). Transparency, validation, accountability and improvement are values underlying much of the effort regarding programme assessment and accreditation at the international level. Driven by a significant global growth in higher education enrolment and an exponential increase in programme complexity, programme assessment and accreditation have, in recent decades, taken on an increasingly visible and important role and institutions have taken strides to benchmark against each other for best practices (Harvey and Newton, 2007).

In reality, where good practice has been developed, it has been based on paying attention to what the key stakeholders have said regarding systems and policies (Harvey and Newton, 2007). For example, where institutional student feedback processes have been followed over a period of years, there is clear evidence to indicate that student satisfaction is closely interrelated with clear, tangible action (Williams and Kane, 2009). Where institutions have acted by what the students have said in their annual feedback surveys, student satisfaction can be seen to rise. A quality feedback action cycle, such as that outlined by Harvey (2003) appears to work in practice to ensure congruence.

At the same time, where students and staff work together to act on issues raised by this dialogue, quality appears to increase. Students can be engaged at all levels from student academic boards at faculty level to working with staff to develop new and innovative teaching materials. This approach has, at least at one institution, resulted in an increase in NSS scores for optional questions relating to engagement, but, more significantly, it has enhanced the experience of those students and staff involved. Engaging students and staff in partnership, therefore, appears to be a key component in successfully enhancing the learning environment (Millard et al., 2013).

Participant 14 had this to say given these standard practices that are common worldwide in the higher education sector to ensure quality, and its assurance:

“So, to explain and I hope it will answer your question, the way we approach quality in our faculty of management sciences, is ensuring accountability for strict observance of the generally accepted norms and standards of practice in the higher education fraternity, there is need for observance of guidelines and these standards of practice which are being respected globally and respectively. Ours is to have an accountable type of approach as we work with a quality cycle on an ongoing basis, where we plan, we act, we review and we improve, so we plan, we take actions, we review and we try to improve on our effort to do what is generally done universally in the education systems. In other words, we hold each other accountable for the observance of these general norms of practice.”

It is clear from the above assertion that quality is not a once-off thing, it must be taken as a cycle and must follow correct planning processes. Hou (2012) argues that quality in higher education, and quality teaching, in particular, springs from a never-ending

process of reduction and elimination of defects, but from an ongoing perspective. In other words, the standardisation of the practices in higher education by way of systems and policies such as accreditation of programme offerings by higher education institutions as a universal practice is meant for assuring quality in the provision of higher education worldwide. Such practices help to bring the element of objectivity in the perceived authenticity and quality of the qualifications obtained from these institutions. Thus, institutions of higher learning are expected to comply with the accreditation requirements, for example, be they are local requirements, regional and international (Hou, 2012).

This is further emphasised by participant 17 who had the following to say:

“We use the systems; we have policies that we follow, we plan, act, review and improve because we look at all these things holistically and we follow that concept of best practices in higher education. Accreditation of programmes that we offer add to the legal basis of our existence as an institution of higher education in the country. We are recognised as such, both locally and regional for example. As an institution we are kept on our toes to improving the quality of what we are producing at the end, I think so.”

From the on-going assertions, it is notable that quality is a continuous process that is ongoing for the rest of the institutions` lives. Systems have to be put in place to ensure quality, and it`s assurance is adhered to and followed not only as a concept alone but as a way of life as far as the existence of the institutions are concerned (Argyris and Schön, 2008). Argyris and Schön (2008) determined that quality enhancement in higher education institutions should be a double-looped process that involves and concerns itself with students` examination and other formalities before examination of students. The question is why the examination of students? The reason is that examination of the students is the final culmination of provision of quality in the education industry. Everything manifests in student examinations, notwithstanding the importance of preparations for the examinations by both learners and teachers and also regarding the organisational factors such as facilities, and more (Argyris and Schön, 2008).

Participant 15 believes that staff needs to commit themselves and do more before they assess the students for example to promote good quality education offering, and had the following to say:

“On the issue of quality, we do our own assessments what we do is we do multiple assessments, before we make sure that, before the students write their final examinations they are ready, we do various interventions in between, to make sure that they do their best, we do not wait for them to write their exams, we give them the support they need before any exam. We are quite proactive on that.”

The above assertions indicate that preparation for the final examinations takes a lot of effort and things to be done, and students’ assessments by lecturers, for example, need to be in different techniques to prepare the students and assist them in producing good work. The concept of the student as a customer was first mooted in the UK (Crawford, 2013). Literature emphasises the importance of students’ involvement in the assessment and evaluation of quality. For example, there is the consumerism school of thought that emphasises five principles: access, choice, information, redress, representation (Pervin and John, 2010), all five of which may be considered by the students as they evaluate the quality of higher education in their institutions.

However, Dickinson et al (2009, p.63) point out that “education may be unique in the sense that it is difficult for the customer to assess the quality and relevance of the service”. It sometimes happens that only years after a university course, a student, at last, comes to understand why this particular course was useful. Telford and Masson’s research (2005) confirm a lack of congruence between the main stakeholders’ views. But this study also shows that the fact that stakeholders do not attach the same importance to the different elements of the educational framework is not in itself an explanation for students’ dissatisfaction at times.

Participant 16 believes that outside factors need careful consideration, and had this to say:

“The outside factors guide quality in all private and public institutions, actually Council on High Education (CHE), that is an outside factor for example, but also to me from the inside quality is being guided by the internal policies and systems that are put in place. Being a university of technology, quality is all those measures that the institution and the industry expects us to do, for example, if you work with a student population, it is important that about 80% of the student population can find jobs, or they can start a business of their own.”

The above participant 16 claims that the institutions’ management needs to understand the requirements of the outside or external bodies that are there to ensure

and monitor quality, such as the CHE and their understanding will guide the implementation of the internal policies and systems towards achieving quality education. National policies or pronouncements issued by quality assurance agencies or other organisations help bring quality teaching to the forefront of the educational institutions. They are likely to help university leaders to seize themselves with a culture of quality that includes teaching within their institutions (However, Dickinson et al., 2009).

Participant 17 emphasises the importance of ensuring quality even in short courses offering by institutions of higher education. The participant had this to say:

“What we as the quality assurance office we quality assure the institution`s proposed short causes, so when they developed the drafts of the short courses are brought to our office, to be reviewed by us and we then ensure that we look through the drafts in line with our policy, check the draft documents to see whether they are aligned with the CHE policy document, as well as the SAQA, so that is what we do in terms of the short courses.”

The assertion by participant 17 above highlights the importance of all the programs that the universities and colleges are offering to be compliant and in line with the requirements and provisions of the CHE and SAQA, which are the external quality assurance bodies in the country. The extent to which the institutions` programmes of short courses also measure up when benchmarked against other institutions and practices, is of vital importance.

(vi) Fitness for purpose and meeting the needs of the stakeholders

The conceptualisation of quality as “fitness for purpose” was adopted by most policymakers in the higher education sector, as they argued that quality has no meaning except about the purpose of the product or service. However, the fitness for purpose approach has been refuted by many scholars as well. Thus, Gibbs (2011) suggests an alternative approach to the conceptualisation that he calls the “good-enough practice”. He highlights that the application of good-enough practices has superficial similarities with fit for purpose. However, unlike the approach where the focus was on matching definitive purposes (as might be the case in manufacturing), good-enough practices requires that quality fulfils the expectations of the reference group, but it does not do it perfectly.

Fitness for purpose is generally the quality conception of stakeholders external to the higher education institution`s community, who normally put a heavy premium on the instrumental function of higher education. The market, for instance, looks at the ability of institutions to produce graduates who are immediately functional in the world of work. Graduates have to fit into the workplace without compromising on efficiency and without prejudicing the profit benefits of an enterprise. In Lockett's (2010) view, quality assurance approaches that are informed by rationality external to the educational institution and that regard students as clients, citizens or potential voters subscribe to The fitness for purpose definition of quality is a developmental approach to quality, and this aspect is particularly significant to higher education. As customer specifications change with time, so do the aims to be achieved by universities. Bradbery contends that the product remains a quality product by maintaining its value to the customer (Harvey and Green, 2012). The assumption here is that the quality of university delivery is not something that is static; rather it is necessarily dynamic as it is responsive to changes in the work environment.

The problem with the fitness for purpose approach is that it is not easy to define what the purposes of higher education should be (Green, 2010, p. 15), as their purposes differ greatly depending on who defines these purposes. This definition focusses on "a threshold judgment" (Perry, 2007, p. 92), which refers to the minimum requirements to fit standards; so, if an institution meets the purposes, this means it has quality, which arguably was not always the case.

Participant 1 emphasised on quality as "fitness for purpose" and had this to say:

"Quality as fitness for purpose is viewed in terms of having to serve the needs of the customers and fulfil national priorities and so on, but quality for purpose is viewed in terms of how we are serving the institution itself, that is, in terms of its vision and mission goals and strategic planning outcomes."

By reflecting on the conceptualisation above, participant 1, gives an impression that quality means or is all about the ability to serve the needs of the customers or

stakeholders. Several participants concurred with participant 1 on the aspect of quality as defining the “fitness of purpose” and customer satisfaction.

Participant 1 had the following to say further:

“To be able to satisfy students’ needs, for example, fitness for purpose and fitness of purpose and the correct understanding of the meanings in an educational context play a very important role. May be the distinction between the two in my understanding is that ‘fitness for purpose’ is concerned with the university’s programmes offering whether they fit the purpose for which they are designed for, while ‘fitness of purpose’ is basically interested in the niche area and mandate of the university in terms of its relevance.”

Participant 14 reiterated that fitness for purpose is about satisfying the customers, and had this to say:

“Customer satisfaction like satisfaction of our students. In our case, our customers are our students. Their satisfaction as far as I am concerned best defines the essence of quality. I believe that it is customers that can assess and measure our quality better than ourselves.”

Participant 15 added that the qualification offered by the institution should fit its intended purpose. The participant had the following to say:

“Quality in higher education is deemed as fitness for purpose and fitness for use. This means that educational qualifications must be fit for their purpose, for example, a student who wants to be a medical doctor must be able to perform as a medical doctor upon completion of the qualification.”

The conceptualisations by the above participants reflect that quality aims at satisfying the needs of the higher education stakeholders and customers, which includes the students and the companies in the geographical area that the institution is serving. The conceptualisation of quality as satisfying “fitness for purpose” was adopted by most policymakers in the higher education sector, as fitness for purpose is based on the premise that quality has no meaning except about the purpose of the product or service. However, the fitness for purpose approach has been refuted by many scholars as suggested before, authors such as Gibbs (2011) suggests an alternative approach to the conceptualisation of quality as the “good-enough practice,” and he highlights

that the application of good-enough practices has superficial similarities with fit for purpose mantra.

The “fitness for purpose” is the conceptualisation that is widely and mostly adopted in the higher education, as it accepts that quality has no abstract meaning, it depends on the purpose for which a particular process is designed. Other conceptualisations such as “customer-oriented” and “value for money”, seem to portray higher education as strictly for business purposes which should not always be the case, as institutions have societal or community roles to fulfil as well. In this study, the notion of quality in teaching was conceptualised as the ability to transform students on an on-going basis and add value to their knowledge and personal development (Lim, 2009). This conceptualisation was also interrogated by Lockett (2010) in that quality assurance in South Africa is also a mechanism to transform the higher education system. Universities engage in transformation in a variety of ways. Transformation can be seen as a way of fully adding value to students throughout their learning. This approach is also in line with one of the three HEQC’ approaches to quality in that: transformation in the sense of developing the capabilities of individual learners for personal enrichment, as well as the requirements of social development and economic and employment growth (CHE, 2004).

(vii) Holistic assessment and experience of quality

The purpose of holistic assessment is to regularly evaluate key systems, processes, and outcomes by adhering to an established framework and methodology to create a basis for the strategic and continual improvement of the organisation’s performance (Samuelowicz and Bain, 2008). Regarding practice, the different conceptions of quality dealt with in the literature may only be regarding the relative emphasis laid on some conceptions.

In this study, quality performance relates to the aspect of the assessment strategies that the higher education institutions use in the process of examining their students. In other words, quality performance extends beyond the quality of the institutions examinations to other forms of assessment that the institutions employ. The assessments do not only confine themselves to students` performance but the holistic

performance of the institution (Samuelowicz and Bain, 2009). The question is, has the institution achieved what it set itself to achieve? These preferred outcomes are usually measured against the institution's mission as they are expected to be normally enshrined in the mission statement of the institution, and this is what the institution can be assessed on in terms of having achieved or failed to achieve what the institution had set itself to achieve (Samuelowicz and Bain, 2009). What institutions seek to achieve is informed by and is also within the interest of the wider (academic) society, who uses a variety of tools to assess the performance of the institution. Thus firstly, quality is perceived regarding societal expectations – that is, the expectations of employers, like professional bodies and industry. A blend of the customer satisfaction and the fitness for purpose conceptions of quality seem to form a significant dimension of the conception of quality for most institutions (Samuelowicz and Bain, 2009). The obvious implication of this is the involvement of external stakeholders like professional organisations in quality assuring academic programmes offered by higher education institutions and assessments.

Participant 1 believed that holistic assessment included the ability of the institutions' graduates to be able to use different skills, and the participant had this to say:

“We are being measured or evaluated for performance as institutions on the ability of our students' assessments, not only in final examinations but on the ability of our graduates to be able to demonstrate possession of other skills too. That is beyond the academic skills. Our graduates should be able to demonstrate that they have acquired other skills such as the communication skills, the maths skills, and any other source skills, that you can think of, that they can use outside the working environment as well. In other words, the lecturers and the institution, in general, are expected to be able to impart these skills as well. This defines the holist approach to assessment.”

The above assertion intimates on the importance of promoting quality and holistic student assessment approaches that are not only looking at the academic assessment of the students but assessment on other skills and knowledge too during the teaching and learning processes. The support of learning is fundamental in the holistic approach to assessment of the students since it is recognised in the holistic approach that teaching and learning is phenomenological, the experience of teaching and learning is personal and requires support. However, the basis of support is the

relationship that the holistic teacher establishes with the learners, and what the institution itself does to facilitate that relationship (Pervin and John, 2010). The holistic approach does not only concern itself with the performance of the students but also the performance of the institution regarding achieving or failing to achieve what it sets itself to achieve from time to time (Samuelowicz and Bain, 2009).

Participant 12 suggested that the holistic assessment approach includes the quality of programs offered by the institutions, and had this to say:

“Quality of programs, quality of assessments and quality of reviews are the same thing. The holistic approach views these aspects as one. The issue is quality of everything. In my opinion, it may not make sense to talk of quality of assessments and quality of reviews without the quality of the programs in the first place.”

Reflecting on the line of thinking of participant 12 above, it is clear that the holistic approach to assessment includes the assessment of the institutions programs, their teaching and learning processes and institutional achievement of set targets. Literature suggest that this is in line with the formative assessment approach which is viewed as suitable as it supports student’s learning processes and outcomes (Paul and Elder, 2006). Various assessment methods are used in the modules and programs taught by institutions of higher education. These methods range from individual assignments to group work in the course work (Paul and Elder, 2006).

Participant 4 suggested that holistic assessment approach is also interested in the outcomes, and had the following to say:

“When you are talking about the quality and its assurance in the higher learning institutions, we also talking about the quality of the programs offered, talking about the quality of delivery methods in class and outside classroom, talking about the quality of assessments of students, you are also talking about the working environment, it must be conducive, and that includes all these things.”

The above assertion by participant 4 reiterates that quality should be looked at holistically in all aspects and respects. It does not refer or limit itself to one measure of assessment – it’s the totality of the experiences of quality cutting across all the domains of higher education institution’s activities, which include delivery in the classroom, faculty staffing, the extent to which the institution meets the stakeholders`

needs, methods of assessments, the condition of the environment, the programs offering, etc. Such a strategy ensures a realistic, proactive and measurable approach to quality.

(viii) Environment conducive for teaching and learning

Conducive learning environment is crucial to the success of learning of the students. Conducive environment of the learners can be viewed from two perspectives, the learning environment and the learning interaction. The learning environment refers to the environment the learners undergo in their learning (Ugwoegbu, 2012). While the learning interaction refers to the relationship that exists between the learner and the educator (facilitator) (Ugwoegbu, 2012). Learning interaction is one of the cardinal factors that dictate the outcome of learning among the learners. Jegede (2011) opined that the facilitator or lecturer needs to be conscious of the characteristics of the learners and let that dictate what takes place in the classroom or in the process of learning interaction. The author further states that some learners may come into a learning situation with experiences, many of which may be directly or indirectly related to the issues being discussed. The lecturer or facilitator should create room for friendliness in the classroom for effective learning to take place during interaction in the class.

Khalid (2008) rightly observes that the issue of conducive learning environment among the learners cannot be addressed without referring to the andragogical assumptions on which at times the education may be based. These assumptions include self-concept, experience, readiness to learn and orientation to learning. The concept of andragogy according to Ugwoegbu (2012) refers to the art and science of helping some learners such as adult learners for example to learn. The central focus of this theory is on why attention should be paid to the adult learners for example in a learning situation. The concept of andragogic learning according to Rogers and Knowles as cited by Khalid (2008), is a concept of self-directed learning in which the learners are involved in diagnosing their educational needs, choosing their priorities, planning their goals and executing the programme to their mutual benefits.

However, no adult learner will ever learn under conditions incongruent with his or her self-concept for example. The self-concept of an adult learner, for example, is pivotal in any learning situation. The bottom line is that the higher education institutions need to provide for all categories of learners including adult learners (Khalid, 2008). The second assumption of Malcolm Knowles is the role of experience. This assumption entails that as an individual matures, he or she accumulates a reservoir of experience that provides him or her with a broadening base to which to relate his or her new learning (Khalid, 2008).

As per Bess et al. (2008) experience shows that an environment conducive to teaching and learning is a multi-level endeavour. Support for quality teaching takes place at three inter-dependent levels namely, at institution-wide level: including projects such as policy design, and support to organisation and internal quality assurance systems; at programme level: comprises of actions to measure and enhance the design, content and delivery of the programmes within a department or a school; and at individual level: includes initiatives that help teachers achieve their mission, encouraging them to innovate and to support improvements to student learning and adopt a learner-oriented focus. These three levels are essential and inter-dependent aiming at producing a conducive environment for teaching and learning (Bess et al., 2008).

Participant 10 had this to say:

“I think I can say that quality is also about promoting a conducive environment for learning among other things as well. It is about creating an environment that is conducive for learning. The environment should be good for both the learners and the teachers for effective learning to be able to take place.”

The learning environment of institutions largely depends on the way lecturers teach in the lecture rooms, and they are the creators of favourable environment for the students. Students work and learn under the influence of that particular learning and working behaviour by their lecturers. Institutions are more than a place where academic skills are taught and learnt; they are a diminutive community in themselves where members interact and influence the behaviour of each other (Shupe, 2010).

Participant 4 reiterated that when one is talking about the environment, it also includes the internal factors such as the programs, quality of delivery by lecturers and assessments. The participant had the following to say:

“When you are talking about the provision of quality education in the higher learning institution, we are also talking about the quality of the programs that the institution is offering, we are talking about the quality of lecture delivery, we are talking about the quality of the assessments, and also talking about the working environment.”

The conducive environment means that the internal environment and the programs in the university should be in a satisfactory manner that allows good results. Quality is about creating an environment conducive to learning and environment and staffing conducive to teaching and learning, and that creates a total learning experience and produces good quality outcomes. Conducive environment for teaching and learning can be manifested through a wide range of activities that are likely to improve the quality of the teaching process, of the programme content, as well as the learning conditions of students.

(ix) Relevance

Quality content refers to the intended and taught curriculum of the institutions. The national goals for education, and outcome statements that translate those goals into measurable objectives should provide the starting point for the development and implementation of the curriculum and content taught in institutions of higher education (UNICEF, 2007). One of the benefits of engaging in this approach is that content relevance should be able to facilitate ease replication of the complexity of experiences that graduates will face in the outside world after completing their studies. In the workplace, except in rare instances, the need for research skills alone will not be prevalent (Abeysekera, 2011). With grounding in a multifaceted approach to learning and doing, the graduates are equipped to face often complicated and diverse demands of the environment. Where there has been difficulty in ‘seeing change’ – we let our students ‘see possibilities and opportunities’ to be a part of, or lead, social change (Abeysekera, 2011). They see, learn about it, discuss it and eventually do it for themselves thus building a bridge between what they are learning and what they can do with it, post-graduation in the ‘real’ world (Abeysekera, 2011).

Participant 6 intimated that relevance refers to the relevance of the context and content taught by the institutions that will assist the graduates to implement it outside university or college life that is in the world out there. The participant had this to say:

“In higher education quality means producing graduates that will solve the industry problems, to me that is the definition of quality. Quality is not passing with a distinction but it means having people which will address the needs of the industry, and that is what is important. To a certain extent, we produce quality students that aim at addressing the socio-economic issues of the industry.”

Participant 8 dwelt on the importance of teaching relevant content as of vital importance to the conceptualisation of quality. The participant had this to say:

“It will mean at the end we will be able to produce good quality graduates that will be able to contribute to the needs of the society. Our institutions are expected to offer programmes and teach relevant content. The content should be relevant to the expectations of the industry for example. Are the graduates trained, going to solve the business problems, are they relevant to the changing business environment? I think these are pertinent questions to ask all the time, as we churn out graduates year after year.”

The sentiments by the two participants claimed that the type of students the colleges and universities teach should be able to solve the challenges that our country has, which means the content taught should be relevant. Producing graduates that will solve the industry problems - here, quality is not passing with a distinction, but it means having people which will address the needs of the industry that is, producing quality students that aim at addressing the socio-economic issues of the industry.

Research on educational practices and projections about future needs in the society contributes to current understanding of the structure of colleges and universities curriculum. In general, curriculum should emphasise deep rather than broad coverage of important areas of knowledge, authentic and contextualised problems of study, and problem-solving that stresses skills development as well as knowledge acquisition. Curriculum should also provide for individual differences, closely coordinate and selectively integrate subject matter, and focus on results or standards and targets for students learning (Glatthorn and Jailall, 2013).

