Exploring Experiences of the Re-accreditation Process: A Case Study

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extend has been accepted for the qualification of another degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements.

Janise Heow:_____

Date: _____

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Abstract

Over the last decade 'Quality' and 'Quality assurance' in education have become global issues. To ensure students are provided with high quality education, educational institutions around the world have been focusing on the design and implementation of quality assurance systems. The development of national systems of quality assurance in many countries, including New Zealand, has sometimes created confusion and controversy. The conflicting perspectives of different groups, mainly governments, academic staff and administrators, and the significant voices of students, employers, and the general public, contributed to this confusion and controversy. Although each is committed to quality, their perspectives of quality differ.

This study set out to explore the perceptions of the senior academic staff and administrators on the quality assurance system and the related institutional processes within the New Zealand College of Chiropractic. The study examined the participants' understanding of the term quality and the significance of quality assurance measurements and outcomes. It explored how quality might be improved, and to what extent staff members' involvement was required to enhance continuous quality improvement.

Face-to-face interviews were used in this study to investigate the perceptions of the participants within the institution of institutional processes. Participants' reflections on past experiences of recent self-assessments and of external inspection team visits were sought and their individual perceptions on how institutional processes can be enhanced

were explored. Common themes across the participants were drawn from the data collected from the interviews.

The intent of this study was to explore how senior members' experiences and perspectives of the re-accreditation processes might contribute to enhancing how institutional processes be maintained or improved through quality assurance processes? The findings are tentative as this was an exploratory study.

Chapter One

Introduction

'Quality was about passion and pride'
(Tom Peters and Nancy Austin, A Passion for Excellence. Cited in Sallis (2002))

1.0   Introduction

Chapter one includes the background to the researcher's interest in the research; the aim, purpose, and significance of the study. The chapter concludes with an outline of the overall structure of the dissertation.

1.1   Background:

My past experience working with Texas Instruments, an American multinational semiconductor corporation in Malaysia exposed me to the quality movement for three decades dating from the 1970s to the start of the millennium. My quality journey took me through various stages in the evolution of the quality movement, such as Quality Control (QC), Total Quality Control (TQC), Total Quality Management (TQM) and Total Production Maintenance (TPM). I was introduced to the works of famous quality 'gurus' including Edward Deming, Joseph Juran, Walter Shewart, Philip Crosby, Kaoru Ishikawa and Genichi Taguchi. The emphasis on quality and quality assurance in the manufacturing environment was extensive and the quality assurance systems were stringent. Manufacturing companies like Texas Instruments were concerned that inferior products were not saleable, useable or reworkable but had to be destroyed.

My passion for quality assurance did not stop after my immigration to New Zealand. When I started working in the educational environment, my fascination regarding quality in education grew. Coming from the manufacturing world of production, I had noticed that there were differences between industry and education. The quality assurances processes, although similar, were applied differently. This prompted me to explore the institutional processes of quality assurance in education and my focus began with the question: How can institutional processes be maintained or improved through quality assurance processes?

1.2 Aim and Purpose

The aim of this qualitative research was to explore the experiences and insights of staff members from the New Zealand College of Chiropractic (NZCC) on the Council on Chiropractic Education (CCEA) regarding quality assurance and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) re-accreditation process. My purpose was to identify and explain how senior members' experiences and perspectives of the re-accreditation processes might enhance teaching and learning through quality improvement and changing the work culture of the institution.

1.3   Significance

Changing market conditions over the last few decades had influenced the relationship of higher educational institutions and the wider social environment. Around the world higher educational institutions find themselves competing for students, funding, staff and above all, reputation (Brennan & Shah 2000). Globalisation and advanced technologies have created a competitive environment for higher educational institutions where students can have instant informed choices of the type of education they want. As consumers, students can shop around the world for the education that they want at the higher educational institutions they perceive would provide them with the most value for money. What did the students perceive as value for money? Was it the educational environment, the most reputable institution for the programme delivered, the most prestigious institution, was what matters most the teaching and learning experiences that they can take with them through life, or the values and philosophies of the degree that was delivered?   This is indeed a challenge for smaller private higher educational institutions in New Zealand. Unless the institution was able to find a niche or point difference from other institutions, competing for students both domestically and internationally would be problematic.   Therefore, what did a small private tertiary institution such as the New Zealand College of Chiropractic need to do to have this competitive edge?

New Zealand College of Chiropractic (NZCC) is a small private tertiary institution accredited to deliver the Chiropractic professional degree. Currently, it is one of four higher educational chiropractic institutions in the Asia-Pacific region providing such a degree. The College was the only one privately owned, by a not-for-profit trust, the other three, all in Australia, are university-based and were owned by the Crown. The 'elite' status of universities is not helpful to NZCC in a competitive market. Anecdotally, most students would prefer to receive a university education although that does not imply that private tertiary institutions are providing inferior education. The perception regarding the reputation of institutions is one of the important aspects in a competitive market. Thus, for potential students to be attracted to NZCC, I thought that the College needs to build a reputation that surpasses the 'elite' status of the competing universities or develop a niche market. A superior institutional process with emphasis on strong quality assurance mechanisms is one of the College's missions to build this reputation.

The questions and thoughts that engaged my mind prompted me to investigate further. Being a senior administrator at the College and having the responsibility for the management of quality management systems created a good opportunity for me to engage in research on quality within the College. While I had my own experiences and perceptions on how to improve the quality systems of the College, I wanted to know how my fellow colleagues felt about them. Following on from the two most recent experiences of the re-accreditation process by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the Council on Chiropractic Education Australasia Limited, I decided to seek my

colleagues' personal perceptions and their reflections on their experiences as these might enhance improvement to our institutional processes, thus taking the College's quality processes to a higher level of excellence. This decision shaped the research project.

I hoped that the insights drawn from this study would build understandings that underpin 'Quality' in education that would enhance teaching and learning through quality improvement, and might evolve in a change with quality assurance work culture of the institution.