(x) Value for money

A study conducted by Newton (2012) demonstrates that many British teachers complained of increased managerialism, bureaucracy, and intrusion, as a consequence of the introduction of the United Kingdom's Quality Assurance Agency quality system which is rather based upon the definition of "quality as value for money". Value for money can be defined as the most advantageous combination of cost, quality, and sustainability to meet customer requirements. In this context, cost means consideration of the whole life cost; quality means meeting a specification which is fit for purpose and sufficient to meet the customer's requirements; sustainability means economic, social and environmental benefits. Value for money refers to the optimum outcome of a business process. It applies to all industries, sectors, geographic locations, and cultures including education. Value for money is expected to help organisations improve their performance (Akintoye et al., 2013).

HA (2012) provided a better definition of best value, as 'the delivery of business objectives at the lowest affordable cost while achieving continuous improvement' with the four key components of best value being effectiveness, efficiency and economy underpinned by the demonstration of continual improvement. In a research survey carried out by Ansell et al. (2010) the respondents of their research survey rank the requirements for delivering best value to the clients as- free from defects on completion; delivered on time; delivered within budget; fit for purpose; low construction costs; pleasing to look at; short construction period; supported by worthwhile guarantees; satisfactory life of repair; low maintenance cost; minimal disruption to the public; and safety.

Participant 12 emphasised that quality is all about value for money. He had the following to say:

"Quality is value for money. I believe so! It is important that as an institution we give our customers, who are mainly our students in this case value for their money. The question might be, why value for money? Money is hard earned. The parents of these students work hard to raise the money to pay fees for their children. It is hard-earned. Therefore the expectation is nothing short of getting the value for that money."

The statement by participant 12 gives a very strong impression of offering customers value for their money lying at the centre of conceptualisation of quality. Customers are not expecting anything less of receiving value for their money. Customers are the life blood of any business, any organisation (Cartwright, 2007). Cartwright (2007) also reports that external evaluations which generally rely on the definition of quality as “value for money” often raise frustration on the part of professors. Many professors believe that these evaluations are too concerned with the financials and not enough with the teaching experience.

Participant 3 brought in the dimension of quality as associated with the concept of return on investment. Participant 3 had the following to say:

“There are numerous examples of what quality would mean, it can be the return on investment. Even with education, parents invest in the education of their children. Yes, it is an obligation, but the fact of the matter is that parents expect to get future returns from the investments in the education of their children. Please note that it is not only investment in child education by a parent but also investment regarding capital, investment regarding costs incurred by the educational institutions themselves. They must ensure they get returns on their investments. Mind you some of these higher education institutions are privately owned.”

Participant 3 further reiterated that quality means the return on the investment regarding costs and capital that the owners of the institutions of higher education have incurred in the provision of quality education to the community. Value for money goes further than the concept of returns on investment. Value for money could also be used as a reputational leverage to attract money from high profile resources and ensuring that it is spent effectively, or at least to the satisfaction of donors for example. Developing an internalised set of values that ensures resources are used efficiently and effectively (Cartwright, 2007).

Quality, as associated to value for money, takes transformation that ensures that top-graded students, for example, are prepared (enhanced and empowered) for significant graduate jobs and that top researchers in these institutions of higher education are fully supported and enabled to attract and deliver major research projects that attract funding for the institutions. It all centres on the stakeholder-centred approach that endeavours to enhance and empower students and researchers: prioritising the

development of participants in the learning and knowledge development process. A variety of quality cultures, a panoply of teaching excellence (Cartwright, 2007).

A different view from participant 4 was that quality is about the features that makes the product. The participant had the following to say:

“Best of the service of the product you are talking about is the features, the traits of a good product, or the features or traits of the good service, depending on what service you are talking about, it must comply with certain standards.”

Emerging from participant 4 is the perception that quality is not only about the end product but the features that were included in making that product to be of good quality.

It is argued that quality should be defined and judged “by the user (students) rather than the producer (higher education institutions)” (Wilkinson, 2011, p. 8). Therefore, defining quality from the students’ perspective is seen as an important aspect, but only a small number of studies highlighted that. One of these studies was by Gatfield (2009) that focussed on developing a customer-derived scale which identified the quality variables related to students’ perceptions of the university experience. A total of 26 variables emerged, and the most significant result was that recognition and the academic instruction (which referred to good teaching) were shown to be of greater importance to students. The same results were confirmed in the study by Hill, Lomas, and MacGregor (2010) that discovered that when students thought about quality as a concept, they gave great attention to the quality of their lecturers.

Defining quality is difficult because it means different things in different contexts (Elassy, 2013b). For example, quality has been applied in different types of departments within the universities. In each case, quality means something different because if it is referred to as meeting certain standards, those standards differ from one context to another. Therefore, it is important to think about the quality of “what”? “What are we talking about? Are we talking about the quality of a lecture or lecturer, the syllabus or curriculum?” (Van Kemenade, Pupius and Hardjono. 2008, p. 176). Defining quality requires an understanding of the entity that is assumed to have a property called quality. It could be concluded that teaching, learning and lecturers’

performances were strongly emerging as elements of students' perception of quality (Elassy, 2013b).

4.2.2. Summary of the findings concerning research question 1

The table 4.2 below shows the summary of the findings from the interviews conducted concerning research question 1, "What are the different perceptions of the concept of "quality" in the higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area?"

Table 4.2: Emerged themes: - Summary of findings concerning research question 1

Research question	Category	Central theme	Interviewee
"Different perceptions of quality"-derived from research question 1	(i) Accuracy and precision	➤ Doing things right the first time and being meticulous	1 & 5
	(ii) Continuous process of improvement	➤ Accountability, willingness to enhance quality improvement and transformation	9, 16 & 17
	(iii) Doing the best with what is available	➤ Doing the best with resources available, efficiently and effectively	1, 7 & 13
	(iv) Doing the conceivable best in pursuit of excellence	➤ Achieving excellence and the best in the provision of quality education	7, 10, 12 & 13
	(v) Evidence of systems and policies and congruence between them		
	(vi) Fitness for purpose and meets needs		

	<p>(vii) Holistic assessment and experience of quality</p> <p>(viii) Environment conducive to teaching and learning</p> <p>(ix) Relevance</p> <p>(x) Value for money</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Observing the general norms and standard practices and use of systems and policies in higher education ➤ Customer satisfaction and ensuring fit for purpose ➤ Graduates demonstrating knowledge and possession of other skills as well ➤ Conducive environment, quality programmes and quality delivery ➤ Relevant content, context, and quality of programmes ➤ Quality as value for money and return on investment 	<p>14, 15, 16 & 17</p> <p>1, 14 & 15</p> <p>1, 4 & 12</p> <p>4 & 10</p> <p>6 & 8</p> <p>3, 4 & 12</p>
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4.3. Category-Factors impacting on the provision of quality higher education

4.3.1. National policies and organisation

In higher education, the statutory process involved the acceptance of a White Paper on higher education and the promulgation of the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 (SA, 1997). Also, the South African Qualifications Authority Act 58 of 1995 (SA, 1995) makes provision for a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and played a major role in creating a policy forum for the establishment of a quality assurance system at the macro level (Strydom, 2009).

The SAQA Act with its Education and Training Quality Assurance bodies (ETQAs), the Department of Labour (DoL) with its Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and finally the CHE with its HEQC (only finalised in May 2001) are all relatively recent developments that have hardly begun to operate and are now subject to new policy developments in the form of the National Plan of the DoE and its detailed implementation documents on funding, institutional planning and programme mixes. All the different quality assurance policy developments coming from national organisations are overwhelming and raise critical questions about the ability of the national organisations to lead and manage policy development (Strydom, 2009). A study done in 1999/2000 on national organisations mentioned certain problem areas needing consideration:

- Insufficient infrastructure. No organisation can achieve its expected aims and objectives without the necessary infrastructure and resources (human, physical and financial).
- Breakdowns in communication. Serious questions were raised regarding the communication practices and systems of the national organisations. According to many role-players, there was a lack of communication channels among national and intermediate organisations and higher education institutions causing frustration and a lack of understanding and progress.
- Lack of leadership. A lack of clear leadership at different levels of national organisations was identified as a source of frustration. Some role-players found the discontinuity and unavailability of staff inconvenient, while others were not

sure that there was enough expertise for this daunting task of policy implementation.

- Also, the following specific problematic areas in quality assurance also require attention:
 - The problem of overload. Taking into account the potential proliferation of ETQAs and even SETAs for higher education, institutions could find themselves in the position of being almost continuously visited by review teams assessing different but integrated areas.
 - The cost of the quality assurance system. Costs should be calculated not only regarding the actual costs of the quality assurance agency and its activities but also regarding the cost to institutions (and programmes) themselves, preparing their self-evaluations and preparing for the external audit, which includes the demands made on the time of staff and students. These costs could be quite considerable for both the system and the institutions. Decisions will have to be taken on how the quality assurance system can be made affordable (while still being effective) for higher education in a developing country such as South Africa.
 - The nature of judgements. Judging, for example, the quality of teaching and learning in a particular discipline or programme is a hugely complex and costly undertaking and could differ substantially from judging the quality of research, community service, support services and management. Finding assessors with the required expertise and experience and who are able and willing to undertake these judgements, is often quite difficult.
 - The issue of standards. There is strong political pressure for maintaining standards, even in a very difficult climate of declining funding and rising expectations. The proposed quality assurance will have to accommodate these pressures without compromising its basic purposes and characteristics.

The implementation of the policy guidelines for quality assurance in higher education is not a simple matter and will require the combined efforts of the relatively small number of knowledgeable people in the field of quality assurance in South Africa (Strydom, 2009).

The next section deals with the analysis of the participants' interview responses concerning research question 2 and the categories and central themes that emerged from the interviews.

Research Question 2: What factors affect the provision of quality higher education in higher education institutions in Durban Metropolitan area?

An examination of the participants' responses to interviews revealed that when it comes to the identification of factors affecting the provision of quality in the higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area the following main categories were generated: national policies and organisation; funding; resources; socio-economic and political factors; internal environment; quality teaching accessories; staffing and other related issues; poor retention and loss of talent and skill; teaching content; assessment tools; individual differences; lack of common understanding; management and continuous improvement; setting and communicating the precedent; understanding the institutional policies and procedures; political and unethical influences; institutional culture; and teamwork. The emerged themes are listed in summary table 4.3 below.

(i) National policies and organisation

National policies or statements issued by quality assurance agencies such as the Council on Higher Education (CHE), Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) or other organisations help bring quality teaching to the forefront within educational institutions. The CHE set up the interim HEQC in June 1999 to investigate how best to establish a national quality assurance system for the country. The interim HEQC believed strongly that to identify best practices for the new HEQC, it should examine past and current quality assurance practices in South Africa as well as acquiring some international comparative perspectives in this regard (Strydom, 2009). It was agreed that an evaluation panel consisting of local and international participants would assess the existing quality assurance activities of the Certification Council for Technikon Education (SERTEC) and of the former Quality Promotion Unit (QPU) of the South African Universities Vice-Chancellors Association (SAUVCA). A special sub-committee was established by the interim HEQC to oversee this task. They are likely

to help university and college leaders to infuse a culture of quality teaching within their institutions (Strydom, 2009).

Participant 12 recognised that infusion of culture of quality teaching within institutions entails developing the internal quality standards for the institutions and they should be regularly reviewed as they impact provision of quality education among the institutions.

Participant 12 had the following to say:

“We have reviewed all the standards and designed our own internal policies based on the CHE standards, and continuous improvement is evident. The idea is to improve our institutional quality standards, of course without compromising the guiding CHE standards. There is need to make sure that the institutional designed quality standards are aligned with the CHE provisions on quality assurance.”

From the above sentiments of participant 12, it is clear that institutions need to review their internal quality standards and policies and align them with the CHE standards. Despite the potential that internalisation presents, it is unsettling that much of this activity happens without extensive exploration of the underlying assumptions about quality present in the policies and practices that are infused across the national settings (Law, 2010; Kells, 2006).

Participant 13 emphasised the importance of understanding the CHE standards. The participant had the following to say:

“There is need for full understanding of the policies, procedures, and the CHE standards. The CHE standards are not only guidelines, but they are mandatory. As an institution we have a statutory obligation to comply, otherwise, accreditation of our programmes and the institution itself pushes us off the balance, and we can be found on the wrong side of the law.”

Reflecting on the above views of participant 13, it is evident that a common understanding of the policies and CHE standards can eliminate the challenges that cause a negative impact on quality and its assurance in institutions. External reviews carried out by dedicated bodies (quality assurance, CHE, accreditation or evaluation agencies) encourage institutions to set up or reinforce internal quality assurance

mechanisms by including a quality teaching aspect. In most cases, recommendations require mandatory corrective actions to be taken when necessary.

Participant 16 proposed that the higher education institutions need to look further than the institutions themselves and also focus on the National Development Plan (NDP) demands.

The participant had this to say:

“The institutional functioning of the country, we have to do our best, presently, we have to fulfil our mandate regarding the NDP. In other words, the national development plan should take precedence over each and everything that we seek to do as institutions of higher education.”

It is noteworthy of what participant 16 expressed about the importance of institutions to look further to meeting the standards of the NDP as well. National policies or statements pronouncements issued by quality assurance agencies or other organisations help bring quality teaching to the forefront and scrutiny by stakeholders within educational institutions. They are likely to help university and college leaders to infuse a culture of quality that includes teaching within their institutions (CHE, 2010).

Participant 17 believed that the DHET standards should also be met all the times. The interviewee concluded the following:

“My responsibilities are to report to the offices that are outside of the university, like the DHET, particularly on curriculum and program related matters, our office is responsible for the accreditation of the programs. We are the quality assurance directorate within the institution.”

From the sentiments raised by participant 17 above, it is clear that although the CHE standards may be met, the DHET standards should also be met. All applications for new programs, for example, should be approved in advance by the highest academic bodies in the institutions such as the senate academic body and signed by the principal officers or their designate. If the CHE decides that an institution’s application satisfies the guidelines for accreditation, it will proceed with the processing of the application. If the CHE decides that an institution’s application does not satisfy the guidelines for the qualification types, designators and qualifiers, then it will inform the institution that it will not proceed with processing of the application (CHE, 2011).

Participant 3 was of the view that it is also important to align internal institutional standards with the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) standards, as the participant proceeded to say the following:

“I think for me one of the biggest projects that I worked on was the alignment of all the university programs, with the new policy which is the Education sub framework, it is the HEQSF, if you want to know that, and every institution private or public in SA needs to align all its programs with HEQSF.”

From the above views by participant 3, it is conceptualised that the understanding of the internal standards and external standards as guidelines are of vital importance as seek to prevent any potential misunderstanding about the standards of the HEQSF. Policies and procedures are there to be followed, and they are meant to facilitate common understanding and standard practice among institutions of higher education. They are also meant to eliminate differences in the application of quality assurance and unethical behaviour among the institutions (CHE, 2011). Policies and procedures also help to give guidelines on the quality and breadth of similar programmes offered by the institutions of higher education to avoid too much discrepancies among the institutions. A BA programme in Mathematics offered by one institution should be identical to the one offered by another institution.

(ii) Funding

Lack of financial resources devoted to higher education can act as a barrier to any potential student seeking higher education. Lack of funding is not only a challenge on the part of the students who are seeking for higher education but is also affecting the institutions as well (Jongbloed, 2008). From the institutional perspective lack of financial resources devoted to higher education can be evidenced in many ways, including: lack of state-of-the-art facilities; insufficient lecture rooms; insufficient inventories, underpaid, and/or insufficiently qualified faculty; lack of management and supervision; lack of and/or poor-quality library and other learning materials; and insufficient attention to standards and quality assurance. Every one of these results of insufficient funding can act as a barrier to any potential student seeking a higher education (Jongbloed, 2008).

By far, the greatest financial contribution to higher education comes from domestic funding—depending on the country, these may be from public (the most common) or private sources. When a country is poor, it probably will not have sufficient domestic funds to pay for the provision of a quality education for all, especially higher education (Jongbloed, 2008).

External funding does contribute to the education funding gap in some countries. However, aid to education has stagnated in recent years. Donors have not lived up to the commitment that they made at the 2000 World Education Forum in 2000. The problem of insufficient financial resources is further exacerbated by the need for sustained economic growth, particularly in developing countries, and the existence of ways and means to ensure distribution of resources including fiscal policy, tax systems and budget reforms (Jongbloed, 2008).

Jongbloed (2008) perceives public funding of higher education as falling into two categories, namely, the funding base, on the one hand, and the degree of market orientation, on the other. The funding base determines whether the funding allocations are tied to educational outputs of performance or educational inputs. The degree of market orientation is determined by the degree to which publicly funded students or funded programmes are regulated by central authorities or by the decisions of the clients themselves (students, private firms, research councils, and others).

Participant 10 thought that considering all factors can prevent financial challenges, and had the following to say:

“There are a lot of factors, there are external factors and internal factors, externally the institution needs to be funded, if everything can be funded, all can work, it is an external factor because government supplies the money, if the government drops the subsidy it will affect all what we are doing here, it will affect even the quality.”

From the above precept, it is clear that participant 10 argued that internal and external factors should be taken into consideration to avoid the funding challenges among the institutions of higher education. The funding base determines whether the funding allocations are tied to educational outputs of performance or educational inputs. The degree of market orientation is determined by the degree to which publicly funded

students or funded programs are regulated by central authorities or by the decisions of the clients, who in this situation are the students and their sponsors.

Participant 15 commented on “fees must fall” campaign, for example, and said the following:

“Look at the “fees must fall” campaign, I mean they can provide education for free but what will happen to the quality? The perception out there is that educational institutions, especially universities and colleges have money, which is not true. The perception out there is that it is the responsibility of the national government to provide higher education for its citizens. This is fallacy and misconceptions.”

From the above sentiments by participant 15, it is conceptualised and perceived that the “fees must fall” student campaign would have a negative impact on the provision of quality education in higher education institutions. If public sector funding is eventually reduced, staff salaries would be affected, existing talent among the faculty would be lost, institutions would fail to retain present talent, and the breadth of programmes offered may be compromised as well.

The lack of clarity about how Government allocates funds means that it is almost impossible, as things stand, to state definitively and transparently how much is allocated to each institution. It is vital that institutions of higher education have good financial management and adopt rigorous financial standards to assure the spending of public money (Hill and Matthew, 2010).

(iii) Resources

The resources perspective is a supply-side intervention aimed to raise student achievements by targeting infrastructure or institutional deficiencies through, for example, improving the physical infrastructure, providing learning materials, and training and hiring extra faculty. Financial resources as discussed above lies at the centre of the provision of other resources as well. These could be provided by governments and/or aid-funded programmes that take the form of directed or generalised financial allocations to improve the physical conditions of the existing institutions of higher education (Paqueo and Lopez-Acevedo, 2013; Bjorkman, 2012; Barrera-Osorio, 2011) or involve the construction of new institutions of higher learning

(Burde and Linden, 2013). Other studies have also examined the allocation of financial resources to provide educational materials such as computers, flip-charts and books, which support the learning process and improve lecturing quality delivery (Barrera-Osorio and Linden, 2009; Vermeersch and Kremer, 2005; Glewwe, Kremer and Moulin, (2009); Evans, Kremer, Ngatia (2009); Banerjee, Cole, Duflo, Linden, 2007; Linden, 2008; He, Linden and MacLeod, 2008; Muralidharan and Sundararaman, 2010). Kember (2010) argues that using resources for quality enhancement activities can achieve significant improvements in teaching and learning.

Participant 1 suggested that if the resources are not available, that will negatively impact the quality of provision, and the participant had to say the following:

“The importance of availability of resources needs not to be over emphasised. Without resources, the institution does not exist in the first place. We cannot talk of quality without resources. It is availability of resources that will ensure and enable us as an institution to be able to provide quality education to our students.”

From the above intimacy by participant 1, it can be suggested that the availability of resources needs urgent attention and considerations by the institutions` executives. According to Owoko (2009), the term resources refers not only to teaching methods and materials, but also the time available for instruction, the knowledge and skills of teachers acquired through training and experience. Which is a holist approach to the essence of quality? This can be achieved by an increase in resources or by re-arranging available resources. Students are not required to meet the classroom standards rather the classroom meets the individual needs of all the students (Bargma, 2011). Puri and Abraham (2013) argue that school management and teachers should make effort to identify and attend to all students even those with special learning needs.

Participant 12 expressed that students are having a potential, but due to the lack of resources, it becomes damaged. He had the following to say:

“Think of our children, the potential is there, but the resources are not there. Resources are a serious limiting factor. Parents, for example, are struggling to make ends meet, later on, to raise fees for their children. They expect their children to get the best of education. This puts

a lot of pressure on us as institutions to make sure that we provide the necessary resources under difficult conditions.”

From participant 12 sentiments above, it can be deduced that the participant was of the view that if the necessary resources are unavailable, their lack of availability can negatively impact the provision of quality higher education by institutions of higher education. This opinion resonates well with the concept of “Teaching Learning Resources (TLR)”, and the concept comprises basically of three components: material resources, physical facilities and human resources (Kochung, 2011). Most of the studies done in the past about availability of TLR have concluded that TLR are a challenge in most of the higher education institutions. This inadequacy of TLR has been of serious concern to educators who feel that non-availability of resources curtails their potential.

Participant 17 underscored that resources are not only of a financial nature. There are other resources as well that need to be considered. The participant reiterated the following:

“The term ‘resources’ is very broad; it could be resources in any form that we are talking about here, either financial or material resources. Of course, that does not take away the fact that with the availability of financial resources in the institution, lack of other resources could be a thing of the past.”

The above implies that the institutions should consider all types of resources which includes financial, human and material resources for them to produce quality education outcomes. According to Oyugi and Nyaga (2010), learning is a complex activity that involves interplay of students’ motivation, physical facilities, teaching resources, and skills of teaching and curriculum demands. The availability of TLR, therefore, enhances the effectiveness of the universities and colleges as they are the basic resources that bring about good academic performance of the students. The necessary resources that should be available for teaching and learning include material resources, human resource such as teachers and support staff and, physical facilities such as laboratories, libraries, internet and classrooms. TLR helps improve access to education and quality educational outcomes since students are less likely to be absent from institutions that provide meaningful and rewarding higher education experiences. Kochung (2011), researched the effects of instructional resources on

students' performance in West Africa School Certificate Examinations (WASCE), and the achievements of students in WASCE were related to the resources available for teaching. Those above concluded that material resources have a significant effect on the student's achievement since they facilitate the learning of abstract concepts and ideas and discourage rote-learning. When TLR are inadequate, education is compromised, and this inevitably is reflected in low academic achievement and performance of the students, high dropout rates, problem behaviours, poor teacher motivation and unmet educational goals.

(iv) Socio-economic and political factors

Understanding social structures and the mechanisms through which these structures create or perpetuate exclusion is thus a necessary step in achieving more equitable outcomes in the provision of quality education. Within the different approaches to macro socio-economic and political analysis, there is a significant degree of variation across individual country cases (Ebner, 2013). None of the frameworks is considered a blueprint for the analysis, and each approach is adapted to the context of the particular country. Nevertheless, based on the review of the different donor funders for education and approaches, macro socio-economic and political analysis focuses on five main areas (Gibbons, 2012). The first is the inequities in social inclusion and obstacles to it. The second concerns the risks to the livelihoods or human security of poor and vulnerable social groups. The third area covers the political environment and relevant factors that contribute to the stability of the political system and the mobilisation of coalitions for pro-poor reform. The fourth area is the space for collective action by citizens and the enabling environment for civil society. Finally, it focuses on the capacity of institutions to deliver basic goods and services including higher education (Gibbons, 2012; Ebner, 2013).

Participant 15 believed that socio economic and political factors impact the provision of quality higher education, and the participant had this to say:

“So, I think your quality issue that you have raised in your inquiry of me has got to go back and is impacted heavily by the social economic status of our country. The socio-economic and political structures have a bearing and effect on the ability of institutions of higher education to be able to provide quality education to the best of their capabilities. The poor, for example,

are the most vulnerable in terms of social and economic exclusion and as a result are not able to access higher education.”

Participant 15 made a strong assertion that the issue of quality is not a new thing, and socio economic and political factors have an impact on its provision. Focusing on one dimension only (for example, access to assets), is not enough since certain groups may be socially excluded without being poor, and poor without being socially excluded (Muhammad and Cory, 2014). The challenge is to identify and then transform the processes that impede the social group’s participation in the economic, social, cultural, political, and institutional arenas (Garavan, 2012).

Participant 8 had another view which emphasizes the learners` mind set on the notion of free education as part of the socio economic and political impacts against quality. The participant had the following to say:

“With the current learner mind-set, and this push for fees must fall, it seems quality is not an issue in the mind-set of the socio-economic conscious beings – free education is, irrespective of quality. What matters the most is getting an opportunity to learn, quality will come later.”

From the line of thinking of participant 8 above, the perception is that among other things, socio economic and political factors are bound to impact positively or negatively on the provision of quality higher education. History and culture condition the extent to which institutions of higher education can address the issues of social cohesion and equal opportunity for everyone in any given context. Thus, the temporal dimension, or the timing and sequence of the development of the existing institutional arrangements, is crucial to understanding what possibilities and alternatives exist for change to embrace the socio-economic and political dimensions that may impact on quality.

(v) Internal environment

The quality of graduates of any educational institution depend on many factors such as the curriculum, technology, infrastructure, assessment, students, and its faculty. These factors define and shape up the internal environment and its impact on the provision of quality higher education (Williams, 2006). There is need to create an enabling internal environment if quality delivery is to be achieved and enhanced in

institutions of higher education in the country. While to a large extent these institutions of higher education are considered to be international, just like most universities elsewhere are, for example, their success in achieving academic excellence that makes them competitive enough in the country, on the continent and globally is heavily influenced by their internal and contextual imperatives. This is what makes quality assurance a context-specific phenomenon in any institution of higher education, although aspects of it may be informed by generic practices and trends in the global higher education market. Analysis of quality assurance practices of the case institutions of higher education entails understanding the peculiar contextual internal factors of the individual institutions including the quality of the faculty (Williams, 2006).

The most important of all these factors is faculty since if faculty members are satisfied, motivated and committed then the students' learning is going to be much better. No matter how advanced the technology, infrastructure, curriculum design and assessment, the quality of the faculty can augment or negate the quality of all or some of those above. Teaching, whether in conventional or distance mode, is the most important variable that can be a decisive factor in the students' learning. The aforementioned is also supported by Williams (2006) who argued that faculty is the most important factor in learning,

Participant 1 argued that poor context and internal environmental imperatives such as the quality of the faculty and the quality of content delivery impact the provision of quality higher education. The participant had the following to say:

"The quality of the content that you are delivering as a lecturer, may be is a sum up of the quality of you as the lecturer, influences the quality of the output. However, it takes a conducive internal environment as well, what makes a quality lecturer. Is it the context and content delivery? I strongly believe curriculum content plays a much critical role, and everything that defines the internal environment."

It is evident from the views above that curriculum content and delivery, curriculum context, and a conducive internal environment influence the provision of quality higher education by the institutions of higher learning. The provision of coherent, high quality and relevant higher education also lies on the quality of faculty, the curriculum and the

programmes in general that respond effectively to the evolving needs of the community at large (Williams, 2006).

Participant 10 indicated that institutions can control internal environmental factors because they are within their reach to do so. The participant acknowledged that these internal environmental factors if not controlled, may impact negatively on the provision of quality higher education as he had the following to say:

“We can control the internal factors to make sure that we provide quality to the best of our abilities, very little we can do about the external factors, and for example internally we can have good quality teachers to teach and good environment.”

It seems that it is quite important and paramount for higher education institutions to prudently manage their internal environmental imperatives and affairs to produce quality and good academic outcomes.

Participant 11 thought that the learning environment should be conducive enough. The participant said the following:

“From where I am standing the whole students experience in the institution should lead them to succeed, for the reason they are here, the institution has to provide conducive environment that makes sure that they achieve their objectives.”

Institutions should make sure that the environment is conducive to teaching and learning because bad environment negatively impacts the provision of quality higher education. It is important to provide a quality campus experience to support the students` learning experiences (Williams, 2006).

Participant 6 commented that low and manageable student numbers can ensure the provision of quality higher education. The researches have demonstrated that increased class sizes negatively impact knowledge and skill acquisition in the classroom. The number of students in a class determines how effectively a lecturer can cater for differences among the learners, organise and supervise teach effectively (Hernes, 2011). Large classes demand a lot on the lecturer while small classes allow the lecturer to give attention to students. This means that the quality of education can be affected by the presence of large or small classes (Hernes, 2011).

The participant said the following:

“It is easy to produce quality in our institution because of the lesser number of students in each lecture and our programs do not take too long. We do not believe in quantity, but quality. No mass production is our motto.”

The expression by participant 6 above clearly recognises that the higher numbers of students in classes would negatively impact the provision of quality delivery in the lecture room.

(vi) Quality teaching accessories

The word “accessories” has many facets; in some instances, it means a source of supply, support or aid that can be readily drawn upon, and at other times it refers to a capability or determination. In the context of classrooms, we see accessories as physical demonstration aids, students’ contextual understandings, teacher subject expertise, and structured organisation of materials, ideas, and activities. The points of contact at which students interact with these accessory resources are where knowledge construction can occur (Cohen et al., 2012; Grubb, 2008). Accessory resources are not self-indulging, they are there as aids that need to be exploited to achieve organisational objectives and inevitable change when necessary. Differences in their effects depend on differences in their use (Cohen et al., 2012; Grubb, 2008).

Participant 1 suggested that the poor teaching accessories resources negatively impact provision of quality higher education, especially, they affect the quality of content delivery in lecture rooms.

Participant 1 had the following to say:

“Because I went back and I looked at it and said ok, what is the problem with this work sheet? It was a copy, of a copy of a copy. So, you can imagine, how a copy of a copy of a copy be looking like, and from there I saw that that was really a nonsense.”

The assertion by participant 1 highlights that quality of content delivery in the classroom is of pertinent concern. Quality teachers and quality teaching accessories

produce quality outcomes. Soft copies of the content materials can be used in the place of hard copies.

Participant 10 perceived that bad teachers negatively impact the provision of quality higher education. The teacher`s style of content delivery and learning aids and materials that the teacher uses reveal and depict a lot about the quality of the teacher himself or herself.

The participant said the following:

“Internally we can have good quality teachers to teach and good environment. Of all the resources or accessories in learning, the teacher is the most important of them all. ,It is important that as an institution we invest in quality faculty.”

From the above sentiments by participant 10, it is deduced that institutions of higher education need to employ good quality lecturers or faculty because inexperienced lecturers who do not teach quality content negatively impact the provision of quality education. Backgrounds and experiences that impact learning outcomes are also personal characteristics that negatively or positively impact on the processes and learning outcomes (Cohen et al., 2012).

(vii) Staffing and other related issues

Regarding quality, higher education is characterised by a lack of adequate and qualified teaching staff. The institutions are affected by the under-motivation and underpayment of the faculty, which often leads to poor quality of content delivery and ultimately the overall quality education. As for the curriculum content itself, “irrelevancies, a lack of practical skills formation, an over-concentration on memorising content, passive pedagogies, and a lack of learning materials, library books, facilities and equipment” (OECD, 2010) can be detected among the higher education institutions.

Participant 10 pointed out that staffing can be controlled. That is, it is a challenge within the reach and control of the institutions. The participant had the following to say:

“We can control the internal factors to make sure that we provide quality to the best of our abilities, very little we can do about the external factors. As an institution, we have tried in the

given circumstances to attract high quality faculty and make sure we reasonably resource them. Resources are scarce, but we are trying the best we can.”

From participant 10`s opinion above, it can be suggested that if the internal staffing is not dealt with objectively, that can negatively impact the provision of quality education. However, to enhance and reward teaching excellence, it is essential to know what constitutes good or quality teaching. Scholars have repeatedly identified several features of the "good teacher". Feldman (2011) lists teacher sensitivity to class level and progress, clarity of course requirements, understandable explanations, respect for students and encouragement of independent thought, as the main characteristics of a good teacher. Shulman (2009) also emphasises pedagogical knowledge and full command of the curriculum as critical to quality content delivery.

Marsh (2008) mentions appropriate workload, clear explanations, empathy with students, openness on the part of the lecturer and quality of the assessment procedures. Entwistle and Tait (2007) list clear goals, appropriate workload and level of difficulty, choice in assignments, quality of explanation, appropriate pace in lecturing, enthusiasm of lecturer and empathy with students as essential traits and characteristic of a good teacher.

Participant 11 expressed that when lecturer work as a team there is bound to be better quality outcomes than when the lecturer works in isolation, as creating good teams promotes good outcomes. The participant said the following:

“Apart from the fact that my team is good, I have a good team that I work with. We even core-teach some modules. I have always found the strategy working very well. As a team of faculty, we share ideas, we share knowledge, and we share materials. Even, the students seem to like that approach. It breaks the monotony, and enhances synergies.”

The assertions made by participant 11 above highlight that institutions should employ faulty quality staff. The highest quality teachers, those most capable of helping their students learn better, having deep mastery of both their subject matter and pedagogy, would certainly make a difference towards provision of quality higher education (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

Participant 12 added that more experienced staff can improve the quality of teaching and content delivery for the benefit of the learners, and the good of the institution.

Participant 12 had the following to say:

“It will mean we will get more experienced lecturers and be able to produce more quality graduates. However, that is indeed a challenge for our institution. Attracting high quality lecturers takes a lot of costs. Keeping them in the institution is just a night mare. Our competitors, on the other hand, may always want to outwit us in that regard.”

The sentiments by participant 12 claimed that institutions should employ more experienced staff members' otherwise in-experienced staff members' negatively impact the provision of quality higher education. The preparation that lecturers do before beginning their work in the classroom, however, varies significantly around the world and even within the least developed countries. Perhaps as a consequence of too little preparation before entering the profession, some lecturers in China, Guinea, India and Mexico were observed to master neither the subject matter they taught nor the pedagogical skills required for good presentation of the material in the classroom (Carron and Chau, 2013). This affects educational quality since students' achievement, especially beyond basic skills, depends largely on lecturers' command of their subject matter (Mullens, Murnance and Willett, 2012) and their ability to use that knowledge to help students learn.

Participant 16 felt that the institutions employ wrong people. Employing inappropriate faculty can be detrimental to the institution. The nature of the services provided by institutions of higher education cannot be separated from the faculty who are the services providers in essence. The participant said the following:

“Getting wrong people employed, it affects quality negatively. Faculty staff is the packaging for the services offered by the institution. As they stand in class delivering the curriculum content, their attitude, their delivery style and ability says a lot about the institution.”

The sentiments by respondent16 above suggested that it is important to follow correct employment procedures because wrong people can be employed and that can negatively impact the provision of quality higher education by the institutions. When hiring, institutions need to consider the experiences of the potential faculty members,

their effort to improving their academic qualifications to upgrade their level of training and research output (Carron and Chau, 2013). The ability of the faculty staff to assure excellence in a given field of specialisation - mainly through advanced post-graduate qualifications - is crucial if a higher education institution is to award degrees or diplomas in that discipline. This problem has important ramifications both for institutions which are launching new areas and programmes of study and also for those in the developing world who are wishing to strengthen and maintain high academic standards in order to improve their rankings at the international level (Carron and Chau, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Mullens et al., 2012).

Participant 2 recognised that lecturers in their institution were incompetent. The participant had the following to say:

“Lecturers not doing what they are supposed to do, coming late to classes, not to be feasible in a sense, they ignore it then step in. This is worrying because as an institution we regard lecturers as professional people who are supposed to be responsible.”

The reflections by participant 2 above endorsed that incompetency negatively impacts the provision of quality in content delivery and the overall quality of higher education provided by the institution. Whether a lecturer uses traditional or more current and modern methods of instruction and delivery, efficient use of the institution`s time has a significant impact on student learning (Mullens et al., 2012). Lecturers` presence in the classroom or lecture room represents the starting point. When lecturers are present, learning occurs when they engage students in instructional activities, rather than attending to administrative issues or other non-instructional processes (Fuller, 2010). As mentioned above, the opportunity to learn and the time on task have been shown in many international studies to be critical for educational quality (Fuller, 2010).

(viii) Poor retention and loss of talent and skill

According to Doherty (2008) quality teaching matters but not all actors in higher education consider it a priority, understand and recognise what constitutes quality teaching, or are willing and able to play a role in ensuring it takes place in their institutions. Quality teaching is the use of pedagogical techniques to produce learning outcomes for students. It involves several dimensions, including the effective design

of curriculum and course content, a variety of learning contexts (including guided independent study, project-based learning, collaborative learning, experimentation, etc.), soliciting and using feedback, and effective assessment of learning outcomes. It also involves well-adapted learning environments and student support services (Doherty, 2008).

Participant 7 thought that the inability to employ lectures which are 65 years old impact the provision of quality higher education, as the participant had the following to say:

“We are losing a lot of our old or retired band of people because we are not allowed to employ them anymore after they are 65, we are now getting young, dynamic lecturers enthusiastic, smart, but they do not have the experience, they have not been in this industry long enough.”

Reflecting on the statements by participant 7 above, it is evident that the employment issue is a challenge among the institutions of higher education because the department of education does not allow the institutions to employ persons over 65 years of age. The participant believed that those are the most experienced persons to be employed. But the laws are prohibitive.

Participant 8 thought that higher education institutions are not doing well enough in attracting new faculty. The participant raises this issue as a challenge among the higher education institutions. The participant intimated as follows:

“It is not easy to get new people on board and means to attract quality people into higher education are not forthcoming. There are a lot of limiting factors. There are options though to come with a more attractive strategy. It is stressful, so these are some of the issues of concern.”

Based on participant 8`s sentiments above, it is concluded that the challenge that the institutions have, is that new people are not attractable enough to come and render their services in the institutions of higher learning. According to Coplin (2013), employers want to hire graduates with personal potential for growth, who are performing well their daily businesses and take initiatives, no matter which grade or specialisation they acquired. These are in possession of employability skills. Employability skills can be classified as “core employability skills”, which cover generic attitudinal and effective skills, and “communication skills” (for example, English language skills, written and verbal communication) (Osman, 2011). In a wider sense,

the definition of “employability” comprises writing and oral communication skills, skills in mathematics, research, decision-making, critical thinking, evaluation, computer work, teamwork and lifelong learning skills for example. These qualifications have to be obtained within the course of the study, the curriculum itself, not after graduation. The higher education system has to equip students with these named skills to enhance their career flexibility, as stated by the American Society for Quality (2012).

(ix) Teaching content

This can be related with the fact that academics are not always effectively integrated in the development of quality assurance procedures, namely those occurring within institutions (Loukkola and Zhang, 2010; Veiga, Tavares and Amaral, 2012). According to Doherty (2008) quality content teaching matters but not all actors in higher education consider it a priority, understanding and recognising what constitutes quality content teaching, or are willing and able to play any role in ensuring that quality content teaching is taking place in their institutions. Institutions should play the key role in fostering quality content teaching by making sure that their academics are trained in pedagogy, and they continuously upgrade their educational competences over their professional lifespan. Else in the world, the faculty have increasingly sought to strengthen the relevance of their content delivery (Doherty, 2008).

Participant 4 indicated that incomplete work negatively impacts provision of quality education among the higher education institutions. Participant 4 responded as follows:

“People will not be having enough time to address the areas that they are supposed to teach. People will not then cover the syllabus, may be that will result in work not completed. Half cooked and backed graduates is what we churn out at the end of the day.”

The above revelation by participant 4 expressed that the issue is that lecturers fail to manage their time accordingly, and as a result, they are not able to cover whole course syllabus. This negatively impacts the provision of quality higher education. Quality is seriously compromised. Institutions are expected to play the major and key role in fostering quality teaching, even though national regulations rarely require or prompt academics to be trained in pedagogy or to upgrade their educational competences over their professional lifespan (Doherty, 2008).

(x) Assessment tools

An assessment tool that is centred on a curriculum-based rating scale allows teachers to determine students' level of mastery of previous and current years' curricula, which helps them determine the extent to which alternative instructional strategies and remedial content can be necessary for both individuals and groups (Harris, 2013).

Participant 1 mentioned that clumsy work can negatively impact the provision of quality outcomes among higher education institutions, as the participant had the following to say:

“And I want these questions typed, whether you refer to the past papers, I do not care, but I want quality question paper because we were expecting quality responses from the quality questions. And if I can show you today the quality of the papers that we are getting from the lecturers, you will be amazed.”

From the above sentiments by participant 1, it is perceived that the quality of the presentation of the assessment material work to students by some of the lecturers need to be looked into, as it can have a negative impact on the provision of quality education by the institutions. At this day and age, it boggles the mind to think that some University lecturers accept un-typed assessment work from their students and also on their side they prepare poor quality assessment tools. Properly typed work should be promoted. This approach results in significantly improved higher educational outcomes (Harris, 2013).

(xi) Individual differences

There are two main kinds of individual differences. First, there are *quantitative differences* in the quantity, speed and depth of learning. Some students can understand a new concept after one lesson whereas others may need to re-examine an idea several times before being able to grasp it (Dunn and Dunn, 2006). After a series of lessons, the amount of knowledge acquired, and the extent to which new concepts or skills are well understood varies greatly across students. In addition to quantitative differences in cognitive abilities (information processing, memory, reasoning, abstraction ability, and more.) there are conative differences between students. Conative differences concern personality traits, motivation, needs and

interests. Students differ, for example, on their level of personal autonomy, level of achievement motivation, tolerance of ambiguity, and test anxiety. Regarding students' interests in a given subject matter, differences are observed across individuals due in part to their age, cultural heritage and gender (Dunn and Dunn, 2006).

Second, there are qualitative differences in the ways that students learn best. Some students prefer to begin with tangible details and then arrive to a larger vision on a topic whereas other students prefer the exactly opposite approach when beginning on a new topic. Some students learn well when working alone whereas others do best in learning through small group situations (Dunn and Dunn, 2006). These differences often called “cognitive styles” or “learning styles”, suggest that students approach tasks in qualitatively different ways if they are given the choice (Dunn and Dunn, 2006).

Participant 13 suggested that lack of adequate knowledge and attitudes cause individual differences that may impact negatively on provision of quality learning outcomes. The participant had the following to say:

“Lack of knowledge, indifferent attitudes, not having the ability, sometimes people are put into positions where they are not capable of doing what they are supposed to be doing, and that negatively affects quality. There is also failure to understand and accommodation of students' differences and learning aptitudes.”

The sentiments by participant 13 above give an impression that negative attitude towards learning and teaching negatively impacts the provision of quality among the higher education institutions. Research demonstrates that to achieve academically, students need to attend lectures consistently. A students' exposure to curriculum — his or her 'opportunity to learn'- significantly influences their achievement, and exposure to curriculum comes from being at the University or College (Fuller, 2010). A study of village-based schools in Malawi found that students with higher rates of attendance had greater learning gains and lower rates of repetition, a finding consistent with many other studies (Dunn and Shome, 2009).

Participant 15 claimed that bunking classes negatively impacts the provision of quality outcomes. Learner that bunk lectures have a higher rate of failure. The participant said the following:

“Students attendance of classes, students’ attitude towards learning and their commitment to meeting the requirements of their qualification are very important and critical to provision of quality outcomes. Systems to monitor students` attendance of lectures have to be intensified to close the loopholes.”

The assertions by participant 15 above highlighted that the negative attitude towards class attendance causes the students to fail and that can negatively impact the quality at the end. Studies reiterate that to achieve academically; there is need for students to consistently attend their lectures as lectures give them opportunity to learn better (Fuller, 2010).

(xii) Lack of common understanding

The presence and heterogeneous uses of technology in higher education are one of the manifestations of how higher education institutions as organisations can become more diversified to meet the needs, interests, experiences and realities of individuals and groups of stakeholders including students, that is, how the institutions can become more student-centred. The use of technology is expected to facilitate a common understanding of quality and its assurance, at least to facilitate positive perceptions about quality (Carron and Chau, 2013).

Participant 14 thought that negative perceptions on quality negatively impact provision of quality education by institutions of higher education.