1.4   Overview of the Dissertation Structure

This dissertation consists of several sections. The introductory, Chapter One has placed the study in context. It reviewed how my past and present working experience contributed to shaping the present study.

Chapter Two (Literature Review) is a review of the research literature pertaining to the basic concepts underpinning my study: the evolution of quality, concepts of quality, quality assurance in previous studies and influential factors focusing on quality assurance in education. This literature supports my justification for the study.

Chapter Three (Research Design and Implementation) presents an overview of qualitative research. The research process and method employed in the study were detailed. I described the use of case study methodology and the techniques used for the analysis.

Chapter Four (Findings), presents my findings from the participants in this study. Common themes across participants emerged from the data collected from the face-to-face interviews. Emerging concepts that support quality improvement has been summarized into categories that were discussed in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five (Discussion), the findings outlined in Chapter Four are discussed more fully in the fifth chapter. The discussion covers the accreditation process, and influencing factors that influenced institutional quality management systems for continuous improvement.

Chapter Six (Conclusion) presents the conclusion of this study base upon the findings of the study. I start the chapter by summarizing the findings of the present study, and then the strengths and limitations of this research will be discussed. Implications of quality assurance processes and recommendations to the management of the institution will be provided. Finally, the direction of possible future research will be presented in the final section of the dissertation.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.0   Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature on quality, quality assurance and accreditation processes that relate to this study. Most studies undertaken by authors that were related to the topic of my study were completed within the university environment in countries such as North America, Europe, South Africa and Europe. There was only limited literature available in New Zealand, especially in this field of research within the Private Tertiary Education Provider environment.

In reviewing the literature, and to better understand the aspects of quality in education, I drew on literature on the evolution of quality from craftsmen to industry and finally to education to provide background knowledge on how the concept of quality shaped my present research. This will be followed by an overview of the literature on quality in education. Included within this review were concepts of quality assurance in education, its purpose and importance, quality assurance mechanisms; and the accreditation processes in which this research was positioned.

2.1   The Evolution of Quality

Sallis (2002) suggested that quality standards had existed before the emergence of industrialisation. He mentioned that some form or concept of quality had been around for centuries and this can be traced back prior to industrialisation when craftsmen took ownership of the quality of goods that they produced. According to Sallis (2002), it was

the craftsmen who maintained and set their own standards. As their livelihood depended on the quality of their product, they had to either maintain or better the standards of their products in order to ensure that their customers return to patronise them. On the other hand if their product was inferior, they would lose their customers who would look elsewhere for a better product. It therefore can be recognised that a craftsman's ownership of the standard of his/her product was a concept of quality which in turn bears the responsibility of accountability for his/her craftsmanship.

Sallis (2002) in his investigation on the quality movement revealed that the checking of an individual's product quality was taken away from the workers with the advent of industrialization. With the emergence of the division of labour at the turn of the twentieth century and the concept of mass production, it led to the introduction of quality control and inspection. Goods that were mass produced were taken through to a central check-point for quality inspection where goods were randomly checked on whether the standards were met. When any product was found to be of low quality or was below standard, the product were either reworked or thrown away. Sallis (2002) further suggested that companies soon found this process to be uneconomical and wasteful and the concept of quality assurance emerged after the Second World War. This led to the idea of having a built-in quality process during production of goods thus returning to the worker the responsibility for checking the quality of the product by themselves instead of being quality checked by someone else (Sallis, 2002).

Based on the process above, it can be argued that workers who had lost their responsibility may not be even aware that products that had been produced were not up to the quality level because they were not responsible for it in the process. If a worker is not held responsible for the process, then how can the worker be held accountable for the inferior product. Logically speaking, I would further argue that the worker is not even aware that there a problem existed with the product and thus not aware of the cost involved in this process.

Kenny (2006) highlighted the above development as a shift from the individual 'skilled artisan-craftsperson' to industrialisation and mass production, where the creativity of the individual skilled worker had been 're-engineered' and departmentalised into simplistic process tasks (de-skilling) that was measured and controlled by the owners of the 'means of production' (p 2). This development diminished the workers' right of ownership and the loss of accountability of the product.

2.2   Emergence of Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement

Literature (Sallis, 2002; Woodhouse, 2004) revealed that although the ideas of quality assurance and quality were originally developed in the United States during the 1930s and 1940s, it was not until after the Second World War that any attention was paid to these ideas. According to Sallis (2002), during the 1950s and 1960s the manufacturing industries in both the United States and Western Europe were maximising output and profit as manufactured goods were in high demand by consumers everywhere. These industries were so consumed by outputs and profits that the quality of goods was not on their agenda and in what Sallis (2002) regards as "the sellers' market that existed for goods, quality had a low priority" (p 8). The Japanese at the same time, realising that

their companies were producing inferior goods, sought quality experts from the United States to rebuild their economy (Sallis, 2002). In the late 1970s, the economic storm in the form of Japanese competition hit the United States. When Britain and the United States began to realise that they had lost a huge amount of the world market share to the Japanese industries, it was a wake up call and they began to question the Japanese success. They questioned whether it was Japan's national culture or the quality management techniques that had led to this success. Sallis (2002) commented that the turning point in the United States came about in 1980, when the nationwide NBC documentary programme called 'If Japan Can, Why Can't We' was broadcast which highlighted the Japanese dominance in many industries (Petersen, 1999). It was in the later part of this programme that Edward Deming's major contribution to the Japanese economic success was featured.