As the participant had this to say:

“To change the perceptions of the people and how they view quality, you have to make them understand the advantages and benefits of embracing quality, quality is not punitive, where actions will be taken against you, quality is an evolving process, it benefits you it also improves the situations, people must have a common understanding of the concept of quality in order to strengthen it.”

On the other hand, Participant 17 had the following to say:

“And the fact that quality is not being well understood, the way it should be understood, by some people, for example when I referred to the retired people that I co-opted, into helping us in the office, they were the academics placed in various faculties.”

The sentiments by participants 14 and 17 above reflected that different understandings of quality impact the provision of quality by institutions of higher education. As institutions respond to the needs of diverse and excluded groups, facilities and practices will need to be diversified to respond to specific needs of different areas and users (Carron and Chau, 2013).

Participant 5 brought in a different dimension and viewed the issue of not understanding English properly by some students for example as negatively impacting the provision of quality higher education outcomes:

“Some of them do not understand as all papers are written in English, so some of them have a difficulty when it comes to the final exams, and they can’t understand what is written in there, so by providing extra classes to them, it can improve the passing marks.”

From participant 5’s reflections above, it can be pointed out that there is a challenge in some of the students who cannot understand English as a language and papers are written in English, and therefore lack of understanding English as a medium of instruction is a serious challenge. There is need to go an extra mile to assist these students to be able to fit into the institutional context as the medium of instruction in higher education is English, students do not have a choice but to learn the language.

(xiii) Management and continuous improvement

Management and continuous improvement are one of the core values of quality management which is a people-focused system that aims at continual increase of performance by stressing learning and adaptation as keys to the success of an organisation (Deming, 2009; Evans and Lindsay, 2010). Systems for the effective management of teaching and learning (for example, running electronic learning management systems, managing accreditation procedures, organising programme supervisions) play an important administrative role, but they are not designed to be used for development or improvement of teaching and learning. Above all, effective management is crucial to quality improvement. Institutional management and decision-making bodies have a fundamental role to play in shaping the institution’s quality continuous improvement culture. They are often the initiators of quality teaching

initiatives and their approach directly affects the outcome of these initiatives (Deming, 2009; Evans and Lindsay, 2010).

Participant 1 felt that improper guidance and poor management negatively impacts provision of quality higher education by the institutions of higher learning. The participant had the following to say:

“Proper guidance by the management is essential, and that’s a leadership role to ensure continuous quality improvement in the institution. Continuous improvement processes need to be driven from that level of institutional management and then castigate down to the rest of the institutional or organisational members.”

Emerging from participant 1’s sentiments above is the perception that if the management is not doing proper job in managing the institution’s drive for quality and its assurance, that will negatively impact provision of quality education by the institution. The quality of administrative support and leadership by the management of the institutions is another critical element in higher education processes, both for students and for lecturers. At a more macro level, ensuring financial resources for education, especially for recurrent budgets is a necessity. Lecturers require institutional management that is supportive of learning processes and systems. Organisational support for teaching and learning takes many forms, including such measures as advocating for better conditions and professional development, respecting the lecturers’ autonomy and professionalism and developing inclusive decision-making processes. Such support by institutional management has been seen to having impact on student learning (Deming, 2009; Evans and Lindsay, 2010).

Participant 16 mentioned that poor academic leadership negatively impacts provision of quality higher education in their institution, as the participant had to say the following:

“Academic leadership is an important aspect in the institution. Poor academic leadership impacts negatively on the institutions’ efforts to provide quality outcomes. This is probably a challenge in our institution today, without saying too much.”

Based on participant 16’s opinion above, it can be emphasised that if the academic leaders do not perform their duties as expected, quality is compromised. Management

in academic institutions means exploring the needs and expectations of the institutions' stakeholders and customer base – who may be the faculty, the students, the staff, the board, the accreditation agencies, and the members of the community in general – re-evaluating the effectiveness of programs and total quality initiatives at large (Pulido, 2009). Many heads of institutions continue to have extensive pedagogical responsibilities in addition to administrative ones. This leaves little time for supervision and support of the faculty staff (Carron and Chau, 2013).

(xiv) Setting and communicating the precedent

By doing the right thing, you tend to get the same things back and set good precedence. Give value to people, help them, and they will often want to help you and give you value in some form. Not everyone will do it but many will. Not always right away but somewhere down the line. Things tend to even out. Do the right thing, put in the extra effort and you will tend to get good stuff back (OECD, 2012). If you do not do it, you tend to get less good stuff back from the world.

Participant 1 indicated that it is important to do the right thing from the beginning. Doing the right things from the beginning is also viewed as setting good precedence in the sense that one is motivated to continue doing the right things after that. The participant had this to say:

“It meant that at the first instance we had to produce something of a good quality as per the expectations of our stakeholders. That is getting things right the first time. As a leader one should set the rules also right from the beginning, and stick to them without compromise.”

From the reflections of the sentiments by participant 1 above, it is evident that staff members should understand the expectations of the stakeholders of their institutions and do the right things from the start. Continue doing the right things after that without compromising their credibility.

Participant 3 declared that active communication is important otherwise people will not understand what is expected of them to do, as the participant had the following to say:

“And most importantly will be the active communication among all stakeholders that

will be a contributing factor towards achieving what we have planned to achieve. Reason being that quality starts from the Head, if the Head is not communicating, how would you expect the rest of the people to achieve the goals, mission, and vision of the institution?"

Emerging from participant 3's line of thinking above, is that there is a need to communicate with all the stakeholders actively and that has a positive impact on the provision of quality outcomes. In higher education systems, there are substantial reforms aimed at encouraging institutions to be more responsive to the needs of society and the economy. This has been understood to be accompanied by a reappraisal of the purposes of higher education and influencing government policies. Although institutions now have more room to maneuver autonomously, they also have clearer accountability to society at large. The tertiary education sector is expected to contribute to equity, ensure quality and operate efficiently on an ongoing basis (OECD, 2012). This is viewed as setting the right precedence.

(xv) Understanding the institutional policies and procedures

Institutions should have policies and associated procedures for the assurance of quality and standards in programmes and outcomes. They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture of recognising the importance of quality and its assurance, in all the facets of their work (OECD, 2012). To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement strategies for the continuous enhancement of quality in their operations. These strategies, policies and procedures should have a formal status and made publicly available. They should also include clear roles for the students and other stakeholders (OECD, 2012).

Participant 9 commented that it is important to understand the policies and procedures of the institution that are related to quality and its assurance. The participant had the following to say:

"What drives quality is that the institution's policies and procedures relating to the institution's programmes should be clearly understood and as programmes are

reviewed on a regular basis, here we have like a 5-year review process, internally we use the HEQC guidelines, it's part of the institution's policies and procedures."

From participant 9 reflections above, it can be suggested that if the staff members do not understand the policies and procedures of the institution, that will negatively impact the provision of quality outcomes and the institutions are not able to meet the standards of the HEQC. Formal policies and procedures provide a framework within which higher education institutions can develop and monitor the effectiveness of their quality assurance systems to meet the HEQC standards. They also help to provide public confidence in institutional autonomy (OECD, 2012).

Participant 2 thought that there should be an active communication and good understating between the external departments and the institutions, as the participant said the following:

"Ok, quality education is aimed at institutions, as they are expected to follow the department of education, what we get from the department, the department has got a set of rules, regulations and policies that we take and we use to design our own. Then we have to improve, we come into that place, and we try to improve and we then continuously monitor our efforts towards achieving quality outcomes."

From the sentiments by participant 2 above, it is believed that institutions need to adhere to the department of education's guidelines as they develop their policies and procedures. Policies and procedures contain the statements of intentions and the principal means by which these will be achieved. Procedural guidance can give more detailed information about how the policies are implemented and provides a useful reference point for those who need to know about the practical aspects of carrying out these procedures (OECD, 2012).

Participant 2, further said the following:

"And, when it comes to quality of education in Innovatus, we do not compromise with anything, we make sure that we adhere to the department's guidelines and we also have our policies, currently we follow and are undergoing ISO9001 accreditation processes, we have policies and documents, so anything that we need to do, we go through that policy document."

The assertions by participant 2, above are clear that the department of education`s guidelines should be followed to the letter to promote good quality outcomes of the institutions of higher education. The standards for internal quality assurance contained in the CHE guidelines provide a valuable basis for the external quality assessment processes. It is important that the institutions` internal policies and procedures are carefully evaluated, to determine the extent to which the standards are being met. If higher education institutions are to be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their internal quality assurance processes, and if those processes properly assure quality and standards, then external assessment processes might be less intensive than otherwise (OECD, 2012).

Participant 3 expressed that not understanding the purposes and standards of the CHE by the institutions negatively impacts their provision of quality higher education.

Participant 3 had the following to say:

“More education and knowledge on what is the purpose of CHE is important, there is no understanding of it, we know that they are our godfathers but what do they do with the exception of the Quality Directorate, nobody has a clear understanding of their objectives, what does it stands for except its acronym, how does it add value to the economy, how does it relates to SAQA, for that matter.”

From the sentiments by participant 3 above, it can be deduced that there is a challenge of not fully understanding the purposes of the CHE. This negatively impacts the provision of quality higher education by the institutions. One of the requirements by CHE is that all applications for new programs by institutions must be approved in advance by the highest academic bodies of the institutions and should be signed by the principal officer or her/his designate. The institution may then submit the application to the CHE for accreditation of the programs (OECD, 2012).

(xvi) Political and unethical influences

Political influences usually come from parties, personalities, pressure groups that strongly influence the education stability of an institution through their actions and pronouncements. Influencing is an effect of one person or thing on another and the

power of a person or thing to have such an effect on the education outcomes (OECD, 2010). Political influence is the process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills, and values from one generation to another (OECD, 2010).

Participant 13 insinuated that some people are given positions in institutions that they do not qualify for due to political interference. By nature, political influences are unethical. The participant said the following:

“Sometimes people are put into positions where they are not capable of doing what they are supposed to be doing, and that affects quality. Usually, that happens as a result of some political influence, especially in government organisations, even in our institutions of higher education these things do happen.”

The sentiments by participant 13 above, highlighted that political and unethical influences impact the provision of quality higher education by institutions of higher learning, and such practices result in the conflict of commitment in these institutions. The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC, 2007) defines conflict of commitment as follows;

The term conflict of commitment relates to an individual faculty member's distribution of effort between obligations to one's academic appointment (normally "full-time" in teaching and research) and one's commitment to "outside" activities. A conflict of commitment arises when these [outside] or professionally removed activities (for example, outside teaching or business) come to interfere with the paramount obligations to students, colleagues, and the primary missions of the academic institutions by which one is appointed and salaried.

Participant 3 pointed out that mostly, student-lecturer relationships and other dealings affect quality outcomes. These are clear unethical influences. The participant had the following to say:

“The amount of underhand business dealings, scandals, and student-lecturer relationships, any institutional or organisational issues for that matter are posing a serious compromise to provision of quality outcomes by institutions. May be student-lecturer relationships are the worst of them all.”

The sentiments by participant 3 above, claimed that the institutions that allow underhand dealings, improper student-lecturer relationships and other scandalous behaviours negatively impact the provision of quality higher education by the involved institutions.

Participant 4 raised the concern about stressful environment that it negatively impacts the provision of quality higher education outcomes. The stress is suggested to be caused by colleagues or staff members that are bent on causing problems and frustration by making the work life of other people miserable. They are even manipulative to the leadership of the institutions. Once institutional leadership let in manipulative people into the institutions, they can be extremely hard to get rid of. Manipulative people will use frustration and confusion to bait other people into conflict of interest and underhand dealings (Bédard, Clément and Taylor, 2010). Once these people know all the things that trigger the leadership, they will use them to influence the leadership`s actions (Bédard et al., 2010).

The participant had the following to say:

“Stress that we are working under in this environment, in a way it will reflect negatively on the quality of the educational outcomes, people will not be having enough time to address the areas that they are supposed to teach. People will not then cover the syllabus, may be that will result in work not completed, that will only be reflected on the end product, and also if the student’s strikes continues, it will affect the quality of our education if the issues are not addressed. It’s a pity the leadership is manipulated as well.”

The suggestions by participant 4 above insinuate that stress can be caused by different factors ranging from manipulative manoeuvres by other people at work place, to the working conditions and these can negatively impact provision of quality higher education. Teaching on its on is a highly stressful occupation, teacher stress can affect various aspects of the teacher`s health and their effectiveness in the classroom (Nauert, 2015).

(xvii) Institutional culture

Each university or college has a unique and cherished culture. This culture is born from the institution's history and evolves to maturity with time. This tradition, in turn, reinforces that historical background. As new people come into the institution or organisation, they are simulated into the culture and fused into the institution`s values and beliefs. An institution`s culture, tradition, and values are not only important; they are vital to the wellbeing of the institution because they provide stability and continuity (Nauert, 2015).

Participant 11 emphasised that institutions` culture should be properly communicated otherwise it will negatively impact the provision of quality higher education. The participant had the following to say:

“In dealing with the institutional values and beliefs that shape up the journey towards the achievement of the institution`s goals we are guided into the culture of the institution. It is important that there is enough communication of the institutional values and beliefs that should be shared to every member of the organisation, especially the new comers, they need to be properly oriented.”

The reflections by participant 11 above appeared to endorse that the staff should clearly understand the unique culture of their institution. To remain viable though the institution`s culture must also evolve and adapt to meet change. Institutional culture is like a living organism. At times it grows adding new programs, constructing new buildings, and hiring needed personnel. At other times it is forced to modify its focus by shedding obsolete policies, eliminating out-dated curricula, and adjusting to short term goals. Over time the institution matures, and so does its culture. It is important though that the institution maintains the traditional core values that define it as an institution with its uniqueness (Chalmers, 2011).

Participant 14 thought that it is important for institutions to inculcate the culture of providing good service to their customers, as the participant had this to say:

“Yes, it has for example when you are in a University structure you always want to give what is good service, and we know we are independent in producing good service because the government funds it as the government does fund the University, you have to push to have good service.”

Reflecting on the sentiments by participant 14 above, it is evident that good service provision should be part of an institution's culture. Understanding the institution's culture and structure and their potential influences on employees' working life and career development can leave one prepared with strategies to make the most out of the opportunities that arise (Chalmers, 2011).

(xviii) Teamwork

With this view of teamwork by Chalmers (2011), the role of higher education lecturers or teachers is bound for changes. In addition to being, first and foremost, a subject expert who is acquainted with ways to transmit knowledge, higher education teachers are now expected to have effective pedagogical skills for delivering student learning outcomes. They also need to co-operate with their students, their colleagues even from other departments, and with external stakeholders as members of a dynamic learning community to promote good teamwork spirit. The new teaching and learning paradigms in higher education imply that there is bound to be new relationships regarding access to teachers, and a wider range of communication and collaborative team work through technological learning platforms as well (Chalmers, 2011).

Participant 10 gave a view that teamwork is a very important dimension and ingredient for provision of quality outcomes by institutions of higher education. He had the following to say:

“People have to work as a team that is a critical dimension and catalyst for institutional success. Team work brings in variety, above all, some synergies can be gained from working as a team as compared to working as individuals.”

Participant 11 reiterated on the importance of a good team on their side, and had this to say:

“Apart from the fact that my team is good, I have a good team. If the truth were to be told, I don't know how I would be able to perform without my good team effectively. I have realised that, as team members, we complement each other very well. Our work experience is so fulfilling.”

Participant 17's sentiments complimented participant 11 very well. The participant also gloated over the usefulness of his team and how successful has been in their work. The participant had the following to say:

"Have a team by my side has helped me tremendously, and supported me well, I could not do this project on my own, and so I needed a good team, so I found one. My work is not being stressful at all. The quality of the work output is just amazing."

Participant 3 lauded the critical importance of team work and spirit. Went further to reiterate that lack of team spirit is worse than lacking resources. The participant said the following:

"Lack of resources, infrastructure, budget, and also what I think can hamper quality is the lack of team spirit. Team work that is coupled with good team spirit can only be the ingredient for quality outcomes in our institution."

The sentiments by the participants above well reflected the importance of teamwork and its influence on the provision of quality higher education outcomes. The realisation is that individually, faculty and staff cannot produce quality, but can achieve it through working with others because people have different roles to play. Combining the different expertise, talents and skills can help achieve the overall institutional quality improvement. The ultimate goal of the institutions is to produce graduates that can integrate theory and practice and apply what they have learnt in theory to the practical solutions to the real-world problems. Key to this is facilitation of the way of thinking which requires skilled and experienced lecturers (Bédard et al., 2010).

4.2.3. Summary of the findings concerning research question 2

The table 4.3 below shows the summary of the findings from the interviews conducted concerning research question 2, "What factors affect the provision of quality higher education in higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area?"

Table 4.3: Emerged themes: - Summary of findings concerning research question 2

Research question	Category	Central theme	Interviewee
“Factors impacting on the provision of quality higher education”-derived from research question 2	(i) National policies and organisation	➤ Inadequate internal quality standards	3, 12, 13, 16 & 17
	(ii) Funding		
	(iii) Resources	➤ Limited understanding of policies and procedures	10 & 15
	(iv) Socio-economic and political factors		
	(v) Internal environment	➤ No full committal to DHET standards	1, 12 & 17
	(vi) Quality teaching accessories	➤ Lack of financial resources	8, & 15
	(vii) Staffing and other related issues	➤ Impact of fees must fall campaign	1, 6, 10 & 11
	(viii) Poor retention and loss of talent and skill	➤ Limited availability of other resources	
	(ix) Teaching content	➤ Socio-economic vulnerability	1 & 10
	(x) Assessment tools	➤ Learners mind-set and attitudes	2, 10, 11, 12 & 16
	(xi) Individual differences	➤ Non-conductive internal environment	
	(xii) Lack of common understanding	➤ Poor quality teaching accessories	7 & 8
	(xiii) Management and continuous improvement	➤ Poor staffing and incompetence	4 1

	<p>(xiv) Setting and communicating the precedent</p> <p>(xv) Understanding the institutional policies and procedures</p> <p>(xvi) Political and unethical influences</p> <p>(xvii) Institutional culture</p> <p>(xviii) Teamwork</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Limited ability to attract and retain high quality faculty ➤ Poor content quality and delivery ➤ Poor assessment methods and tools ➤ Lack of adequate knowledge and negative attitudes ➤ Poor class attendance by students ➤ Negative perceptions on quality ➤ Challenges of English language among students ➤ Inadequate management commitment to continuous improvement 	<p>13 & 15</p> <p>5, 14 & 17</p> <p>1 & 16</p> <p>1 & 3</p> <p>2, 3 & 9</p> <p>3, 4 & 13</p> <p>11 & 14</p> <p>3, 10, 11 & 17</p> <p>3, 10, 11 & 17</p> <p>3, 10, 11 & 17</p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ineffective and inadequate communication ➤ Limited alignment of institutional policies and procedures ➤ Political undue influence ➤ Underhand dealings ➤ Limited understanding of institutional values and beliefs ➤ Limited use of teamwork 	<p>3, 10, 11 & 17</p>
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4.4. Category- Important quality dimensions that strengthen and enhance the provision of quality higher education

4.4.1. Impact of leadership styles on provision of quality higher education

At the core of each institution of higher education is the leader – the principal/vice chancellor, and others (Crum and Sherman, 2008). The principal plays a pivotal role in improving the quality of instructional practice to boost student achievement and close educational and performance gaps (Goldring et al., 2007).

Literature suggest, three prominent stylistic models in leadership that help strengthen and enhance the provision of quality higher education: *instructional leadership* (Hallinger, 2010; O'Donnel and White, 2010), *transformational leadership* (Marks and

Printy, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2010), and *distributed leadership* (Elmore, 2009; Spillane, Camburn and Pareja, 2007; Spillane and Healy, 2010; Harris et al., 2007). These three leadership styles have been chosen for focus here because literature proffers as important quality dimension drivers that strengthen and enhance the provision of quality higher education. Each of the leadership styles incorporate the practices involving promoting and fostering a culture of organisational improvement (Argyris, 2011) and cultivating and maintaining organisational relationships (Northouse, 2007).

Hallinger (2010) asserts that instructional leadership centres upon a strong leadership that directs its focus on quality curriculum and instruction outcomes. Typically, the principal would bear sole responsibility for overseeing, coordinating, supervising and developing all items related to quality curriculum and instruction for the institution (Quinn, 2008). Because the role of the instructional leader tends to rest with the principal, there is a large component where the instructional leader is seen as decisive and strong (Hallinger, 2010; Quinn, 2008). Furthermore, the instructional leader is typically goal-oriented with a focus placed upon improving quality student achievement outcomes and, as a result, is very much involved in the decision-making processes surrounding curriculum selection and design (Hallinger, 2010).

The focus of transformational leadership for the leader rests on the leader's ability to engage in "shared or distributed leadership" rather than operating as sole controller (Hallinger, 2010, p. 338). The building and cultivating of relationships as a practice in transformational leadership validates what Fullan (2012) argues in that organisational relationships are necessary and foundational towards accomplishing organisational change and continuous improvement. In addition, Hallinger's (2010) review of transformational leadership forms the theoretical perspective of change management. Change lies at the center of institutional or organisational transformation. Hallinger (2010) supports conceptualisation of transformational leadership and is strongly backed by Marks and Printy (2008).

Elmore (2009) presents an argument for the concept of distributed leadership. He asserts that distributed leadership involves a leader creating multiple roles and responsibilities for various organisational members that establishes a chain of

command exhibiting a clear “division of labour” (Elmore, 2009, p. 24). As a result, the knowledge base and institutional practices within the organisation become spread among the roles established versus being compartmentalised within one individual – the leader. Thus, leadership does not reside within one individual, but within the collective group through the guidance and support of the leader (Elmore, 2009).

The next section deals with the analysis of the participants` interview responses concerning research question 3 and the categories and central themes that emerged from the interviews.

Research Question 3: What are the important leadership quality dimensions that can strengthen and enhance the provision of quality higher education in institutions of higher education in the Durban Metropolitan area?

An examination of the participants` responses to interviews revealed that when it comes to the examination of the important leadership quality dimensions that can strengthen and enhance the provision of quality higher education in institutions of higher education in the Durban Metropolitan area the following categories were generated: leadership abilities; democratic and participatory leadership abilities; leadership ability to steer compliance to policies and procedures; leadership ability to ensuring that stakeholder needs are met; good team work and good relationships leadership abilities; influential leadership ability; leadership change facilitation and management abilities; growth and success empowering leadership abilities; securing the buy-in of shared vision of quality improvement leadership abilities; quality results orientation leadership abilities; exemplary leadership abilities; management by exception leadership abilities; passion and value driving leadership abilities; student-centred quality leadership abilities; quality learning environment enhancement leadership abilities emerged. The emerged themes are listed in the summary table 4.4 below.

(i) Leadership abilities

The ability to influence and impart the leadership skills on institutional team members to meet organisational demands for quality outcomes is a complex element of the

overall leadership development picture, however, important and critical to strengthening and enhancing provision of quality higher education. Leaders are tasked with effectively guiding organisational goal achievement while considering team member skills necessary to produce the desired quality outcomes (Elmore, 2009).

Participant 13 had a view that holding leadership position allows a person to be able to influence the institutional team members towards the achievement of the institution's quality outcomes. The participant had the following to say:

“The most important thing about leadership position is the ability to influence desired behaviour. The sphere of influence is just great; institutional objectives are achieved with ease. What matters the most is the ability to motivate the team members, get their buy-in.”

Based on participant 13's sentiments above, the conclusion is that to be in power allows a person to make all the means to achieve the institution's objectives through the establishment of right structures and systems. Influential leadership has a positive impact on the provision of quality higher education. A focus on balancing talent development with organisational goal achievement places the organisation on a trajectory of achieving performance success regarding quality outcomes. Motivating team members toward goal achievement is no small task. Essentially, leaders should reflect behaviours that inspire and motivate people to change. Though motivation factors vary across organisations, there are many leadership qualities common to successful leadership. Leadership qualities that influence goal achievement include the ability to create a clear vision, the ability to understand organisational culture, the ability to focus on performance achievement, and the ability to encourage innovation among team members (Elmore, 2009; Hallinger, 2010).

(ii) Democratic and participatory leadership abilities

According to McKenna and Quinn (2012), above all, effective leadership is crucial to quality improvement. Institutional leadership and decision-making bodies have a fundamental role to play in shaping the institution's quality culture. They are often the initiators of quality teaching initiatives, and their approach directly affects the outcome of these initiatives.

Participant 10 believed in democratic and participatory leadership. This is leadership style that believes in team membership involvement in decision-making, as the participant had the following to say:

“I am more of a person who believes in consensus decision making processes, who believes in the participation of subordinates in making decisions, especially decisions that directly affect their work. We are talking about provision of quality education here. I strongly believe democratic style of leadership fits the bill.”

Emerging from participant 10`s line of thinking above, problems need to be solved, and a consensus needs to be reached among the parties concerned. Democratic leaders are typically excellent at solving complex issues and problems. They can work collaboratively, using a consensus of opinions to get things done the right way. The democratic leader often thinks innovatively and encourages others to do the same, so that solutions to complex and strategic problems can be found (Printy, 2008).

Participant 11 strongly believed in participatory type of management and leadership style, in clear support of the sentiments by participant 10.

Participant 11 said the following:

“I strongly subscribe to management style that is participatory, that allows subordinates to air their views, even if not all of those views are useful. The idea is to create a sense of belongingness. My subordinates need to feel that they are important, their contributions are valued.”

From the sentiments by participant 11 above, it is suggested that participatory style of leadership assists in promoting good quality outcomes in institutions. Participatory leadership is a sustainable and empowering way of creating successful organisation and development. It fosters change. Participatory leaders use every meeting as a key mechanism through which they can unleash the potentials of their subordinates (Guthrie and Schuermann, 2010).

Participant 12 suggested that to be participatory oriented leader means that you are leading from the middle. In other words, a participatory leader allows to be lead when necessary.

The participant had the following to say:

“I am democratic, participatory, am more leading from the middle than leading from behind, I do not like to give instructions but I would like my subordinates to be involved, am involved with my team, this type of leadership assists me very well.”

From the opinion by participant 12 above, it is believed that democratic and participatory leadership style is bound to be more efficient and an ingredient for facilitation of quality outcomes in higher education institutions. In other words, provision of quality higher education is achieved better with this leadership style. Democratic/participative teams are not only capable of making good decisions, but they also support their group’s goals- even when their suggestions aren’t adopted (Guthrie and Schuermann, 2010).

Participant 13 suggested that it is important to listen to other people’s views before making a decision. The whole idea is to recognise that other people may be capable of providing good solutions to institutional problems. The participant said the following:

“At this moment, I have 4 managers in my team, I would like to hear them and their voices about issues, I need to have a blending of all 4 and get a solution, and once I have heard all the voices I then take a decision but it must be an informed decision. That will be a participatory decision; it does assist me in whatever I want to achieve. I make sure that my team is comfortable, they are valued, they are known that they have been heard, and even if I do not go along with what they are saying, I explain to them the reasons why. Then they will get along with what I have said.”

The assertions by participant 13 above highlighted that leading by being participatory, and making sure that subordinates are engaged for ideas towards institutional problem solutions is the ideal practice that strengthens and enhances provision of quality higher education outcomes. This kind of philosophy makes leadership quite effective, though

may be difficult if it is not derived from clear institutional policy and procedure provisions coupled by structures on the ground. Structures such as a specific unit within the institution that supports quality teaching and learning and ensures that leadership initiatives are followed through and through (Guthrie and Schuermann, 2010; Printy, 2008).

(iii) Leadership ability to steer compliance to policies and procedures

Quality in all private and public institutions is driven by the external forces such as the CHE. There are other factors from outside as well such as the industry's expectations for example. An institution that works with any student population, the expectation is that 80% of that student population do find jobs after completion of their studies, or can start-up businesses of their own (Guthrie and Schuermann, 2010). It is therefore paramount that institutions develop internal policies and procedures and the leadership ensures that these are complied with to satisfy the expectations of the external stakeholders as well, such as the industry. The idea is not only to be able to produce quality labour for employment but quality entrepreneurs for employment creation (Guthrie and Schuermann, 2010).

Participant 10 highlighted the importance of ensuring compliance with policies, procedures, rules and regulations of the institution. Policies usually define the institution's relationship with external stakeholders, such as HEQC, CHE and industry.

The participant had the following to say:

“Yes, before I could discuss it further, it is my boss, he is a person that will never negotiate or settle for anything less than expected, he will go according to the rules, regulations, policies and procedures. He is a very strict disciplinarian when it comes to these things, and however he will also see that learners or students are happy.”

The sentiments by participant 10 claimed that real leaders have spine, they stick to their guts, and they apply the rules as they are without compromise, especially when it comes to satisfying their customers. Higher education is regulated by national frameworks of qualifications which guide policy formulation and procedures that the institutions have to follow. It is paramount that these national frameworks and policies are effectively communicated to the general populace. Learners, providers of higher

education and employers must be aware of the frameworks and be able to apply them (Hallinger, 2012; Guthrie and Schuermann, 2010).

Participant 12 claimed that standards are important at the work place. Standards are naturally defined regarding policies and procedures to be followed. These work as operational guidelines. They make workflow to be smooth.

The participant expressed herself as follows:

“For me there is a saying that quality people are very rigid in their minds, certain structures govern us, external frameworks by the department of higher education, for example, policies and procedure and I honestly believe this for the fact that because in work space where I work, if there were no standards in place I would not make it.”

The reflections by participant 12 above suggested that external generated standards and guidelines should be adhered to to remain relevant as an institution. It's not a question of choice, but compliance with the regulations. Otherwise, the institutions risk being shut down by the responsible authorities. For example, the implementation of the HEQF – since 1 January 2009 requiring all new programmes to be submitted to the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) for accreditation have to be compliant with the HEQF (Elmore, 2009).

Participant 17 recognised that leaders need to plan for the compliance with the external standards and requirements for achieving quality outcomes. This also takes the need for the achievement of the institutional business objectives. The importance of proper and adequate planning needs not to be over emphasised (Lucas, 2008).

The participant had the following to say:

“Development of the assessment policies and business management principles into place, Purpose of a leader is to plan, organize things and control, we have to respect the structures, as much as sometimes we can be accused as being mean, we do require to rule in some instances, we need to set up the precedence, of the type and kind of a leader you want to be, or commitment on what you want to achieve at the end, with regards to the vision and mission.”

The opinion by participant 17 above suggested that planning and sharing information is of vital importance to the achievement of quality outcomes. Quality has been important as a policy issue, as a focus of practice and as a concern for study in higher education research. As an illustration, recent literature on the internationalisation of higher education shows a revitalised interest in quality practices including rankings and accreditation (Lucas, 2008; Huisman, 2008; Marginson and Van der Wende, 2007; Salmi and Altbach, 2011).

(iv) Leadership ability to ensuring that stakeholder needs are met

Quality as meeting customers' stated needs is the driving force behind successful leadership. The leadership that respects the customer as "the king" as the ability to steer their institution into great heights and sustainable competitive advantage. Quality as meeting customer`s needs is a conceptualisation of the concept of quality that deals with the customers' needs and highlights the importance of knowing who the institutions` customers are, what their needs are and how to satisfy them (Huisman, 2008).

Participant 15 reflected on the leadership practice of recognising the students as the most important stakeholders and customers for the institutions of higher education.

The participant expressed herself in the following manner:

"So, we talked about the leadership practice, our leadership focus is mostly on satisfying the students who are our customer number one. We deliver for our students and we can place them to be part of our planning, the practice that we will use in terms of leadership should lead the institution to successfully satisfying the students."

Reflecting on the sentiments by participant 15 above, it is evident that the leadership ability to satisfy the needs of the customers is critical to achieving quality outcomes. This phenomenon brings in an important dimension of conceptualisation of quality and its assurance. The argument is that quality and quality teaching are conceptualised in many different ways (Harvey, 2012: p. 234) because the conceptualisations of quality and quality teaching are "stakeholder relative" – "stakeholders" including students, employers, teaching and non-teaching staff, government and funding agencies,

creditors, auditors, assessors, and the community at large. Tam (2010) also found in his study that all stakeholders held their views of what quality in education meant to them that is listening to customers.

Participant 2 suggested that it is of vital importance to listen to the customers. Institutions can ignore their customers at their peril, as the participant went on to say the following:

“We can’t take a decision immediately, but when it comes to customer issues, we need to listen to them first, and am sure that every issue or a problem has got a solution, if you are unable to satisfy your customers in plan A then you can always go for plan B, therefore cross options are always available where you can satisfy everybody, you might be having issues with the community or internal staff or anyone.”

Based on participant 2 reflections above, it is clear that institutions need to listen to the customers` voices as ignoring customers can be a very risk exsiccation. Implementing the ‘Voice of the Customer’ program can give an institution a significant competitive edge that can help improve the bottom line immensely and it all begins with learning how to listen. The ‘Voice of the Customer’ is all about listening to the customer and acting on what they are saying. However, to find out what your customers are saying, the institution`s leadership needs to speak to the customers. The most effective approach to speaking to customers is by way of combining the quantitative tools like surveys with qualitative tools like in-depth interviews. Customer feedback is also an essential element because it gives institutions a starting vantage point for continuous improvement (Hannah et al., 2008).

Participant 9 added a lot of dimensions on the qualities of leadership, and their function in institutions.

The participant had the following to say:

“So, if you have a good leader with good qualities of leadership it is right of course. There are also skills that are involved there and then the institution can just move in the right direction, like for instance from the registration of the College, its accreditation, presentation of its programs and content delivery, you know. It begins with the management of the institution, down to the learners’ satisfaction, including how one knows if the learners are satisfied or not.

Coming from what I said earlier concerning the results, there must be some learner survey forms that are circulated to students just to find out how they feel about what the institution is offering them. All this, you will know that it gives an idea and a clear direction that the institution needs to move towards.”

Emerging from participant 9 sentiments above is the perceived thought that customer feedback is critical and has to be consistently sort by the institutions leadership. In other words, it is not only enough to have good leadership qualities and skills to steer the institution in the right direction. Understanding the feelings of the institution`s customers is the most important quality dimension (Morley, 2011). There are some complications in defining quality as meeting customers` needs, one of which is whether the “student” is the customer, the product or both? Also, the main critics of this approach asks whether students were in a position to determine what their needs were (Green, 2010).

(v) Good teamwork and good relationships leadership abilities

A team with effective team structures has observable processes in action when the team is working and meeting, has defined roles and responsibilities for members. However, the roles and responsibilities can and should be shared. A team uses protocols to help guide group work and provide consistent operational framework, has agreements in place that are clear, purposeful, and understood. These agreements drive meetings, the intent being to maximise time and efficiency of the team members, has an identified facilitator who normally becomes the team leader, as well as secondary facilitators, who keep the team focused on the desired goals. Team meetings have a start and end time, as well as clear agenda, and clear understanding of how decisions will be made (Hannah et al., 2008; Hamilton, Stecher and Yuan, 2008; Hannah and Lester, 2009).

Participant 10 felt that team work creates good working relationships that follow very formal and structured operational protocols.

Participant 10 had the following to say:

“People have to work as a team if they are to be successful. Team work is a critical dimension,

it creates good working relationships. At the centre of team work is democratic leadership that facilitates group participation in decision making processes. I believe such oriented team leaders are a vital cog in strengthening and enhancing quality outcomes in institutions of higher learning.”

Emerging from participant 10 reflections above, was the perceived thought that teamwork is important and crucial for creating good working relationships based on mutual benefits. These are democratic teams that allow for open discussions, and encouragement of different viewpoints, about how to reach institutional goals (Hannah et al., 2008). Team members dare to share their viewpoints, even if the views may vary with those of the majority in the group. Team members are allowed to be open-minded, to listen, and give their colleagues a chance to speak. There is general decent and respectful dialogue among the team members. Above all, team members can engage in “unfiltered conflict” around ideas, with the will to admit any weaknesses and mistakes and courage to ask for help where necessary. Team members objectively accept questions and input about their areas of responsibilities, give one another the benefit of the doubt before arriving at any negative conclusion, they are willing to take risks on offering feedback and assistance, they appreciate and tap into one another’s skills and experiences, offer and accept apologies without hesitation and any reservations (Hamilton et al., 2008; Hannah and Lester, 2009).

Participant 11 expressed that good leadership promotes good teamwork, in support of participant 10, and he said the following:

“Work challenge, the other thing is that all these people that I have been working with, they always compliment my team and me. Which exhibits to me that they are finding my team members are working well, and my leadership is working as my team is working well, without beating my own drums of course.”

From participant 11’s sentiments above, it is suggested that providing a good leadership direction to the team leads to a common understanding of the team or group goals and interests. The common goal is to achieve quality higher education outcomes for the institution. In other words, team or group interests that are incongruence with the institutional interests should transcend above the individual interests for the

success of the institution (Hamilton et al., 2008; Hannah and Lester, 2009). In a team with clarity of purpose, there are clearly defined, transparent goals that are aligned with the mission and vision of the institution. All team members are committed to these goals and a clearly articulated plan of action. Goals are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely (SMART) (Hamilton et al., 2008; Hannah and Lester, 2009).

Participant 17 commented on the leadership quality dimension of taking the responsibility of one`s actions, and be prepared to live with the consequences, even if it means suffering them.

The participant had the following to say:

“For me it’s taking responsibility for what I have done and what I have to do, working closely with my line manager and the people that I am answerable to particularly my line manager, and working with the people within the quality office in our institution as well as within the university as whole. Working with others does not mean that they have to take responsibility for my actions.”

From the assertions by participant 17 above, it is worth noting that it is the responsibility of a leader to work closely with institutional stakeholders and above all to be accountable and take responsibility of their actions.

Participant 4 suggested that without his team members he would have not been successful in his institutional responsibilities, as the participant had to say the following:

“I could not do this quality assurance project on my own, so I needed a good team, I think as a leader of that project I was able to see the strengths in other people and be able to tap from them within the team, and been able to work with them and together as a team we were able to complete the program. I work well with my team. I work in such a manner that I listen to my team members`. I also consider their advice regarding what I am supposed to be doing, what I am accountable for, and I think about it in that context. I would go back to my team members and say to them for these reasons we have to do things in this way, or for these reasons I will consider what you are suggesting.”

The sentiments by participant 4 above, suggest that the consideration of other peoples' ideas by the leader and valuing them is of vital importance to institutional success. Vital to the achievement of quality higher education outcomes. A team focusing on accountability is committed to decisions and plans of action, and it holds one another accountable for delivering the set institutional goals that have been agreed upon. All the team members feel that sense of obligation to the team or group for its progress, and they focus on the achievement of the collective institutional results (Hamilton et al., 2008; Hannah and Lester, 2009).

Participant 14 added the view of the leader drawing from other peoples' expertise. It takes recognition of other people`s potential contribution to the common goal of the team and the institution.

Participant 14 had the following to say:

“This is a difficult one, philosophy is whatever lies in whatever you do, so my philosophy is teamwork, I can just simple put it that way. It is reading through others with others. Teamwork does assist the institution in producing quality, individually you can't produce quality, but you can achieve it through others, because we have different roles to play, and so many things to achieve in an institution, we should be able to achieve the overall quality improvement. We need each other to play our roles. You can't do it alone. Well you can in your specific discipline, but when you are talking about quality, you are talking about various aspects, so forth and so forth.”

The sentiments by participant 14 above, suggested that leaders need to draw from the expertise of others. Need to recognise the value and synergies that team work brings to the common institutional goal of achieving provision of quality higher education outcomes. Good leaders do not view themselves as the yard stick, barometer and standard of achieving quality, but as the facilitating instrument for team members to unleash their full potential (Hamilton et al., 2008; Hannah and Lester, 2009).

(v) Influential leadership ability

The ability to influence other people towards the achievement of the common goals of institutions lies at the centre of the function of the human resource department of the higher education institutions and their overall performance in achieving quality outcomes to the satisfaction of the students and the community in general. On the other hand, it takes full team members` commitment to the achievement of the institutions` goal of providing quality outcomes. Literature suggest that that can only be achieved through happy employees and happy employees result from realised job satisfaction (Hamilton et al., 2008; Hannah and Lester, 2009).

Participant 10 pointed out that influencing other people is important to the achievement of the institutional goals.

The participant had the following to say:

“When people tend to agree with my vision, in the position of leadership and when they tend to role model themselves, around my vision, it gives me all the satisfaction. Then I would know that I have managed to exert my influence, good influence of course.”

The assertions made by participant 10 above, give an impression that the leader has a responsibility of sharing their vision with their team members. This is the vision to take the institution to great heights. When that happens, then the leader has managed to influence other institutional members for the common good of the institution. By providing this bigger picture, the leader does not only articulate the vision of the institution but also outlines the means of accomplishing the bigger picture (Seeley, 2008). It guides the work of the organisation. Seeley (2008) describes the vision as a "goal-oriented mental construct that guides people's behaviour." Vision is a picture of the future for which people are willing to work towards achieving.

Participant 11 added that training others to be leaders is a good thing to do. It gives satisfaction to see the people once under your mentorship now being successful leaders that are driving the institutional goal of achieving quality outcomes (Nanus, 2008).

“As part of the fact that I can give them a chance and space to be good leaders themselves in future, my support allows them to be good leaders, I would be proud one day if I find them good leaders, and they must be better than me.”

Reflecting on the assertions by participant 11 above, it is evident that leadership of the institutions could well be by thinking of succession by grooming other potential people to take over the leadership positions in these institutions. In other words, it should be part of the institutions' vision to ensure successful leadership succession. That brings the sense of continuity of the institution's culture, values and beliefs that relate to quality outcomes (Nanus, 2008).

Participant 12 highlighted an important dimension that true leaders take their influencing ability everywhere they go and regardless of the environment. In any environment, there is always a potential for a leader to influence. The idea is for a leader to leave footprints where ever they go (Nanus, 2008).

The participant had the following to say:

“In a different perspective, I am a father, am also a husband, a pastor. I need to provide for them, and I move from one world to another, I make friends, and I retrench from another world as well, so we communicate in different ways. As a leader, I believe that as you channel the environment what serves best is that you need to understand your role and influence the people even in politics, in the community, in the institutions, leadership is influencing others.”

Based on participant 12's sentiments above, on a lighter note, it is important for institutional leaders to extend their ability to influence other people even way far from their work stations. This gives an impression that a leader is a leader everywhere. Even though institutions are more than places where academic skills are taught and learnt, they are diminutive communities in themselves where members interact and influence the behaviour of each other, leaders mature in their leadership when they take their influencing abilities beyond the boundaries of the institutions they serve (Shoben, 2011).

(vi) Leader change facilitation and management abilities

Change is conducive to continuous quality improvement in teaching and learning only to the extent that there is appropriate internal organisational support systems in place. Institutions are complex adaptive systems, and there is no single pathway to make change happen and achieve real improvements in quality teaching and learning (Lange and Singh, 2010). Moreover, effective change is typically driven by a combination of top-down and bottom-up initiatives by leaders as agents for change. Change evolves (Lange and Singh, 2010).

Participant 12 reflected on leaders as change agents. Effective leaders can steer change for the benefit of their organisations. With issues of quality at stake in the higher education sector, it is critical that leaders steer the needed change for the betterment of institutional continuous quality improvement.

Participant 12 had the following to say:

“Leaders are expected to bring to the institution something that will result in a change of people`s attitudes, change of behaviour, that will change ethics that will best suit the realisation of the best results for the institution.”

Emerging from participant 12 assertions above is the notion that the institutional leaders serve as agents for change. Change is inevitable, and this is a part of doing business in a world influenced by technology, globalisation and evolving customer demands. Change management has in recent years shifted from a specialty to being more of a leadership quality trait that affects how institutions and teams adapt to shifting marketplace dynamics and daily operations. Whereas change management used to primarily focus on operational and process improvements and cost effectiveness, it is now something that leaders are using to think about how things should get done regardless of institutional hierarchy (Lange and Singh, 2010). Organisations are looking to change agents to execute new processes and help employees adjust to new ways of doing things. Change agents can be managers or employees, or external consultants hired to facilitate initiatives for change. Internal change agents have the advantage of being familiar with an organisation’s history, operations and people, while external change agents can provide a fresh perspective without the influence of a firm’s traditions and culture (Lange and Singh, 2010).