2.3   Contributors to Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement

According to Sallis (2002) and Petersen (1999), W. Edward Deming's contribution to the Japanese economic success can probably be regarded as the most influential in the quality movement. They mentioned that Deming worked with Joseph Juran, the other main United States of America contributor to the Japanese quality revolution, and Deming and Juran discovered the important factors that contributed to the increase in productivity. According to Deming and Juran (Sallis, 2002), it was not the changes in physical working environment but the style of leadership and teamwork that had led to this success. Sallis (2002) went on to comment that Deming's development of quality movement was influenced by Walter Shewhart in United States of America who developed the Statistical Quality Control technique that eliminates waste and delay. Deming's (PDSA) Plan, Do, Study, Act cycle that offered the first programme for

managing continuous quality improvement was one of Shewhart's lasting contributions. According to Sallis (2002), Deming's approach to Japan's quality success in industry was to find out what their customers wanted. Sallis (2002) explained that instead of starting with quality control, the Japanese companies placed the emphasis on prioritizing the customer's requirements in which they designed the production methods and products of the highest quality that met the customers' requirements. The reason for Japan's success story was putting into practice the ideas of Deming, Juran and other US quality experts during that period of time (Sallis, 2002). Later the Japanese further developed the ideas of Deming and Juran into what they called Total Quality Control (TQC) (Sallis, 2002). The quality movement which started in the manufacturing industry was followed by other service industries which included banking, finance and was followed by education at a later stage (Sallis 2002).

2.4   The Emergence of Quality in Education

The movement for total quality in education was slow to take off; Sallis (2002) mentioned that there were few references seen on quality in education before the 1980s, however, around the 1990s, a surge in interest came from the United States and in Britain. Sallis (2002) reasoned that the slow start of quality in education may have stemmed from the fact that although there was a need to develop quality cultures, some educationalists were sceptical of equating educational processes with the production of industrial products. This phenomenon was also illustrated by Venkatraman's (2007) paper on a framework for implementing Total Quality Management (TQM) in higher education which reviewed educational practices, the barriers of TQM and the return on investment of TQM implementation.

There has been a growing importance and strength of the quality movement in education from 1990 onwards (Sallis, 2002). Van Damme (2000) highlighted that this interest was brought about from concerns with the potential decline in academic standards which he perceived was the result of global massification of higher education. He stressed that there was a loss of confidence in traditional educational quality management capacities and the capability of meeting stakeholders' expectations, such as students and employers. The mounting pressure for more accountability in the use of public funds and the changes within the funding structure of higher education that were designed to increase competition for students and resources was another reason for the interest (MacBeath, 2006; Woodhouse, 2004; French, 2001; Craft, 1992). Both Craft (1992) and Woodhouse (2004) had contended that, as the government was using society's money to fund higher education institutions to provide quality education, it was therefore the responsibility of higher education institutions to provide the quality education to students that was of relevance and value for money (Tertiary Education Commission, 2006). Society also needed assurance that the education provided was of acceptable standard of quality. With the increase in the number of self-funding students, students now become customers of higher tertiary institutions thus demanding quality service in terms of a quality education and a qualification that was of value to them. There was also a responsibility to employers, who were part of the stakeholders group that is to produce graduate students who have the knowledge and professional competency acquired from the provision of education by these institutions. While all aspects of responsibility had been stressed the question, 'What about the responsibility with students for their learning?' remains unclear on how it can be answered.

With globalisation, there was an increase in the internationalisation of higher education (Woodhouse, 2004). The changes that had affected the educational arena were: growing mobility amongst students, professionals and academics; changing student recruitment styles; the emergence of more private institutions; trans-national education; and the availability of e-learning systems (Harman, 2000). Thus, the demand for mobility of qualification had created a demand for international comparability of qualifications (Woodhouse, 2000a; 2001).

The emerging global factors that have been revealed above were causes of concern for the education sector in reacting to changing demands (Tertiary Education Commission 2006; Woodhouse, 2004). It was no longer a status quo position for the education sector as it had multiple stakeholders including funding agencies, students, parents, employers, the community and the wider society.

2.5   Defining 'Quality' in Education

In education, quality is an important issue as it defines how the stakeholders perceive each institution in their own eyes. An example is that one stakeholder may view universities in United Kingdom is better than in Australia. The Oxford English Dictionary (2007), defines the word quality as "the degree of excellence of something as measured against other things" or "general excellence". In the industrial world it was easier to define the concept of quality in products, which were definable; however education researchers who were interested in quality found it difficult to define it in the education world. (Brennan & Shah, 2000; Green, 1994; Harman, 1996; Harvey & Green, 1993).

Gavin (1988) in his research identified five approaches to quality which had been widely applied to industry. Although they initially appeared to have little relevance to education, in the absence of more suitable approaches, they have now been widely applied in the education arena. The five approaches that Gavin (1988) identified were: transcendent (innate excellence), product-based (some attribute), user-based (needed), manufacturing based (conformance to requirement, and value-based (cost and prices). Later, Harvey and Green (1993), in addressing the concepts of quality in relation to higher education explored the meaning of quality to different people and also the relation it had on processes or outcomes. Accordingly, the concepts explored by Harvey and Green (1993) were considered to have relevance to higher education as their interrelationships were explored and their philosophical and political underpinnings examined. Harvey & Green (1993) categorized their exploration into five differing conceptualisations which they grouped as (1) excellence, (2) perfection, (3) fitness for purpose, (4) value for money, and (5) transformation. These concepts had assumed usage in the education arena although there were arguments as to the appropriateness of the adoption of such conceptualizations.

Although Harvey and Green's (1993) definition of quality in education had been widely adopted in the education environment, international literature on quality and quality assurance in education revealed the difficulties and ambiguities of the definition with a number of key terms (Brennan & Shah, 2000; Harman, 1996). According to Harman (1996), quality encompasses a number of complex notions and therefore the adoption of a broad agreement about what quality involved was important. He suggested that apart from the lack of agreement, authors who were interested in quality issues had significantly differing views about how the key concepts that were currently debated

about quality were defined. In discussing the concept of quality, Harman (1996) indicated that" many see quality as a relative concept, meaningful only from the perspective of particular people at particular points of time, measured against some either explicit or implicit standard or purpose" (p 4). With such difficulties and ambiguities, it was no wonder that Green (1994) had argued that if there was no consensus about what quality was in higher education, it could not be assessed.

This literature has revealed the problematic definition of quality in education and had posed the difficulty in deciding what needed to be assessed. It was my view that however problematic it was to define, small private tertiary education providers were less able to define what was required to be assessed but had to build a concept that was acceptable to the wider education regulatory community.

2.6 The Importance of Identifying who Determines Quality

With marketisation, consumerism and globalisation creeping into the education environment, the education market had become highly competitive where students can make choices to study both at domestically or internationally. It was important therefore to understand who determines quality. To be successful, just as in other industries, educational institutions need to build a reputation in order to attract customers. Customers in the educational environment are more complex, as the diversity of who constitutes customers or, in broader terms, who are the institutions' stakeholders.

The term stakeholder within education was defined by Campbell and Rozsnyai (2002,) as 'students, society and government agencies participating in or benefiting from the provision of education' (p 134). I would argue that anyone who has an interest in education can be identified as a stakeholder of any institution. With a perspective of who constitutes their stakeholders, institutions are able to use identified quality systems to meet their expectations. Since the government provides funds to educational institutions, it was an expectation therefore that, as recipients of public funds, the institutions be accountable for student outcomes. As the market consists of students, parents, community and employers, they were the determinants of quality (Blom & Meyers, 2003). Education providers who best meet the preferences of purchasers or buyers (government, market) or the definitions of quality would be successful. Blom and Meyers (2003) suggested that it was the market that controls the continuation of education provision. According to these authors, the existence of education providers was not only to serve students, employers or the wider community but also all other members of the society. Their views were presented on the basis of differing perspectives by different groups of people within the community or society of what constitutes quality in education.

Mac Farlane and Lomas (1999) suggested that it was important to have a transparent quality management process and recommended that educational institutions need to identify who their stakeholders are as well as the recognition of their claims as stakeholders. They commented that, without a clear indication of as to who the players were that is the stakeholders, the question of quality and its meaning was just a reaction to government guidelines imposed on institutions (Mac Farlane and Lomas, 1999).

In considering that there were differing perspectives of stakeholders, Blom and Meyers (2003) proposed adopting the quality system approach that includes the identification of stakeholders in the quality process. According to them, the emphasis on stakeholders' differing views and values can be adopted as indicators of quality for the educational institutions. By adopting this approach it becomes a value that was being determined where quality can be defined and measured in terms of the stakeholders' need. They suggested that these values would in turn influence the approach that these stakeholders take on quality. With the inclusion of stakeholders as an approach, the creation of useful benchmarks in defining quality can be obtained from them (Blom & Meyers, 2003).

This recommendation and approach, in my opinion, was worthwhile for educational institutions to consider, especially the smaller providers who may or may not have loosely adopted the approach. Without performance indicators that were measurable, it would be difficult for such an institution to be able to sustain long term commitments to their stakeholders.

2.7   The Purpose of the Introduction of Quality Assurance Mechanisms

Bazargan (2005) defined "quality assurance in higher education as a process that examines the aims, structure, inputs, processes, outputs and projected outcomes and in general terms includes activities such as assessments, audit, evaluation and accreditation" (p 2). However, the literature revealed several other important dimensions of variations in quality assurance mechanisms concerning the purposes or functions of quality systems. Harvey (1998) and Van Damme (2000) mentioned that the main and

most frequently stated purpose or function of a quality mechanism was the improvement of education. According to these authors, the purpose was linked to the definition of quality as transformation and its goal was to assist institutions to receive feedback to improve its processes to raise the standards of outcomes. Primarily, the quality assurance system was to provide feedback to academic staff of institutions for the improvement of the delivery of its curriculum (Van Damme, 2000). It was about the transformational experiences of students' journey through this learning process.

Van Damme (2000) and Harvey and Askling (2003) further suggested that another dominant and important rationale for introducing quality evaluation was the concept of public accountability. They mentioned that governments in many countries, who were either the major or the only funder of education, were looking for more efficient and effective use of resources and thus demand this kind of accountability in return for their investments. They state the use of quality assurance in the form of external evaluation thus encourages compliance to emerging or existing government policy, guidelines and regulations. They reasoned that the increased costs of massification had led to growing governmental pressure for educational institutions. The Tertiary Education Commission in New Zealand indicated that educational providers be responsive to value-for-money concerns, be relevant to social and economic needs, and to engage in widening access (Ministry of Education, 2008b). Educational institutions were also expected to achieve the planned outcomes of student job destination and students' satisfaction through their courses and at the same time asked to provide transparency by reporting publicly on quality educational outcomes and the social benefits to stakeholders.

Detailing the accountability function of quality assurance into three broad concerns, Harvey (1998) contends that accountability must first focus on external funders, mainly governments, where he suggests, that public and private money must be spent appropriately, accounted for and such expenditure needed prioritisation. Educational institutions were now forced to be responsible and cost effective in how they spend public funds and resources (Van Damme, 2000). The second accountability was to the education sector. In this respect, Harvey (1998) stated that there was a need to ensure that the principles and practices within education were not eroded or flouted. According to Harvey (1998), this was to control the development of private providers and at the same time was a mechanism to ensure public providers were not complacent. Harvey's (1998) third accountability concern was related to customers, in which he emphasized that there should be an appropriate provision of educational experiences, so that graduates should be equipped with the skills and knowledge that would maximise their contribution to society and had international acceptance of their qualifications.

Van Damme (2000) suggested that stakeholders as potential customers, such as students, parents, student recruiters and employers, had a right to public information and market transparency. Information on academic success rates and facilities were important factors enabling customers to make informed choices in terms of their education pathway. Quality assurance on effective public information would help in and lead to the improvement of market transparency (Van Damme, 2000). Information on outcomes should be shared by stakeholders. Van Damme (2000) emphasised a need for a quality assurance mechanism that would generate appropriate reporting about the quality of the institutions and programmes. On this note, Harvey (1998) concluded that educational institutions had either been encouraged or forced to comply with the

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production of statistical data, prospectus and course documents. Taken for granted practices and procedures were now worked on and clearly documented to meet such compliance. Harvey (1998) also stated that this development"represents minimum required shift from entirely producer-oriented approach to education to one that acknowledges the rights of other stakeholders to minimum information and a degree of service" (p 241). Although, this was intended to allow users such as potential students to make informed choices, Harvey and Newton (2004) suggested there was little evidence of students or employers having made use of this information to make decisions when selecting courses or programmes.