Participant 16 expressed the realities of the injustices of the apartheid system, how it compromised quality in the education sector.

The participant had the following to say:

“Mediocrity was something that was strong in a sense. The provision of resources, when we think of what apartheid system has done, it made the quality to be in a lower level, depending on the colour of the skin of an individual, as an Indian I could see that it was something beyond one`s control.”

From participant 16`s sentiments above, it is clear that resources need to be provided and made available all the times for the institutions to sustain their provision of quality higher education efforts. There is still much more to be done to address the imbalances and injustices of the apartheid system caused to the education sector in South Africa in the past. Hence the need is there to conscientise every team member on the importance of providing quality outcomes in the higher education sector. As a result, anyone in the institution can act as a change agent (leaders, faculty, students, support staff) provided they understand the process of change and are committed to the vision underpinning the strategic objectives of raising quality teaching standards. A good understanding and appreciation of the role of change agency across the institution, based on a mutual respect for the role each team member plays (from leadership on institutional policies to innovation in faculty teaching practices) is crucial for the success of reforms and building of a quality culture in the institution (Lange and Singh, 2010).

(vii) Growth and success empowering leadership abilities

Empowering institutional team members for growth and success is a key dimension of strengthening and enhancing continuous quality improvement in institutions of higher education. If a leader intends to empower their team members, they are going to be required to communicate like a pro (Lange and Singh, 2010). The success of any organisational team empowerment program is utterly dependent upon the leader`s ability to share his or her thoughts, ideas, intentions, and assumptions. It`s all about communicating an understanding who is responsible for what, mapping out the

program to everyone involved, being able to share the leader`s expectations — and then backing off. Empowering people for growth and success is about moving people to act and think in a bigger way, think in some position of authority in the future (Lange and Singh, 2010).

Participant 10 pointed out that leaders need to power their team members or subordinates for growth and success.

The participant said the following:

“Like I said before, I am saying it again, as part of the fact that I am in a position to facilitate or empower my subordinates for growth, it would give me pleasure and satisfaction to see some of my subordinates today being in leadership positions tomorrow. It takes empowerment today, not tomorrow. It’s all about them becoming successful leaders tomorrow, and they must be better than me.”

Participant 10`s sentiments above, the impression given is that wanting to hang onto the old “command and control” model of management or leadership does not fit well the bill when it comes to ensuring sustained continuous quality improvement. However, it’s also true that employee empowerment, when implemented correctly, empowers everyone — not just the subordinates, but the current leaders as well. The success of a leader`s subordinates is the success of the leader (Hansman, 2011).

Institutional employees are walking, talking treasure troves of information. They already know where they could reasonably take on more responsibility. They know what decisions could be made without the leader`s input. They know which areas could be streamlined if they were given the opportunity to chart their course. And this should be good news —the leader doesn’t even have to be an empowerment expert to look like a modern-day hero to their subordinates. The leader needs to bring the team members together, sit down, relax, and ask them where they would like to take on more responsibility for continuous quality improvement. If the leaders is a type of a manager or leader who encourages honesty and openness, the subordinates will tell that! As a leader one might find himself agreeing with the team members, and implementing their ideas for the betterment of all involved and the institution (Hansman, 2011).

Participant 13 added on the importance of encouraging the team members or the rest of the institutional staff.

The participant had the following to say:

“I am a person who is ensuring that people I actually work with are encouraged, build confidence in themselves, and make sure that they believe in themselves. The idea is to try and get best out of them, as far as achieving quality outcomes. They have to understand that as an institution we have no choice.”

The assertions of participant 13 above, highlighted that people should be encouraged to drive personal motivation to work towards the same institutional goal of providing quality outcomes. People grow personally and become highly productive in a climate that is conducive to personal and professional development. Growth is further accelerated in a work environment that offers the freedom to try new ideas, to fail and try again, and to learn from experience (Jackson, 2013).

Participant 16 highlighted the importance of the ability of the team leader to help team members grow, and ready themselves for potential future leadership of the institution`s structures, and determined to assist the institution continue its provision of quality outcomes trajectory (Jackson, 2013).

The participant had the following to say:

“The encouragement you get from the lecturers` development or growth, and the knowledge that you have enabled them as a leader to grow, as a person and as an educator, and then you realise that you are adding value, to the system, it is not just a job but basically developing other people, in terms of their personalities towards promoting quality outcomes in the institution, not only academically, and also to encourage the lecturers to improve on the education as well. So, the institution also must develop, and as you see them you get a sense of pride, if you think where they have started and where they are at the moment, it actually makes you feel good.”

The sentiments by participant 16 above, claimed that there is a need for institutions to create room and environment for people to achieve personal growth and development. The leadership needs to appreciate that people want to grow in personal effectiveness,

in career standing, and in their job productivity. When that happens commitment to common institutional goal of achieving quality outcomes is enhanced (Hess and Kelly, 2007). The most effective impact a leader can make is to help team members develop and use more of their full potential for the good of the institution and push forward the institution`s agenda for achieving quality outcomes (Hess and Kelly, 2007).

Participant 6 brought the dimension of students acquiring quality information and knowledge that will help them achieve their life goals after completing their studies. It is every institution`s leadership responsibility to ensure that this happens.

The participant said the following:

“People have goals to achieve in their lives, achieving personal academic goals is every student`s desire, ours as leadership is to ensure that all of our students achieve this dream, but with quality. It is not just enough for the students to pass. The question is: have they acquired quality information and knowledge, quality information and knowledge that will help them make their dreams come true in the world outside the university life?”

The utterances by participant 6 suggested that information should be shared. Understanding seems to be a huge theme coming through - it is important that you understand people, understand the work, understanding the cornerstones of quality, understanding your role in the bigger picture.

(viii) Securing the buy-in of shared vision of quality improvement leadership abilities

Webbstock (2012) underlines that good leaders would go out of their way to influence their team members to secure their buy-in into the leader`s vision for achieving and strengthening the provision of quality higher education by the institution. The leader`s vision for provision of quality outcomes by the institution should not be seen to be invariance with the institution`s strategic vision.

Participant 10 believed in securing the buy in;

“I always feel that if you lead people whom you have to sell them your vision for achieving quality outcomes there must be a buy-in into that vision, because it is very important for the institution. Of course, people should buy in into your idea as the leader, and there must be consensus on how we go forward.”

Reflecting on the assertions made by participant 10 above, it is evident that setting team members or subordinates to understand the leadership vision assists in promoting the provision of quality outcomes by the institutions. In many organisations the visions are not communicated often well enough if communicated at all, they are not adequately communicated. As a result, institutional members would profess ignorance of the institutional vision. Literature intimates that it is the responsibility of the institutional leadership to ensure that they communicate the institutional vision to the members of the institution. It is not enough to display the institutional vision on the walls and be silent about it. Leaders should not look at the institution's vision as their own, but as a public domain feature (Helsing et al., 2008).

Participant 11 emphasised on the importance of facilitating teamwork by the institutional leadership. Team work that is bound together by the institutional vision for achieving quality outcomes (Helsing et al., 2008).

The participant had the following to say:

“Like I have said the leadership philosophy is that it's based and characterised by the vision, the vision for achieving continuous quality improvement in the institution, your vision should basically help you as a leader, your valuable proposition of your leadership, what is it that you want to achieve in terms of quality, leading people to a situation where they will achieve target objectives, you got to have a vision, a vision bringing team work that will actually lead everybody to where you want to go.”

Based on participant 11's sentiments above, it is reflected that sharing the vision for achieving quality outcomes to the team assists in planning for the institution's programs, teaching and learning processes. Shared vision creates a sense of commitment and belongingness, where all staff members align their interests with the vision of the institution. The vision should inspire everyone to put in extra effort to achieve the common goal of the institution. The vision should motivate and excite the institutions or the team members to exercise their innovate capabilities since the overall success of the institution affects everyone. Shared vision should clarify workers' and managers' expectations in the institution. This helps avoid interdepartmental conflicts that may disrupt normal operations in the institution (Goldring et al., 2007; DuFour, 2012; Darling-Hammond and Richardson, 2009).

(ix) Quality results-oriented leadership abilities

Effective Institutional leadership should translate into quality results, be it students results or the results of any activities, actions, projects or any undertakings by the institution or its designated agents (Conley and Glasman, 2008).

Participant 9 recognised the importance of leadership duty to ensure that the institution achieves quality results in everything that the institution does. In other words, all the institutional outcomes should be quality.

The participant had the following to say:

“Without just going any further on what leadership is all about, it is an outcome of quality results, overall quality results. As leadership our disposition should be clear about our intentions. Our intentions should be to make sure that our faculty achieve quality students’ results, the faculty’s preparation for content delivery should be quality, the assessment should be quality, above all, our programmes should be quality.”

The assertions of participant 9 above highlighted that good leadership would lead to quality results in everything that the institutions do. It is incumbent to leaders to inculcate the culture of quality results orientation in their team members. The team members need proper equipment and resourcing. Resourcing includes training and development to capacitate the team members with knowledge and prerequisite skills to achieve quality results (Goldring et al., 2007). What differentiates positive leaders from the rest is that positive leaders do not concern or preoccupy themselves with what they can get out of their subordinates. Instead positive leaders search for opportunities to invest in everyone who works for the institution. They view each interaction with any team member as an opportunity to increase team member’s positive emotions towards the achievement of quality results (Goldring et al., 2007).

(x) Exemplary leadership abilities

Good leaders lead with their actions as well as their words. They effectively translate intentions into reality by acting on the concepts and messages they preach about, they teach, they brag about and the things they say to those surrounding them (Conley and Glasman, 2008). Leadership is the act of setting the right example for those who follow. Leadership is about actively demonstrating one’s beliefs, not just talking about them.

People who say one thing but do another eventually lose credibility (Conley and Glasman, 2008). The need to strengthen and enhance provision of quality outcomes in institutions of higher education demand such a calibre of leadership.

Participant 12 expressed the importance of leading by example, the importance of walking the talk. This is a quality dimension that supersedes the rest (Conley and Glasman, 2008).

The participant had the following to say:

“We have got to lead by example, not by looking at the person, that is what I strongly believe, that we lead by example, and as a leader you got to be the role model, you find me arriving very early and departing very late, if I do not do that you will find my subordinates will follow that, leading by example basically is important. To me that defines quality.”

Based on participant 12`s sentiments above, it is clear that leading by example and showing people the way to do the right things the right way is the good essence of quality leadership dimension (Branson, 2007). The way leaders can bring their team members to higher standards is by committing to greater challenges themselves. The abilities, talents and characteristics of leaders provide a larger foundation on which those around them can grow, both as individuals and as a group. By being the example of great discipline and great self-drive, a leader encourages those who follow them to adopt higher standards of quality as well (Branson, 2007).

Participant 3 reiterated that leaders should practice what they preach. That is the essence of quality leadership that leads to institutional quality outcomes.

Participant 3 had to say the following:

“A lot of people actually can, especially when one has people that are working hard, they set norms and standards that they adhere to. In my experience I have seen that if you want your sub-ordinates or lecturers that you are guiding and working with, you want them to achieve something, you need to practice what you preach, do what you have to do and assist them.”

Emerging from participant 3 assertions above, was the importance of leaders to practice what they preach. Nothing kills credibility faster than not practicing what one

purports to be standing for. If an institutional leader purports to stand for quality, then they need to exhibit quality (Branson, 2007).

(xi) Management by exception leadership abilities

All leaders are managers, and not all managers are leaders (Bennis, 2008). The technique or concept of Management by exceptions is a typical management practice, which, however, takes the leadership thinking and disposition to achieve its purported benefits to the institution (Bennis, 2008). The practice supports the development of subordinates, as the authority is given and also the freedom to take independent decisions or take initiatives to proceed and solve institutional challenges, issues and problems. This unique opportunity created by the leadership, for the subordinates or team members to take independent decisions helps in developing dedicated and efficient individuals or subordinates, who are capable of giving desired quality results for the institution (Bandura and Locke, 2009).

Participant 11 made a bold statement that he has always found management by exception quite useful and resonating well with the institution`s common goal of achieving quality outcomes. Literature suggest that management by exception is a quality strengthening and enhancing dimension (Bandura and Locke, 2009).

Participant 11 had the following to say:

"I lead by managing by exception, so I only manage by exception, I believe in giving my people the autonomy to make decisions. I give them freedom to make decisions in situations, otherwise under normal circumstances they would not have been allowed to do so. To me, I have found the philosophy working well. I strongly believe it's the best way to facilitate and strengthen desires to achieve quality outcomes for the institution."

The assertions by participant 11 above, highlighted that effective leadership is about giving people time to examine themselves, examine their capabilities and believe in themselves, have courage to make bold decisions. Subordinates` own experiences and exposure to be managed by exception allows them to understand the institutional strategic intent for achieving continuous quality improvement and outcomes better- which in turn allows them to manage better/lead when placed in positions to do so and

facilitate (influence) and bring about the desirable outcomes. Management by exceptions emphasizes timely consistent supervision and assessment of activities as well as analysing the total job performances. Constant supervision facilitates effective decision making and drawing of logical conclusions (Barth, 2010; Bandura and Locke, 2009; Bennis, 2008).

(xii) Passionate and value driving leadership abilities

Exhibiting passion and drive for nothing less than value addition to the institution by the leadership is a prudent quality dimension that when transferred to the team members or subordinates has a potential of taking the institution to great heights (Arievitch and Haenen, 2011). Every higher education institution aims at attaining higher and higher rankings. To achieve these goals, leaders need the cooperation of their team members. Team members get motivated and excitement when seeing the levels of passion for quality work being exhibited by their leader. As a result, they are bound to emulate their leader (Arievitch and Haenen, 2011). As the institutional leaders become more and more passionate about achieving quality outcomes for the institution, subordinates are also motivated to do so. People need to be motivated and be driven to the best of their abilities regardless of their job, position or the work they are doing for the institution. Being a passionate, value driven, motivated, having zeal, are self-driven attitudes required of the institutional workers for the institutions to realise their quest for quality outcomes (Arievitch and Haenen, 2011).

Participant 10 asserted that as a leader he believes in being value driven. He believes in adding value to the institution. Value addition is a quality virtue (Arievitch and Haenen, 2011).

The participant said the following:

“My values are integrity, professionalism, responsiveness, and empathy, those are like critical, in the area of quality, you have to be quality yourself, professionalism is key. I believe these are critical to strengthening and enhancing quality outcomes by our institution.”

Based on participant 10 reflections above, passion for value addition by the institutions leaders and their subordinates alike is a key ingredient for continuous quality improvement in the institutions. Passion is an emotion that comes from within a person. It is about enthusiasm, zeal, drive and being motivated. A person cannot just feel passionate about their job; they want to put passion into it and apply all of the skills and energy into the work they are doing (Arievitch and Haenen, 2011).

Participant 13 emphasised that integrity is value and virtue of quality. Quality outcomes in institutions of higher education can only be attained by men and women of integrity. It is not only institutional leaders that must exhibit the virtue of integrity, but every institutional employee owes it to the institution that regard integrity with high esteem (Andrew and Soder, 2009).

The participant had the following to say:

“You succeed with integrity, these are the values of quality, it sticks with integrity, there is no substitute for hard work, you have to make sure that you strive to achieve your goals, and if you want to achieve your goals you cannot sit comfortable and expect that things will fall like manna, you have to work hard for these things to happen, we have got to work relentlessly.”

Emerging from participant 13 above, was the perception that to achieve set goals and objectives for achieving quality outcomes, institutional employees, led by their leaders need to aim at working hard with integrity. Integrity means being consistent in one's beliefs and value, without any compromise. This defines a passion for goodwill, and passion does not go unnoticed (Andrew and Soder, 2009). People will see how well the job is done and how good are the attitudes towards achieving quality outcomes. They will see even if a task is hard and a person continues to apply even much more effort to overcome all the hurdles and obstacles. People will notice the drive and motivation and rewards would come accordingly (Andrew and Soder, 2009).

Participant 15 declared integrity as being a discipline virtue (Andrew and Soder, 2009), as the participant had to say the following:

“It involves a lot of discipline that as a leader one has to subscribe to, discipline even takes one going an extra mile in whatever they are doing for the benefit of the institution

despite getting no extra remuneration for that, but I think if you have a passion of what you are doing you will go an extra mile because you are disciplined.”

From the above sentiments by participant 15, it is suggested that another dimension of quality is discipline coupled with integrity. Self-discipline is one of the most important and useful virtues that every institutional worker should possess. Disciplined leaders and their team members have the enthusiasm that is required to steer the institution towards achieving quality outcomes (Anderson et al., 2008). This skill is essential in every area of life, including life outside work place and though most people acknowledge its importance, very few do something to strengthen it. Self-discipline means self-control, which is a sign of inner-strength and self-control of one`s actions, and reactions (Anderson et al., 2008).

The possession of the virtue of integrity enables people to be able to persevere with prudent decisions and plans for achieving quality outcomes until they are accomplishment. Integrity also manifests itself as an inner strength, it helps to overcome addictions in unprofessional conducts and behaviour, procrastination and laziness and gives the incumbent strength to follow through whatever is being done. One of the main characteristics of integrity as a quality dimension that can enhance the institutions achievement of quality outcomes is the ability to reject instant gratification and pleasure, in favour of some greater gain in the future, which requires spending effort and time to get it (Cohen, Raudenbush and Lowenberg Ball, 2011).

Participant 3 claimed that integrity is about being transparent, being honest, being accountable and being true to one`s duty as the needle is to the pole. These are quality virtues (Cohen et al., 2011).

The participant had to say the following:

“I think our values focus on the issues of transparency, being honest, being accountable, being true in what we are doing, giving our customers value for their money, people spend a lot of money coming to study. It will be good to give them quality all the time.”

From the sentiments by participant 3 above, the argument that honesty, transparency, accountability and truthfulness lead to success. Not only individual success, but institutional success as well, in its quest for achieving quality outcomes. These are pillars and foundation for organisational continuous quality improvement (Cohen-

Vogel, 2008). A culture of honesty, transparency, accountability and truthfulness results in more than merely “happy” workplaces, and deep-seated respect. Expectation for these values make institutions more successful in achieving quality outcomes (Cohen-Vogel, 2008).

(xiii) Student-centred quality leadership abilities

Student-centred quality leadership focuses on the students learning experiences, also known as learner-centred education, broadly encompasses the methods of teaching that shift the focus of instruction from the teacher to the student (Crum and Sherman, 2008). In original usage, student-centred learning aimed to develop learner autonomy and independence by putting responsibility for the learning path in the hands of the students. Student-centred learning puts students' interests first, acknowledging students voice as central to the learning experience, and as the most important stakeholder and customer. In a student-centred learning space, students choose what they will learn, how they will learn, and how they will assess their learning. It is then the responsibility of the institutional leadership to ensure that students are offered a wide variety of quality programmes for students to choose (Crum and Sherman, 2008; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

Student-centred learning is a contrast of traditional education, also dubbed as "teacher-centred learning", which situates the teacher as the primarily centre and active role player while students take a more passive, and receptive role. In a teacher-centred classroom, teachers choose what the students will learn, how the students will learn, and how the students will be assessed in their learning. In contrast, student-centred learning requires students to be active, responsible participants in their learning and with their own pace of learning time (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Crum and Sherman, 2008).

Participant 13 claimed that their institution has become a student-centred learning higher education institution. The belief is that this dimension suites the achievement of quality outcomes better (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

The participant said the following:

“Our institution has become student-centred, and it is important when we become student centred. We look at the students in a very holistic way, not just as people sitting in front of the teacher in a class. Our belief is that when we graduate them our students would have contributed immensely to the quality outcome they would be. Our students lie at the centre of everything we do. They almost play that leadership role to determine the quality outcome they would be.”

The assertions by participant 13 above, highlighted that holistic and good quality students are the most valued treasure of any pro-quality institution of higher education including the industry and other employment sectors. It is for this reason that the representation of employers as stakeholders in the governance of higher education institutions will continue, not as a statutory requirement and an institutional ordinance, but a mutual beneficiary practice for both parties (DeRue and Wellman, 2009; DeRue et al., 2011).

Participant 15 added that their focus as an institution was on the quality student outcome.

The participant had the following to say:

“We have a strong focus on producing quality students in our institution. Our philosophy is that everything that we do as an institution should translate into quality measurable outcome of quality students in all material respects. It’s like running a business with the sole intention to maximise profits, the bottom line “In higher education quality means producing graduates that will solve the industry problems, to me that is the definition of quality. Quality is not passing with a distinction but it means having people which will address the needs of the industry, and that is what is important. To a certain extent we produce quality students that aims at addressing the socio-economic issues of the industry.”

The sentiments by participant 15 above, suggested that the value of any credible institution of higher education measured regarding the quality of the students that the institution churns out into the labour market and entrepreneurial venture ship. Gone are the days when companies and other employment organisations would have time for graduate employees to acclimatize, as they slowly find their feet in their first employment experiences. Nowadays the industry is increasingly expecting the graduates to be able to ‘hit their decks running’ (DeRue et al., 2011).

(xiv) Quality learning environment enhancement leadership abilities

Effective leaders go out of their way to create conducive learning environment in their institutions, environment that strengthens and enhances provision of quality outcomes by their institutions (Hou, 2012). This is quality environment for both, students and lecturers. For the lecturer, it is a conducive working environment, while for the students, it is a conducive learning environment. As a result, many institutions are therefore keen to provide professional development to their faculty, while at the same time making sure that quality facilities exist for students to accomplish their learning outcomes (Hou, 2012). Learning environment for the student and working environment for the lecturer have a bearing on the outcome or output of the institution. Therefore that quality learning and working environments would produce quality outcomes (Hou, 2012).

Participant 1 expressed that the environment that the institutional leadership creates in their institution is of interest to the institution`s major stakeholders. That is the students and the lecturers, notwithstanding the importance of other stakeholders too. Participant 1 had to say the following:

“Our faculty and staff care about the working environment; our students care about the learning environment. That is why it is important for us to address these issues so that we meet the quality standards of our stakeholders. They are not dictating anything to us,(As leadership we are seized with these issues.”