Many countries had been using quality indicators to differentiate between institutions in the allocation of funds and resources (Van Damme, 2000). For example, in New Zealand between 2005 and 2007[1] (Tertiary Education Commission, 2006), the Tertiary Education Commission made use of the Assessment of Strategic Relevance process to assess whether a qualification of a tertiary educational provider was of strategic relevance and value for money. Qualifications that were awarded a status of either high or strategic relevance were allocated baseline funding and may be eligible to apply for additional funding, while those with low relevance were given an opportunity to meet the stated requirements or face their funding being taken away from them (Tertiary Education Commission, 2006). The requirement process represents the government's quality assurance mechanism for resource allocation and planning.

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[1] The documents for references on Assessment of Strategic Relevance for 2005 are no longer on the Tertiary Education Website, however notes on the subject can be found in pages from 20 to 44 in 2007 Reinvestment guidelines (Tertiary Education Commission, 2006)

According to Harvey (1998), the final purpose or function of quality assurance mechanism was control. As explained by Harvey and Newton (2004) there were two such control functions. They suggested that the first control function by the government was the intention to control the education system by restricting growth. According to them, the use of either financial control or the use of quality outcome monitoring was to either encourage or restrict expansion. In New Zealand, the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) made use of the 'Investing in a Plan' to control such growth and expansion in the tertiary sector (Tertiary Education Commission, 2007). The second control addresses the comparability of standards that include the standard or level of national or international student academic or professional achievement. Harvey and Newton (2004) stated that it was the intention of those in authority to control the status, standing and legitimacy of the education system.

The above literature has revealed the purpose and importance of a quality assurance mechanism in education. The mechanism links quality with the necessity for educational institutions to embrace accountability with its stakeholders. However, the drawback was that accountability measurement was not straight forward, especially when it comes to the provision of funding by funding agencies. Criteria for the allocation for funding may differ as to whether the educational institution was a private or public institution. This had created a challenging situation for private educational institutions, especially the smaller ones, where the allocation of funding was important to their survival.

2.8   Accreditation

Accreditation is a process during which a higher education institution or a particular programme was subjected to a review by a competent body or organisation in order to establish whether or not the given institution or programme met particular sets of standards of quality in order to undertake or to continue to function as an "accredited institution" (Vlasceanu & Barrows, 2004, p 17). In a simple form, accreditation is a process of assuring the quality of educational programmes, their graduates, and the improvement of quality education (Guncer, 1999) and the retaining of some kind of central control after various higher educational institutions had been accorded autonomy (Hamalainen, Mustonen & Holm, 2004).

According to Woodhouse (2004), there were two types of accreditation; the general accreditation which was used to testify to the standing of institutions, and the professional accreditation which was to testify to the standards of courses in the professional disciplines such as medicine. He raised the challenge faced in the United States, that being a large country, it was impossible for institutions and individuals in different parts of the country to know what each state's standards were, and there was a need for general accreditation. As for the professional accreditation, accreditation arises from a concern for consumer protection. Woodhouse (2004) also suggested that accreditation had been introduced to provide an independent testimonial of standards that other countries can trust. The existence of this parallel system was the assurance that standards were applied across the higher educational arena.

In reviewing the objectives of accreditation, Hamalainen et al. (2004) revealed there were many motivations for accreditation. According to them, accreditation generally

'serves as a steering mechanism and suggests that the acceptance of external quality assessment by means of independent, formal accreditation was one of the most important reasons for introducing accreditation ….. and in light of the Bologna Declaration (Barrows, 2000), it was a necessity …… to make its level and quality clear to other countries' (p 19).

Hamalainen et al. (2004) also suggest that the shared objectives of many countries were to improve the quality of education, to provide public information, and to ensure that education was of an approved quality. As part of the national quality improvement system, the rational of their objectives were to examine whether or not the institutions had met the requirements or that the minimum level of quality requirements had been met.

Accreditation was an important feature of quality assurance management. Lategan (1997), in reviewing the different accreditation models around the world, suggested that the quality assurance systems varied from country to country although they had some common features. Lategan (1997) presented the different accreditation features as:

(1) The inclusion of an initial self-evaluation process followed by an external review or peer review of the results;

(2) Through self-evaluation and the role of peers in the external evaluation, higher educational providers largely owns the quality systems;

(3) An independent body usually co-ordinated the external evaluation which was conducted in terms of standardized criteria ranging from detailed norms to more flexible check-lists;

(4)   The results of evaluation were in most cases made public; and

(5)   Negative sanctions can be a consequence of the assessment in nearly all countries (p 114 – 115).

According to Hamalainen et al (2004) in most countries, higher educational institutions were free to choose the accreditation services that they prefer and which they thought were useful for their own purposes. In New Zealand, under the Education Amendment Act 1990 New Zealand Qualifications Authority (2007), the New Zealand Qualifications Authority was awarded the delegating authority relating to the approval of programmes, courses and accreditation of institutions. University degrees offered were approved by the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP of New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2007).   However, when the educational institution offer professional courses, then the institution may use the services of the appropriate particular professional body for accreditation purposes in addition to NZQA accreditation.

Brennan and Shah (2000) suggested the term 'accreditation' can sometimes be used as a general one to describe all aspects of management. They defined 'quality management' by using the general term to describe the total process of judgement, decision and action. Brennan & Shah (2000) viewed quality control and quality assurance as commonly used terms and suggest that the word 'control' implies a regulatory function whereas 'assurance' and 'management' involve regulation and development as well as enhancement.   According to Brennan and Shah (2000), they had used 'quality management' as a generic term to cover all structures and processes both internal as well as external that involve assuring as an important aspect of quality management.