Reflecting on the sentiments by participant 1 above, it is important for the institutions to address their internal environmental configuration. It is essential for the leadership to effectively deal with issues and things that impact the quality learning and working environments for students and their lecturers and staff negatively. Within the lecture rooms, for example, a welcoming and non-discriminatory climate is critical for a quality learning environment. Within the lecturer`s office, for example, a welcoming and well-equipped preparatory station is critical for a quality teaching environment (Hou, 2012).

Participant 10 suggested that the institutions` stakeholders in general value the conducive environment for quality learning.

The participant had the following to say:

“It is about creating an environment that is conducive for learning, no more no less. All our stakeholder, be it students, lecturers, the community, the department of higher education, just everybody. We are very conscious about the expectations of our stakeholders, as leadership we are kept on our toes.”

Based on participant 10`s assertions above, the conclusion is that conducive environment for learning is non-negotiable as a quality dimension. It is of kin interest to all the institution`s stakeholders, irrespective of their vested interests in the institution. For students, their futures are determined by the institutional environment. For lecturers and other staff, their professions or career and personal developments are achieved or not achieved (Guthrie and Schuermann, 2010). Physical learning environments or the places in which formal learning occurs range from relatively modern and well-equipped buildings to open-air gathering places. The quality of institutions` facilities seems to have an indirect effect on learning though, an effect that is hard to measure. Some authors argue that empirical evidence is inconclusive as to whether the condition of school buildings is related to higher student achievement after taking into account students` background (Fuller, 2004).

Participant 2 made a bold statement that academics should ensure quality in their teaching as they are integral components of a quality teaching environment.

The participant had the following to say:

“As an academic staff we need to make sure that we deliver quality content to our students. This is our goal to provide quality higher education and to see our students as successful people in future, succeeding in everything they are doing. I believe it begins in the lecture room, with the quality of the content, as we impart knowledge on them.”

Emerging from participant 2`s assertions above is the perception that quality teaching is a quality dimension that is valuable to the institution`s stakeholders. The perspective assumes that it is not only lecturers that should be concerned about quality content

delivery, but deans and heads of schools, operations managers, academic leaders, quality assurance directors, heads of programmes and other team leaders who are drivers of change and continuous quality improvement (Houston, 2010). This collaborative approach does not only provide a firm foundation for determining the pedagogical competencies that lecturers need to develop and the support they require but also helps to build collective commitment across faculty concerning achieving quality outcomes. The clarity provided also make it easier to establish what instruments and support measures lecturers need to produce real improvements in quality teaching (Houston, 2010).

4.2.4. Summary of the findings concerning research question 3

The table 4.4 below shows the summary of the findings from the interviews conducted concerning research question 3, “What are the important quality dimensions that can strengthen and enhance the provision of quality higher education in institutions of higher education in the Durban Metropolitan area?”

Table 4.4: Emerged themes: – Summary of findings concerning research question 3

Research question	Category	Central theme	Interviewee
“Important leadership quality dimensions that can strengthen and enhance the provision of quality higher education”- derived from research question 3	(i) Leadership abilities	➤ Leadership influence	13 & 19
	(ii) Democratic and participatory leadership abilities	➤ Consensus decision making	10,
	(iv) Leadership ability to steer compliance to policies and procedures	➤ Participatory decision making	11,
	(v) Leadership ability to ensuring	➤ Compliance with policies and procedures	12 & 13
		➤ Planning for continuous quality improvement	10, 12 & 17

	<p>that stakeholder needs are met</p> <p>(vi) Good team work and good relationships</p> <p>leadership abilities</p> <p>(vii) Influential leadership ability</p> <p>(viii) Leadership change facilitation and management abilities</p> <p>(ix) Growth and success empowering leadership abilities</p> <p>(x) Securing the buy-in of shared vision of quality improvement leadership abilities</p> <p>(xi) Quality results orientation leadership abilities</p> <p>(xii) Exemplary leadership abilities</p> <p>(xiii) Management by exception leadership abilities</p> <p>(xiv) Passion and value driving leadership abilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Stakeholder focus ➤ Team building and relationships ➤ Taking responsibility for actions and accountability ➤ Visionary leadership ➤ Employee training and development ➤ Facilitating change and management ➤ Employee empowerment ➤ Personal motivation and growth ➤ Securing shared vision buy-in ➤ Quality results oriented ➤ Exemplary leadership ➤ Exceptional management ➤ Value driven ➤ Student focus 	<p>2, 9 & 15</p> <p>4, 10, 11, 14 & 17</p> <p>10, 11 & 12</p> <p>12 & 16</p> <p>6, 10, 13 & 16</p> <p>10 & 11</p> <p>9, 21, 22</p> <p>3, 12 & 23</p> <p>11</p> <p>3, 10, 13 & 15</p>
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	(xv) Student-centred quality leadership abilities	➤ Conducive learning environment	13, 15 & 19
	(xvi) Quality learning environment enhancement leadership abilities		1, 2, 10, 17 & 20

4.6. Conclusion

The chapter dealt with the analysis, discussion and interpretation of the qualitative results of the study that were obtained from the qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews of the purposively 23 selected executive managers and senior lecturers of the higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area. The qualitative data analysis that this study dealt with produced some lessons about the provision of quality higher education within the higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area and also provided a good insight for further future studies. The use of deductive theoretical thematic analysis enabled the researcher to simultaneously examine the data from the interviews and married it with the existing literature to explain and support the study's findings. The next chapter deals with the conclusion and the recommendations.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This study examined the different perceptions of the concept of “quality” and its assurance in higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area. The study also ascertained which factors affected the provision of quality higher education by these institutions, and evaluated the important leadership quality dimensions that can strengthen and enhance the provision of quality higher education in these institutions. A qualitative study employing a case study methodology aimed at answering the following research questions:

- What are the different perceptions of the concept of “quality” in the higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area?
- What factors affect the provision of quality higher education in the higher education institutions in Durban Metropolitan area?
- What are the important leadership quality dimensions that can strengthen and enhance the provision of quality higher education in institutions of higher education in the Durban Metropolitan area?

To answer these questions, data was collected at twenty-three public and private institutions of higher education in the Durban Metropolitan and was comprised of in-depth interviews (Yin, 2008; Merriam, 2009).

No pseudonyms were created for the universities and colleges; however, respondents were referred to as participants 1; 2 etc. to ensure that all participants’ identities were protected. All data collected was transcribed and entered into NVIVO software package that was used for inductive analysis with attention focused on the proposed category themes outlined in chapter 4, and these categories were used as the conceptual framework for this study.

This final chapter will converge on the comprehensive lessons learned as a result of this action research-based study. The remaining sections of this chapter conclude by summarising the study’s findings, addressing the implications for the study’s findings on the issues of provision of quality higher education by the institutions studied, the

higher educational sector managerial implications of quality and its assurance, as well as offer brief recommendations emerging from the findings. Recommendations for further study are also offered to conclude this chapter.

5.2. Conclusions on the findings of the study

5.2.1. Different perceptions of quality

There was considerable variation in different perceptions of quality and its assurance in the institutions of higher education among the participants. Broadly, ten different conceptualisations of quality in the higher education were perceived within this group of senior executives and senior lecturers that were interviewed (Table 4.2). The findings from this case study were that quality is conceptualised as doing things right the first time and being meticulous. Although the degree of perceptions varied, virtually everyone acknowledged the importance of doing things right the first time as a quality virtue (Borys and Rogalka, 2011; Morley, 2005; Green, 2010).

The perspective of the majority was that quality is about accountability, willingness to enhance continuous quality improvement and transformation of the institutions of higher education to achieve the provision of quality outcomes. The conclusion is that these practices are substantial, sustained and relevant to the conceptualisation of quality in the higher education sector (Borys and Rogalka, 2011; Ozturgut, 2011; Green, 2010).

There was a fundamental optimistic picture of achieving quality outcomes by exploitation and employment of the institutions' available resources to the best of their optimal ability for the institutions to achieve quality outcomes. There is no excuse for failure to adhere to quality dictates, the best can still be done to achieve quality outcomes with the resources available, when they are employed efficiently and put into effective use (Warren Piper, 2009; Feldman, 2011; Shulman, 2009; Chea, 2011; Papp, 2014; Williams, 2006).

There was strong consensus among the participants that quality means doing the conceivable best in pursuit of excellence in all the aspects of the university or college life. Virtually all those interviewed stressed that excellence is a social phenomenon based on theoretical and cultural considerations, but the group also recognised that

the concept has practical applications in the context of management (Harvey, 2012; Bader, 2013; Bess et al., 2008; Ahamer, 2011).

Furthermore, the general perception among the participants was that quality is about observation of the general norms and standard practices and use of systems and policies in higher education (Harvey and Newton, 2007; Williams and Kane, 2009; Millard et al., 2013; Hou, 2012).

Despite the considerable variation on the perception on quality, there was a consensus that quality is about meeting the customers and other stakeholders' needs and satisfaction and ensuring fit for purpose. Thriving for quality outcomes all the time will make the institutions fit for their purpose of existence (Gibbs, 2011; Luckett, 2010; Harvey and Green, 2012; Perry, 2007).

Much attention was shown on the perception of quality as being all about the institutions producing graduates that demonstrate knowledge and possession of other skills as well. These are skills beyond the formal academic skills such as communication skills and life skills for example (Pervin and John, 2010; Samuelowicz and Bain, 2009).

The perspective of the majority of the participants was that quality is about creating conducive environment for learning, quality programmes and quality content delivery; is about teaching relevant content and in right context (Ugwoegbu, 2012; Jegede, 2011; Khalid, 2008; Shupe, 2010).

Quality is about giving customers and stakeholders` value for their money and ensuring good returns on investments. Stakeholders expect the optimum quality outcome from the institutions they have vested interests. The major stakeholders are the students and their parents or guardians. They expect nothing less of value for the money they have invested in the education of their children (Akintoye et al., 2013; Cartwright, 2007; Wilkinson, 2011; Hill et al., 2010).

5.2.2. Factors impacting on the provision of quality higher education

The interviewees raised a coterie of factors that impacted on the provision of quality higher education by the studied institutions in the Durban Metropolitan (Table 4.3). Although the degree of perceptions varied, there was consensus among the majority

of the participants that inadequacy of internal quality standards coupled with the limited understanding of the policies and procedures leading to no full committal to the DHET standards by the institutions of higher education posed some constraints and challenges that impacted negatively on the provision of quality higher education (Strydom, 2009; Law, 2010; Kells, 2006; CHE, 2010).

Lack of financial resources and limited availability of other resources were viewed by most of the participants as the factors falling among the most impediments to the institutions` ability to achieve quality outcomes. The participants raised concern that the fees must fall campaign which clearly revealed the students` mind-set and attitudes towards learning would further strain the precarious financial situation of some of the institutions of higher education and as a result curtail the institutions` capabilities to achieve the desired quality outcomes (Jongbloed, 2008; Hill and Matthew, 2010; Paqueo and Lopez-Acevedo, 2013; Bjorkman, 2012; Barrera-Osorio, 2011).

Inequalities in social inclusion and their obstacles such as risks to the livelihood and security of the poor and vulnerable social groups in the society were regarded by the majority of the participants as factors that contributed to the curtailed capabilities of institutions of higher education to provide quality higher education. To some degree quality standards are compromised by institutions of higher education in order to accommodate the poor and vulnerable social groups in the society (Gibbons, 2012; Ebner, 2013; Muhammad and Cory, 2014; Garavan, 2012).

Non-Conducive internal environment, poor quality teaching accessories and poor staffing and incompetence were proffered by the majority of the participants as handicapping the institutions from providing quality higher education. For the institutions to continue achieving quality outcomes which they are aspiring for, much greater effort has to be put to improve the internal environment in order to facilitate effective learning, much greater resources are needed for teaching and development of the teaching staff in order to improve their competencies (Williams, 2006; Hernes, 2011; Cohen et al., 2002; Grubb, 2008).

From a quality assurance point of view raised by the majority of the participants, the limited ability of the institutions to attract high quality faculty and be able to retain them continues to be a challenge for the institutions. At the same time, there is a strong drive to bring the institutions in line with international trends and practice. Issues of attraction and retention of high quality faculty touch on the aspects of quality benchmarks that the institutions have to set for themselves to maintain their international and regional reputation as a centre of excellence on the other hand (Fuller, 2010; Doherty, 2008; Osman, 2011; Coplin, 2013).

The majority of the participants brought up the argument that poor content quality and delivery, poor assessment methods and tools and lack of adequate knowledge by the teaching staff or the faculty, coupled with negative attitudes by some of the lecturers compromises the quality performance of the institutions of higher education. The participants argued that these limitations by the teaching staff when combined with poor class or lecture attendance by students creates a very untenable environment for achieving quality outcomes (Loukkola and Zhang, 2010; Doherty, 2008; Harris, 2013).

The management`s ability to foster and develop a culture of commitment to continuous improvement on academic leadership and direction they intend the institution`s quality trajectory to take was raised by the participants as an important ingredient for achieving quality outcomes. Participants lamented on the challenge of lack of management commitment in some institutions of higher education. Some participants suggested that lack of management commitment is synonymous with ineffective and inadequate communication of the management`s attitude and disposition towards quality. This poses a serious impediment on the effort to achieve quality outcomes (Deming, 2009; Evans and Lindsay, 2010; OECD, 2012).

The participants argued that undue political influence and underhand dealings threatened the quest by the institutions to provide quality higher education. Most of the participants suggested that some people are in positions in these institutions which they do not deserve as they do not qualify to be in the positions due to undue political influence. There were also concerns of unethical and underhand dealings that happen in some of the institutions. Unethical tendencies included inappropriate relationships between the lecturers and the students. The participants reiterated that these factors

serious impacted negatively on the institutions provision of quality higher education (OECD, 2010; AAMC, 2007; Bédard et al., 2010; Nauert, 2015).

The common beliefs and values define institutional culture that the institution subscribes to. Some participants raised a concern that there is no clear communication of the values and beliefs by some institutions. This has caused the challenge of the institutionalisation and diffusion of the institutions` culture of achieving quality outcomes. Some participants lamented the limited use of team work among the institutions, notwithstanding the fact that some acknowledged that they have found team work quite effective in the diffusion of the institutional culture and they have experienced quality as a result of team work effort (Chalmers, 2011; Nauert, 2015; Bédard et al., 2010).

5.2.3. Important leadership quality dimensions that strengthen and enhance the provision of quality higher education

There was variation in the perceptions of the participants on what constitute leadership quality dimensions that strengthen and enhance the provision of quality higher education by the institutions of higher education. The majority of the participants dwelt on the importance of the leader`s ability to foster and develop a culture of leadership influence of desired behaviour among the team members, that is the desired behaviour to achieve quality outcomes. It can be concluded that institutional leadership influence has a positive impact on the steering of the institution towards the provision of quality higher education through positive influence on the team members (Elmore, 2009; Hallinger, 2010).

Among alternative styles of leadership, the participants suggested that there are significant reinforcement of quality achievement through team membership involvement in decision making. Participatory leadership allows the leaders to facilitate and monitor positive change among the team members. The majority of the participants reiterated that they have found consensus decision making working better in their effort to rally their troops towards the institutions achievement of quality outcomes. The more the subordinates or team members participate in the decisions that directly affect their work, the more they appreciate the importance of achieving

quality in everything they are doing for the good of the institution (McKenna & Quinn, 2012; Printy, 2008; Guthrie and Schuermann, 2010).

The majority of the participants intimated that placing focus on the team members' compliance with policies and procedures by the leadership lies at the centre of achieving quality outcomes. Continuous quality improvement can be better accomplished through judicious compliance and adherence to institutional policies and procedures relating to quality and its assurance by the institution's members. The participants emphasised the importance of planning for continuous improvement that focuses on the institutions stakeholders, especially the students. Meeting the stakeholders' needs is a leadership quality virtue (Lucas, 2008; Huisman, 2008; Marginson and Van der Wende, 2007; Salmi and Altbach, 2011).

Team building and relationships reinforcement were regarded by the majority of the participants as critical leadership quality dimensions that strengthen and enhance the provision of quality higher education by the institutions. Team building fosters a sense of responsibility and accountability for the actions of each team member and collectively. The participants underscored that as team work oriented leaders, they viewed themselves as vital cogs that strengthen and enhance quality outcomes in their institutions (Hannah et al., 2008; Hamilton et al., 2008; Hannah and Lester, 2009).

The participants said that it takes visionary leadership to achieve the objective of institutional quality outcomes. Visionary leadership that values employee training and development in quality assurance, the leadership that facilitates change and is able to manage the change. The participants also emphasised on the importance of empowering their team members for personal growth and keep the team members motivated all the time. Above all securing the shared vision buy-in by team members was viewed by most of the participants as an important ingredient for strengthening and enhancing the provision of quality higher education by the institutions as they seek to remain quality results oriented (Hamilton et al. 2008; Seeley, 2008; Nanus, 2008; Lange & Singh, 2010; Hansman, 2011; Helsing et al., 2008; Conley & Glasman, 2008; Goldring et al., 2007).

Participants alluded to good leadership that it is characterised by demonstrating one's beliefs and not just talking about them. Leaders that believe in quality will demonstrate it by their actions and by setting the right examples for those who follow. In other

words, demonstrated belief in quality achievement strengthens and enhances the desire by the team members to achieve quality outcomes. They effectively translate intentions into reality by acting on the concepts and messages they preach about, they teach, they brag about and the things they say to those surrounding them (Conley & Glasman, 2008; Branson, 2007).

The majority of the participants raised the concept of management by exception as placing the leadership in a better position to strengthen and enhance the provision of quality higher education in their institutions. The practice supports the development of subordinates, as the authority given and also the freedom to take independent decisions or take initiatives to proceed and solve institutional challenges, issues and problems. Exceptional management oriented institutional leaders are value driven; they are students focus and would thrive to create conducive learning environment that is student centered (Bennis, 2008; Bandura and Locke, 2009; Arievidtch and Haenen, 2011; Barth, 2010; Andrew and Soder, 2009; Cohen et al., 2011; Anderson et al., 2008).

5.3. Recommendations

5.3.1. Recommendations of managerial implications

This study by its nature according to the UKZN policy, that is as a DBA and not a PhD is expected to contribute actionable recommendations as solution to the organisational problems or institutional problems. One of the problems or challenges that emerged from the findings of the study was non-convergence on the understanding of quality in the higher education sector as exhibited by the selected institutions of higher education for the purposes of conducting the study, in the Durban Metropolitan. Changes in the higher education market have forced universities to re-visit their quality assurance systems. There are several reasons why quality assurance has occupied centre stage as institutions respond to these environmental challenges at national, regional as well as at global level.

5.3.1.1 Different perceptions of the concept of “quality”.

The study examined the different perceptions of quality in the higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan. Overall, a powerful message made up of

several claims by the participants has emerged from this study regarding different conceptualisation of quality in the institutions. First, the study reveals the complex nature of the internal-external dichotomy of quality understandings and conceptualisation and quality assurance trajectories commonly discussed in the literature. Internal quality understandings and quality assurance trajectories are associated generally with the institutional improvement, and external quality assurance trajectories are associated with the compliance culture and accountability discourses.

That is the compliance with the CHE guidelines on quality in higher education for example. This study showed that quality and its assurance trajectories are mooted and driven by institutional leadership and are generally regarded as managerial and lack ownership by the academic staff. The actionable recommendation by the study is that the leadership of the institutions of higher education in the Durban Metropolitan area devise strategies to instil the culture of consciousness of quality all the time among all the institutional members. Quality and its assurance should not be imposed as an externally sanctionable dictate by the CHE and other regulatory body but should be inculcated as an inner drive for achieving excellence by every member of the institution. Institutional members should not comply with quality dictates in fear of reprimand or sanction. State facilitation and not state interference is a key factor affecting the ability of institutions to develop and maintain robust quality assurance systems.

Lack of policy ownership by academic staff has serious implications regarding policy implementation. Thus, internal quality and its assurance trajectories remain external to the academic staff unless such staff is fully involved in the development of the quality assurance systems. A key message running through this thesis is that in any given context, quality and its assurance in higher education institutions is under girded by power relationships between and amongst the various stakeholders of an institution. As each stakeholder perceives quality in their manner and context. The nature of such power relations has a direct bearing on the effectiveness of the quality assurance systems put in place by the institutions. There is need for institutional members` buy-in, by involving them in the development of the institutions` quality assurance systems.

Second, understanding quality and its assurance systems of a university or college involves accounting for the contextual complexities that shape such systems. Simply engaging with institutional documents like quality assurance policies and institutional structures does not provide one with sufficient information on the dynamics of the quality arrangements of an institution; neither does it shed enough light on how best to improve the system.

The perceptions of the various actors within an institution of the quality assurance systems therein, the subtle relationships that exist between the institution and its external stakeholders like the national quality assurance agencies are significant factors that shape quality assurance systems of institutions that all the institution`s members should adhere to. Understanding such factors is most revealing regarding existing constraints and opportunities for continuous quality improvement. The study, therefore, recommends effective interaction and dialoguing between the institutions and their stakeholders in their context, as this is highly informative of the deep-seated nuances of the quality and its assurance embodiments in the institutions. Adopting quality assurance policies that are in line with regional trends and affiliating to regional and international quality assurance agencies should augment rather than replace efforts at addressing contextual imperatives.

Quality assurance systems of an institution cannot be fully understood outside context, and efforts at improving such systems should take full cognisance of the context, should be understood as such by all the institution`s members. While this may sound an obvious observation, it is of significant importance in a domain that is dominated by technicism in studies concerning quality and its assurance where contextual variations tend to be overlooked (for example, the specific ways governments articulate with institutions, national and institutional political environments, the role of power and power relations, and the nature and role of stakeholders). There is need for the institutional dealership to be aware of these dynamics to foster common understanding of quality by all the institutional members and institution`s stakeholders.