Vlasceanu, Grunberg and Parlea (2004) contend that accreditation was a confirmation of the ability to perform collectively at a basic level of quality with a given set of prescribed objectives and tasks in teaching, research, and services (p 19). They argued that the process can only be undertaken when the collective ability to perform can be measured against an agreed set of standards, indicators, criteria, and procedures. The accreditation decision was frequently based on the results of an assessment or evaluation process, but it need not be; accordingly, similar assessment or evaluation can be undertaken with no link to accreditation, and sometimes with no direct link to formal decision-making of any kind.

In the above literature, I have presented the accreditation process, the different types of accreditation, their objective, and influencing factors. It seemed important to private professional institutions to have clear visions for the delivery of their programmes and that, dual accreditation was seen as appropriate. It can be argued that professional accreditation normally needed international credibility but that would also depend on where and what type of professional qualifications were involved.

2.9   Self-Assessment/Self-Evaluation

Self-assessment was one of the processes of accreditation. Self-assessment was used interchangeably with self-evaluation and self-study in the context of higher education quality (Harvey, 2004). According to Harvey 2004, self-assessment is a tool used to ensure, develop, assess and evaluate the quality system and educational provider levels. At an institutional level, Harvey (2004) suggested the process may involve going through a set of prescribed criteria as specified by the accrediting bodies. These may

include facets such as institutional mission, staff selection, access of students, attrition rates, the relation between academic and financial plans, and co-operation with other institutions (Harvey 2004). Lategan (1997) stated that for programme evaluation, it may include staff assessment, feedback on teaching performance, regular review of courses and review of departments. The institution had to describe and assess its own strengths and weaknesses against each self set standard, and the identification of a solution to overcome the weaknesses (Harvey, 2002b). Anecdotally, accreditation was a mode of compliance for educational institutions to meet the quality standards as stipulated by the accrediting agencies. MacBeath (2006) suggested there had been concerns about quality for education in which standards had also been debated. Arguably it was the administrator's experience when attempting to demonstrate the difference between what comprises quality and standards. As quality and standards were not static and were always evolving to a higher level then how can this be measured effectively against the accreditation criteria and on what basis should it be measured? These were questions that concerned administrators working on quality assurance measurements. The other tension that administrators had, was the result of highlighting institutional weaknesses. It was important for external inspectors to exercise sound judgment because administrators fear repercussions when they highlight institutional shortcomings and later being assessed by external inspectors as standards not met. In such circumstances, highlighting institutional weaknesses may defeat the purpose of the openness of the institution.

2.10   External Evaluation

External evaluation or peer review was the second stage of the accreditation process. After the initial self-assessment/evaluation, performance review and audit was conducted by an external group of peers (Lategan, 1997). The evaluation usually involves a team of inspectors from the accreditation body visiting the institution for about a week in New Zealand auditing/reviewing the institution against the institution's set of prescribed criteria and followed by a report by the auditors/reviewers on their assessment (Council on Chiropractic Education Australasia Inc., 2003). On examining the institutional response to an external evaluation, Gynnild (2007) presented arguments about how the processes and outcomes of the external evaluation were measured. She used assumptions and questioned the processes by asking that if the accreditation criteria were flawed, how and with what consequences could they be improved? She further asked, how could an institution implement strategies that would serve the dual purpose of quality assurance and quality enhancement? There were reasons as to why an accreditation body should be questioned.   Accreditation bodies may have been established many years ago and may not have updated their criteria in the process of measurement. An example would be that of sticking to old policies. These may be some of the tensions faced by institutions. If there was a better understanding of such policies, there maybe a negotiating process to improve these processes as the existing compliance may not benefit the learning and teaching of the students.

2.11   Expectation of Teaching and Learning Quality

Although much had been discussed about quality assurance and quality improvement in the process of accreditation, there did not seem to be much evidence that it had resulted in improvements to teaching and learning quality.   Genis (2002) suggests that the external evaluation process had focussed on the institutional controls that ensured stipulated criteria were met.   She concludes that although the criteria on student evaluations feedback resulted in evidence for the core business of teaching and learning, it did not result in improvements to teaching and learning quality.   Student evaluation also does not provide evidence of learning outcome and how individual student needs can be met (Gynnild, 2007).   In reporting the summaries of the 'The End of Quality', Harvey (2002a) suggested that external monitoring had no real impact, especially on student learning.   He mentioned that while there were indication that there may be good quality assurance systems that may meet all criteria for self-assessment or evaluation, he questioned on whether it does really affect student learning. This concern was raised by Marten and Prosser (1998) who asserted that, what constitutes high quality teaching and learning was important in the development of quality assurance systems.   Students learn from good facilitation from teachers who are able to engage with students in their learning, thus quality was about effective teaching, and raising the quality of teaching enhance student learning (Adegbile & Adeyemi, 2008).

All the above points had suggested that quality assurance had little influence on the quality of teaching and learning and of learning experiences, yet students are institutions' most important stakeholders. These are concerns that need to understand as teaching and learning are the institution's core business in the educational environment, and how each institution should sought to improve this.

2.12   Continuous Improvement versus Quality Assurance

Dew and Nearing (2004) suggested that there appears to be some attention on the topic of quality assurance to which they alluded that may be similar to continuous improvement strategies, but which was actually tackling different quality issues. Continuous improvement focuses on the understanding of statistical variation in work processes, the importance of group dynamics in improving work process and organisational dynamics in fostering change; however quality assurance looks in a different direction. Rather than seeking to continuously improve what quality assurance in higher education is aiming to ensure that academic programmes meet a standardized process standard. It would appear that quality assurance was the promotion of conformity to external requirements rather than the seeking of excellence. A critique offered by Morley (2003) on quality assurance in Great Britain was focused on an effort by the state to gain more control over education. She asserts that it was being used to invade interior spaces, silence opposition, and promote conformity. There was a significant difference between an emphasis on continuous improvement and a focus on quality assurance.