5.3.1.2 Factors affecting the provision of quality higher education in the higher education institutions in Durban Metropolitan

An important point for the Durban Metropolitan institutions' leadership to note is that investing in the development of sound quality assurance policies is necessary but not sufficient to enhance institutional quality. Good quality and assurance policies need to be supported by a sound resource base if they are to yield the desired effects. Resourcing of the institutions' quality driving structures and functions within the institutions is critical for the institutions' efforts to achieve quality outcomes. The existence of sound and relevant quality assurance policies, the deployment of reasonable levels of funding and other resources towards supporting policy implementation, and the systematic monitoring of an institution's progress towards narrowing the gap between policy and practice are key factors explaining why quality differs from institution to institution. The institutions are recommended and advised to work within their contexts. Institutional leadership needs to understand and appreciate that compliance with national policies by quality assurance agencies such as the Council on Higher Education (CHE), and Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) are mandatory. As a result, the internal devised quality assurance systems should not be in variance with the national policies but should be seen as compliance. Institutions, therefore, need to have quality assurance policies that define their quality goals and how they intend to achieve those goals. In this sense, quality assurance policies in these institutions should not be developed as mere managerial tools.

There are important insights that emerge from this study which have particular significance to quality and its assurance in Durban Metropolitan institutions of higher education. The first is that quality assurance should not ignore the fact that South Africa went through particular colonial experiences that shaped the educational values and practices during the apartheid era. The development of effective and relevant quality assurance systems by these Durban Metropolitan institutions of higher education cannot negate the historical legacies of the country. While in some instances those legacies may be an asset, in others, they constrain the ability of the institutions to transform their quality assurance arrangements in a way that enhances self-improvement. This is typical of developing institutions. For instance, while most of the South African institutions of higher education have to address issues of redress,

social transformation and accountability, they struggle to maintain high levels of scholarship that can give them international competitiveness. The institutions of higher education in the Durban Metropolitan area are recommended to work towards balancing these dynamics if they are to achieve provision of quality higher education.

There is a tension that exists between the redress project which entails enrolling greater numbers of students from previously disadvantaged social groups of the society and the aspired high standards of scholarship that are upheld by the quality assurance policies of the institutions, that the leadership is recommended to be seized with. In the majority, colonialism remains a factor in the institutions` efforts to transform and facilitate the evolution of sound quality assurance systems in the fast-expanding higher education system of the country. It has become evident through this study that understanding quality and its assurance practices in these institutions entails taking into full account the specific history and cultures of the apartheid era. This point is particularly fundamental when it comes to the role international experts should play in the development of quality assurance policies of these institutions. Critical to these legacies is the specific way individual institutions articulate with the state and the government, as well as with the civil society. As resources become scarcer and enrolments grow, greater efficiency is expected on the part of the institutions. This calls for more careful planning and steering of such institutions if they are to meet broader social and economic development goals. The institutions are recommended to staff themselves with the right people, high quality staff and device deliberate policies and strategies to retain the quality staff, and encourage team work among the institutional workers. Team work between teaching staff and the support staff. These institutions are recommended to play the key role in fostering quality content teaching by making sure that their academics are trained in pedagogy that assists they develop quality assessment tools, and they continuously upgrade their educational competences over their professional life with the institutions.

5.3.1.3 Important leadership quality dimensions that strengthen and enhance the provision of quality higher education in institutions of higher education in the Durban Metropolitan.

Leaders of the institutions of higher education in the Durban Metropolitan are recommended to task themselves with effective guiding of their institutional members

towards achievement of the institutional goals of achieving higher quality education while considering their team members' skills necessary to produce the desired quality outcomes. If there are skills gaps identified, they should be bridged through training and development. The ability of the leaders to influence and impart the leadership skills on institutional team members to meet organisational demands for quality outcomes is a complex element of the overall leadership development picture, however, important, critical and necessary to strengthening and enhancing provision of quality higher education.

When it comes to leadership, assumptions are being made that institutional leaders automatically possess the capacity for not just leadership, but the kind of transformative leadership that results in the institutions' achievement of outcomes desired from their reform efforts. The institutional leaders are recommended to seize themselves with necessary transformational leadership focus as their institutions require transformation, change of paradigm thinking and attitudes towards quality and its assurance.

From a sociocultural approach, learning occurs within the interactions and intersections among people, tools, and contexts within a learning situation and environment. The institutional leadership is recommended to ensure conducive environment for learning for the students and conducive working environment for the faculty and other institutional staff members. To achieve this phenomenon the leadership is recommended to build and maintain institutional relationships through effective team work. Organisational relationships are important and the institutional leaders must be aware that building and maintaining organisational relationships are necessary for working to achieve institutional change and focus towards the provision of a holistic quality higher education. The influential leadership ability is therefore critical for the institutional leaders to adopt.

In the context of leadership and the case of concern raised by the participants that there is a general lack of clear communication and capacity building between leadership of some of the institutions studied and their faculty, results in lecturers' feelings of confusion, displeasure, and distrust; this, in turn, results in less-than-desirable cultivation of effective leader development and weak implementation of the institutional quality assurance systems. The recommendation is that the leadership of

the institutions should develop mechanisms for effective compliance and communication of the institutions` policies and procedures for quality assurance, involve the faculty members in the development of these internal policies and procedures in order to enhance buy-in and avoid the unnecessary confusion and the negative attitudes of “it’s their things” among the faculty. Adhering to quality and working towards achieving quality outcomes should be everyone’s “thing”, not a management ‘thing’.

The leadership of the institutions of higher education in the Durban Metropolitan need to understand and appreciate that leadership, as a result, resides within the collective group with the leaders guiding and supporting institutional members as they enact their roles within the distributed leadership structure of the institution. The recommendation to the institutional leadership is that leadership practices associated with distributed leadership would be the best in their quest to strengthen and enhance provision of quality higher education in their institutions. These practices entail the leaders delegating or disseminating leadership roles among their administration and faculty, building and maintaining trust with their members, and becoming personally involved in various activities such as professional development of the team members, adequately resourcing the team members, and empowering them.

Human to human interaction, especially within the institutions, is an act that takes place daily and, therefore, calls for special attention from the leadership to ensure that relationships are built and maintained within the organisation to work towards achieving desired quality outcomes and performance goals. The teaching faculty should be encouraged to improve on their teaching materials and content delivery to remain contextually relevant to the dynamic higher educational environment.

Distributed leadership practices also concern itself with meeting the institutional stakeholders’ needs. The recommendation given is that adopting this style of leadership better position the institutions to meet the needs of their stakeholders, especially the students and their sponsors, as they focus on building student-centred institutions that thrive to create good learning environment for the students. Further or increased collaboration with industry is suggested as a way of exposing the students to practical business challenges and for them to participate in finding the solutions to the business and industrial problems. There is a need to develop and strengthen the

mechanisms to tap into stakeholders` feedback and act on the feedback given by the stakeholders. There is need for the leaders to be value driven, manage by exception, and set exemplary behaviour. By doing so, the leadership of these institutions would achieve giving their customers and other stakeholders value for their money and good returns on investment in the institutions.

5.4. Recommendations for further future studies

This thesis served as a pilot study that evaluated the different perceptions of the concept of “quality” in the higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area, ascertained the factors that affect the provision of quality higher education by the institutions of higher education, and evaluated the important leadership quality dimensions that strengthen and enhance the provision of quality education in higher education institutions. The thesis also examined the existing literature grounded in quality and its assurance in higher education institutions.

While the study’s findings are constrained by the conditions surrounding time spent in the field collecting the qualitative data and analysing it within the limited time frame, the findings provide a door of opportunity to conduct more longitudinal examinations using larger data sets in order to study and confirm the perceptions of the participants on quality and its assurance in the higher education institutions. Furthermore, much of the focus of this study was placed upon the individual executive managers and senior lecturers operating within the context of the selected institutions of higher education.

Future studies would further benefit from exploring the perceptions of the other stakeholders, such as the students, the industry and the community at large. Additional studies in this area of inquiry will help to confirm the ideas presented here to substantiate conclusive or more generalisable findings.

Considering that literature involving the triadic interactions between the institutional leadership, teaching faculty, and the students is limited, the research community can now be charged with the task of conducting further inquiries in this area and test the set of ideas examined in this pilot study for the possibility of a grounded theory model. As the culture and climate of higher education increases its focus on multiple levels of

accountability and transformational change towards achieving quality outcomes, responsibility rests within the research community to shine a guiding light for practitioners on the ways to further enhance and strengthen the achievement of quality higher education by the institutions is cultivated and supported.

Doing so will enable the leadership of the institutions of higher education, and the institutions' communities in which they lead and serve, to enact the level of change we so desperately need and want them to enact for the sake of improving the quality of higher learning for all. The findings of this study strongly suggest that future studies involving or covering a wider population of the higher education institutions outside the Durban Metropolitan area as well could provide further evidence of the challenges of quality and its assurance and success stories for benchmarking quality higher education practices in the sector.

Specific case studies, for example, could be conducted on the categories of the universities regarding their national and international rankings on how they deal with the aspect of quality and its assurance, and possibly develop frameworks for quality benchmarking purposes within the higher education sector in the country.

Further qualitative studies could be conducted to develop grounded theories on the aspects of quality within the higher education sector to validate some good quality assurance practices that might be subconsciously followed by some of the high-ranking higher education institutions in the country. Further future quantitative studies could also be conducted as well to test some hypothesised propositions on aspects of quality and its assurance within the higher education sector in the country.

5.5. Contribution of the study

The study contributes action-based solutions to the problem relating to provision of quality education by the Durban Metropolitan institutions of higher education. The recommended actions are of managerial implications for the field, which includes the need for a balance between the internal-external dichotomy of quality and its assurance understandings and conceptualisation by the institutions of higher

education in the Durban Metropolitan. There is need for a convergence in conceptualisation of quality and its assurances in line with the guidelines provided by the Council on Higher Education and other relevant statutory pronouncements in the higher education sector. The study also reiterates the need for leadership driven organisational quality and assurance policies that clearly cascade down to every team member in the institutions of higher education in the Durban Metropolitan. There is need for the leadership of the institutions to develop strategies to overcome the identified impediments to achieving quality outcomes and cultivation of a culture of compliances among the institutional team members.

5.6. Limitations of the study

This study set out to generate knowledge on how the selected higher education institutions both private and public in the Durban Metropolitan area conceptualised and perceived the concept of quality and its assurance. The study also ascertained the factors that affected the provision of quality higher education among the institutions of higher education in the Durban Metropolitan area. Finally, the study evaluated the important leadership quality dimensions that strengthen and enhance the provision of quality higher education in these institutions. The study was limited to the following higher education institutions: UKZN, DUT UNIZULU, Owen Sithole Agricultural College and MUT as a sample representing the public higher education institutions and Berea Technical College, Varsity College, Mancosa, Damelin and Regent Training and Business Colleges as a sample representing the private higher education institutions. There are two major limitations regarding the generalisation of the results presented here. First, the study was limited to a few selected higher education institutions located in the Durban Metropolitan, and second, the study did not delimitate the sample regarding the academic rankings of these higher education institutions. About the first limitation, it is unlikely that this geographic limitation will to a large extent limit the generalisation of these results to other higher education institutions located in other parts of South Africa. Within South Africa, employees are highly mobile and move from resort to city and back, easily (Tom, 2002).

These characteristics alone means that the sample of managers and senior lecturer is representative of a group beyond the geographical limits implied by the location of the higher education institutions in the sample. About the second limitation, it is most likely that the results reported here would not better describe the would be expected results if the study was conducted on samples based on the academic rankings of the higher education institutions. The academic rankings of the higher education institutions by its very nature would lead to both different expectations on quality and its assurance and the degree of their academic performance and size. Having said this, it awaits further studies to determine how the findings on the issues of quality may differ according to the academic rankings sampling.

5.7 Conclusion of the chapter

This chapter presented the conclusion and recommendations drawn from the qualitative analysis of the data that was collected through in-depth interviews of the executive management and senior lecturers of the selected higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area. In line with the objectives and the research questions of the study, the overall conclusion and recommendations were that the executive management of the higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area need to standardise the institutional understanding of quality and what it means to avoid the different misconceptions and perceptions on quality and its meaning. The institutions need to strictly adhere to the departmental and Council on Higher Education and Higher Education Quality Council guidelines on the provision of quality higher education.

There were also suggestions on the continuous assessment of quality dictates and their relevance to the changing environment, and need for benchmarking, nationally, regionally and international for good quality standards. Recommendations were made for the academic staff to consistently review and improvement on their methods of teaching and delivery in the classroom to ensure more interactive and practical participation of the students during lectures. Collaboration with industry was also suggested as a way of exposing the students to practical business challenges and for them to participate in finding the solutions to the problems. The study also recommended that the institutions continue to tap into the experiences and expertise

of the retired lecturers and professors. The recommendations for further future studies were offered, and the limitations of the study concluded the chapter.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Research proposal approval letter



TO: Ms. P Mathonsi (Student Number: 205523288)

FROM: GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS & LEADERSHIP

DATE: 27 November 2013

SUBJECT: Approval of Doctoral Research Proposal

Title: Leading Quality in Select Higher Education Institutions in South Africa Supervisor: Dr LL Lalendle

This memo is to confirm that the Research Proposal Review Committee has accepted your proposal presented on 19

November 2013. However, you should take note of inter-alia, the following suggestions/comments:

- Student to work with supervisor to revise title. Title requires refinement.
- Rationale is not presented and the justification of the problem seems not to be clear.
- Student is encouraged to work with Statistician Mr Hoque so that the:
 - o Purpose of study
 - o Specific objectives
 - o Theoretical Framework
 - o Motivation and reason for a constructive study are in the proper shape
- Turin Report: The similarity index of 21% is a bit too high. Student is encouraged to work with Supervisor and make the necessary measures so that this is lowered.

Please note that the above comments/suggestions are intended to develop and strengthen your study, thus you would need to consider it seriously. Your supervisor will provide further guidance.

Good luck with your studies, and we look forward to your successful completion.

Yours sincerely

Dr E Munapo

Academic Leader/Research & Higher Degrees Graduate School of Business & Leadership

University of KwaZulu-Natal - Westville Campus

Graduate School of Business
& Leadership College of
Law and Management
Studies

Postal Address: GSB Building, Room 113, Westville, 3630, South Africa
Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8943 E-mail: munapoe@ukzn.ac.za

Appendix B: Turnitin report

- [preferences](#)
[Document Viewer](#)

Turnitin Originality Report

- Processed on: 6 Nov-2018 1:32 PM CAT
- ID: 982890969
- Word Count: 80899
- Submitted: 2

6 Nov 2018 Thesis By Rosemary Zakwe

Similarity Index

8%

Similarity by Source

Internet Sources:

4%

Publications:

1%

Student Papers:

5%

[include quoted](#) [include bibliography](#) [excluding matches < 24 words](#) [download/print](#)

mode:

1

1% match (Internet from 21-May-2015)

<http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za>

2

< 1% match (Internet from 29-May-2018)

<http://www.oecd.org>

3

< 1% match (Internet from 19-Jun-2011)

<http://www.chet.org.za>

4

< 1% match (Internet from 12-Oct-2013)

<http://maritime-transport.net>

5

< 1% match (student papers from 13-Dec-2016)

[Submitted to Higher Education Commission Pakistan](#)

6

< 1% match (Internet from 27-Jun-2018)

<https://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/full/10.1108/QAE-11-2012-0046>

7

< 1% match (student papers from 01-Nov-2017)

[Submitted to University of Adelaide](#)

8

< 1% match (student papers from 06-Dec-2017)

[Submitted to British University in Egypt](#)

9

< 1% match (Internet from 21-Dec-2016)

<http://dissertationedd.usc.edu>

10

< 1% match (Internet from 18-Mar-2014)

<http://www.oecd.org>

Appendix C: Full research approval letter



Student No: 205523288

6 June 2013

Mrs RP Mathonsi

19 Bristol Road

Berea West

Westville

3629

Dear, Mrs Mathonsi

Application: DBA: Doctor of Business Administration

I have pleasure in confirming that your application for acceptance as DBA candidate in the College of Law & Management Studies at this University has been executively approved for the second semester of 2013.

Your admission as a candidate is subject to your compliance with the University's rules and regulations.

Should you have any queries regarding your registration or the administration relating to your Postgraduate Degree please do not hesitate to contact this office.

We wish you well in your studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Yours sincerely

Zarina Bullyraj

HIGHER DEGREES & RESEARCH

College of Law & Management Studies

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000 South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 1615 **Facsimile:** +27 (0) 31 260 2663 **Email:**
bullyraj@ukzn.ac.za

Appendix D: Invitation letter



Letter of Invitation

Dear Registrar:

I am a Doctoral student at University of KwaZulu Natal (Graduate School of Business & Leadership) in South Africa. It is my belief that this study titled: *Enhancing the provision of quality higher education by institutions in Durban Metropolitan area*, presents an excellent opportunity for leaders at your institution to reflect on their leadership in a transforming higher education context in South Africa.

The researcher would like to interview senior leaders at the ranks of Dean / Head of School, Quality Assurance Director, Lecturer of faculty, university, college or school, Academic leaders and Operations Manager/ Managers. I am targeting to have the first phase of interviews in June/ July 2016 and follow up interview early August 2016; all meeting times will be scheduled at times that are mutually agreeable to the leaders and the researcher. There will be two interviews; both sessions will each last approximately 60 minutes to 120 minutes. The interviews will be confidential and the identity of the participants will be concealed throughout the research.

The information provided through this process will be used as part of a completion of a Doctoral study in UKZN (GSB&L). Please find an attached consent for participation in this study that can be faxed back or emailed to me. I am required to request a signed consent form by my university in order to conduct this study. If you have any question regarding this project, please feel free to contact these persons listed below:

Dr. Abdul Kader

Co supervisor

I would appreciate if you could fax back the consent forms by June 12, 2016. Upon my arrival in June, I will visit your office to schedule appointments with senior leaders at your institution.

Yours truly

Ms RMP Mathonsi

Doctoral Student at the University of KwaZulu Natal (GSB&L)

KZN Province

South Africa

Appendix E: Interview protocol



This protocol for interviews will be used for an interview that is estimated to last approximately an hour to two hours.

Individual interviews: A protocol will be administered to leaders at higher education institutions in one session and follow up session(s) will be scheduled as necessary. The interview(s) will probe the leader's perspective on the meaning, construction and practice of leadership. Questions will focus on the following:

- What are the different perceptions of the concept of “quality” in higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area?
- What factors affect the provision of quality education in higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area?
- What are the important leadership quality dimensions that can strengthen and enhance the provision of quality higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area?

Here is the basic protocol for the interviews

Please note due to the open-ended questions interview format the precise wording may vary with each interview.

- 1) As detailed as possible, tell me your understanding of the concept “quality” in higher education.
- 2) In your own words, how would you define “quality” and contextualise it to your institution?
- 3) Are there any social, historical and cultural issues that have influenced your conceptualisation of “quality” in higher education?

- 4) The concept of “quality” originates from business, particularly the manufacturing sector. Why do you think “quality” is relevant to the education sector as well, especially higher education?
- 5) Why is it important for your institution to provide quality higher education?
- 6) Tell me a story that exhibits some of your values about providing quality higher education in your institution?
- 7) How does your philosophy of quality higher education provision relates to what you have just told me?
- 8) Has your thinking about quality higher education provision evolved over the years?
- 9) If so, what are the changes that have occurred in your thinking about quality higher education provision?
- 10) What do these changes mean in the context of your work?
- 11) Are there any events or people that have contributed to the way you think about quality higher education provision?
- 12) What factors affect the provision of higher education in your institution?
- 13) What challenges do you meet as an institution in your effort to ensure the provision of quality higher education?
- 14) Elaborate on your institutional quality assurance mechanisms or systems that you have put in place.
- 15) Do you find the mechanisms or systems working to assure quality higher education provision by your institution? If not, what are you doing to overcome the challenge?
- 16) What are the important quality leadership dimensions that can strengthen and enhance the provision of quality higher education?
- 17) What philosophy of leadership do you think best suite your desired quality assurance environment in your institution?

18) As a leader, how do you ensure the stakeholders buy-in into your vision of quality higher education provision by your institution?

Thank you for your feedback.

Appendix F: Informed consent form



Title of the research project: *Enhancing the provision of quality higher education by institutions in Durban Metropolitan area.*

Dear Sir/ Madam,

As you are currently placed in a position of leadership at a South African Higher Education Institution, I invite you share some of your personal experiences about the quality of provisions. The research project examines the meaning, construction and practice of the quality of provisions in South African Universities. There are three main questions that are central to this investigation

- What are the different perceptions of the concept of “quality” in higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area?
- What factors affect the provision of quality education in higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area?
- What are the important leadership quality dimensions that can strengthen and enhance the provision of quality higher education institutions in the Durban Metropolitan area?

If you choose to volunteer to participate in this project, you will participate in two taped interviews (approximately 60—90 minutes each) with the questions on what are the different understandings of quality in private and public higher education institutions in KZN, how do different understandings of quality affect policy and practice in private and public higher education institutions in KZN and what are important drivers of the quality of provisions in private and public higher education institutions of KZN? In total, the amount of your time required over the course of the study will be approximately three hours (180 minutes) to four hours (240 Minutes).

All meeting times will be scheduled at time mutually agreeable to the investigator and the participating leader. Your participation is strictly voluntary, you may refuse to answer questions or discuss topics at your discretion. You may withdraw your participation in the project without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Confidentiality for participants will be maintained. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. Your personal identity will not be made explicit in any written report or commentary that is submitted for publication. You are entitled to an executive summary of the project and the transcripts of the interviews upon request when the project is finalized.

This researcher is available for you to contact her with any questions or concerns that may be raised by participation in this study:

Ms RMP Zakwe

PHD Student

University of KwaZulu Natal (GSB&L)

26 Norton Avenue, Gillitts, Durban 3610

phumedba@gmail.com / phumem@yahoo.com

Indicate your voluntary agreement to participate in this project by completing and returning a copy of a signed and dated form.

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date:

To ensure accurate data, the researcher requests to audio tape the interviews. After the transcription of audiotapes has taken place, the researcher will destroy the audiotapes

Please indicate your voluntary agreement that the interview be audiotaped for the purpose of ensuring accurate data.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date:

Please note that this has to be sent back at phumedba@gmail.com. The researcher will reimburse any cost you might incur in faxing the consent form.

Appendix G: Confirmation of technical and language editing