According to Harvey (1999), quality assurance processes often commence with determining how quality has been assessed or reviewed rather than questioning on what was to be assessed. In comparing the present and past approaches to quality assurance, Harman (1998) noted that the concept of quality assurance was more systematic, with institutions putting in place mechanisms for review, assessment, and improvement. According to Harman (1998), the mechanisms had more emphasis on external inspection which includes gathering personal views of graduates and employers, thus making the results of assessment widely available to the stakeholders. This mechanism proves able to close the gap between the institution and student learning outcomes, thus meeting the graduate profile required by employers.

2.13   Latest Development in Quality Assurance – The Bologna Process

On 19th June 1999, the Bologna Declaration (Barrows, 2000; Ministry of Education, 2008a), agreed by 31 European Education Ministers from 29 countries brought the latest reform into the quality assurance in Higher Education in Europe. Named as the Bologna Process, the process signified the move by forty-six European countries to work towards greater consistency and mobility across their higher education systems. According to a paper "New Zealand and the Bologna Process" by the New Zealand Ministry of Education and New Zealand Qualifications Authority (Ministry of Education, 2008a), the reform would have increasing global implications in the higher education arena.

It would affect the degree-conferring tertiary education providers in New Zealand as well as the international mobility of students from New Zealand, and the acceptance of New Zealand tertiary education awards. Reacting to the Bologna Process, both government agencies and the tertiary education organisations sought to ensure work that was done on comparability mechanisms that would allow New Zealand's tertiary education system to be able to relate to all international models (Ministry of Education, 2008a).

Although the Bologna Process had raised concerns regarding the mobility of qualifications for countries like New Zealand, Van Damme (2000) had cautioned the validity of this approach. He stressed that "unless the quality issue was fully integrated in the internationalization policies of governments and institutions, the further progress in international student mobility and credit transfer would be retarded" (p 15).

2.14   Summary

The major factors outlined in this literature review in relation to the present study include the range of influences that had contributed to the evolution of the quality movement in education and their effect within the educational sector. The literature also reviewed the importance of quality in education; the purpose of the introduction of quality assurance mechanisms; the emergence of accreditation and its importance; the different accreditation processes; the expectation for teaching and learning quality; and the difference between continuous improvement and quality assurance.

In the next chapter, the theoretical research position of the present study and how the data was collected and analysed are explained.

Chapter Three

Research Design and Implementation

3.0   Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research method chosen for this study. A qualitative approach to research was used to support the aims of this study.

3.1   Qualitative Research Methodology: Overview

Marshall and Rossman (1999) have suggested that qualitative research is an approach to scientific inquiry that takes many different forms and has many viewpoints. According to them, despite the wide range of topics investigated and the variety of methods employed, qualitative research studies share certain common characteristics and assumptions. Among these were assumptions related to the nature of knowledge, and the focus on individual lived experiences, society and culture, language, and communication.

According to Charmaz (2000), qualitative research is a systematic inductive inquiry for collecting and analysing data as the researcher builds theoretical frameworks to explain the data collected. In this way, qualitative research seeks to discover new connections between theory and the real world (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Crabtree and Miller (1999) suggested that qualitative approaches are well suited for studies for which previous literature was limited. In using the approach of qualitative methods, researchers can either understand or uncover what was behind phenomena that were not well understood and/or gain fresh understanding about what was known. According to Crotty (1998) the underlying assumption was that meanings were constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they were interpreting, but these meanings are created not discovered. My approach was to collect qualitative data about factors related to quality assurance, and make use of the collected data to draw tentative generalisations from the participants in this study.

The New Zealand College of Chiropractic (NZCC) provided the setting for this research study. Individual staff members had a history within the organisation and their lived experiences had contributed to their building knowledge bases on quality assurance and improvement, and that was the focus of my study. I thought who would be in a better position to provide such knowledge and experiences other than those who were familiar with the quality assurance systems in the organisation?

The senior management staff at the College were experienced employees of the college. They had experienced re-accreditation processes which gave them knowledge and experience in the field of quality assurance systems at the College. Their experience was valuable to this study as they had undergone the entire process from the start to the end and it seemed to me that the use of qualitative research would enable them to share their subjective views.

Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggests that 'in determining experiences of participants, the researcher, as well as the participants, play an active role in constructing the reality regarding a specific exercise or intervention' (p 84).

3.2   Case Study

Case studies strived to portray 'what it is like' to be in a particular situation to catch the close-up reality and thick descriptions of participants' lived experiences of, thoughts about and feelings for, a situation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). In my selected situation, staff members related and talked about their experiences of the re-accreditation processes during the interviews.   According to Yin (1989), case studies allow a researcher to "reveal the multiplicity of factors (which) had interacted to produce the unique character of the entity that was the subject of study" (p 82). In this study, I made used of the College collectively as a whole to study the case.

I thought that a case study methodology employed within qualitative research using face-to-face interviews would provide rich, detailed and in-depth information about each particular person, the social setting, event, or group. The use of a case study approach was considered to be the preferred strategy for studying interventions in education (Burns, 1994; Lancy, 1993 cited in Woods, 1998) while qualitative research methods were particularly appropriate for investigating quality assurance measures (Woods, 1998).

In this study, face-to-face interviews were employed. The use of an interview was seen as a useful mode of systematic inquiry because interview situations provide opportunities to invite the production of meaning to address the issues related to my study. According to Silverman (1997) interviewees and the researcher actively construct meaning in each other's dialogue during the interview. Miller (1997) suggests that the interview process opens up a unique arena for assessing the perspectives of social structures [the institution] because it requires that the participants to speak of issues in their everyday life [at the College] and practice [their work]. According to Miller (1997), the interview strategy was to produce data that were central to the perspectives of the participants and the phenomena were inductively derived (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) thus allowing themes to emerge (Pandit, 1996).

In relation to this research, participants were interviewed with regard to their lived experiences in the review process. The research was reflective from Pandit's (1996) perspective, in that it did not begin with a theory, but rather through an inductive inquiry of study I explored and allowed themes to emerge.

I adopted a case study approach for this research. The choice of a case study was feasible for this research project as it involved the systematic gathering of enough information from four senior management staff members of the New Zealand College of Chiropractic (NZCC) who had undergone two recent re-accreditation processes. The first re-accreditation that I experienced at the College in 2006 was by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) which was an external audit. The process involved an initial self-assessment by the College followed by a two day audit process of the institution by two NZQA auditors. The second re-accreditation was by the Council on Chiropractic Education Australasia Limited (CCEA) which was an external evaluation. The process involved an extensive College self-evaluation followed by a five member CCEA team inspection over five days. The NZQA audit was the national processes while the CCEA evaluation an international accreditation. My involvement as the quality administrator allowed me to relate to the staff members' experiences and reflections on the quality assurance systems and to consider how these might enhance quality improvement for the institution.

Yin (1994) suggests that a case study approach employed several data techniques, such as life histories, documents, oral histories, participant observation and in-depth interviews. However, only in-depth interviews were chosen to allow the collection of in-depth authentic experiences (individual's personal experiences) and reflections (personal assessment of each situation) which may affect organisational culture change, improvement to the quality of teaching and learning experiences, and the adoption of new process systems that may enhance the improvement of the overall institutional quality processes. The in-depth interviews allowed participants to provide rich descriptive data for the research.

The study aimed to explore how reflections and experiences of staff members may contribute to institutional quality processes improvement. My aim was to gain knowledge about how each management staff member perceived their experiences with the accrediting bodies' inspection and audit of the College and with each experience they encountered from the re-accreditation process, how they made use of their own reflections to challenge the status quo in order to further improve the quality processes of the College

3.3   The Research Context.

The importance of context should be emphasised for understanding the role of the researcher and the participants who were all senior management staff and their understanding in the concepts of the accreditation processes. It was therefore necessary to look at the context in which this research was situated.

The New Zealand College of Chiropractic is a small professional College. "It aspires to be a world-class institution with graduates able to obtain registration in any country in the world in which chiropractic is accredited" (New Zealand College of Chiropractic 2008 Staff Handbook, p 8). The mission implied that the qualification will be recognised by chiropractic accredited countries around the world and graduates will be able to gain employment to these countries.

The College strives to achieve this by ensuring that the qualification that was being delivered was accredited by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority as well as by the Council on Chiropractic Education Australasia Limited. The term 'Australasia' here was used to identify Australia and New Zealand. To achieve this, the College had established quality management systems to ensure it meets the standards and criteria prescribed by both the accrediting agencies.

Over the last three years since 2006, the College had shown significant improvement in terms of accreditation. The NZQA's audit cycle was increased from a one to a two-year audit cycle and CCEA's evaluation cycle had increased from two to three years. These achievements resulted from putting in place rigorous quality assurance systems. However, there were still opportunities to improve and the aim of this research was to explore possibilities of enhancement to institutional processes. The researcher had employed the qualitative research methodology to understand the phenomenon from the point of view of the participants in an institution. (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994 cited in Myers, 1997).

As the researcher and also an employee of the College, Morse (1994) suggests this could be an 'untenable position' (p 222). According to Morse (1994), "it is not wise for an investigator to conduct a quality study in a setting which the researcher is already employed and has a work role", the reason is that having the dual role as an investigator and as n employee can be incompatible. As the researcher, I recognised the complexity of bias and conflict of interest however no conflict of interest was encountered during the research process as the participants are of equal footing as administrators for the management of quality at the College.

3.4   Selection of Participants

The researcher was solely responsible for the collection and analysis of data. The rigour of the research depends on the appropriateness of the data collected. In this study, the researcher selected the senior management staff as participants in order to generate rich descriptive data that were relevant to the aims of this research.

The majority of senior management staff members were involved in re-accreditation processes. Re-accreditation processes for the institution usually occur every one or two years. This was dependable on whether the College has met all of .NZQA's audit criteria. According to NZQA, a one audit cycle suggests that the College has not met all audit requirements and a two audit cycle indicates that the College has met all audit requirements (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2007a).

When a re-accreditation process occurs, all senior management staff are involved in the administration work that relates to the accreditation process, the self-evaluation processes, and face-to-face interviews with either the NZQA audit team or the CCEA inspection team. Their participation was a necessary feature of this research as their involvement in both the re-accreditations had given them experiences that they could reflect on to contribute to the enhancement of institutional processes.

3.5   Participants

The participants of this study were senior management staff of this small institution. Senior management staff members hold management functions at the College. The identified participants had worked at the College for at least two years and were either head of departments of faculties or had administrative roles such as the head librarian. The researcher was very specific in the recruitment of the participants on that all participants in this research had to be senior management staff members who were involved in both the re-accreditation processes.

Data collection took placed at the end of second semester in late October 2008. I had approached all the senior management staff privately and invited them to participate in this study. Initially six of the staff members agreed to participate but due to the timing in which the data collection took placed, only four were able to be interviewed. Senior staff members who were not approached or did not participate in the interviews were either not present at the time of the data collection period or they had not been part of the team during the audit or inspection The four cases were manageable in terms of understanding each case in depth. Before the start of the data collection process, a colleague who had vast experience in the field of quality management was identified to participate in the pilot interview. The pilot interview was not included as part of the data collection.

3.6   Pilot Interview

A list of indicative questions were developed to gather data from the management team's past experiences with the re-accreditation processes by NZQA and CCEA and also factors that influenced their perception on how quality improvement can be enhanced for the College. The pilot interview was used to test and check the appropriateness of the interview questions and the practicality of the interview (Beanland, Schneider, LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 1999).

The selected participant from the College was told in advance before the interview that it was a pilot interview and that any comments about the interview questions and the interview process would be welcome in order to improve the quality of the interview. A set of compiled highlights and lowlights (Appendix A) was given to the participant outlining the outcomes of the re-accreditation process. The list of highlights and lowlights is to enable the participant to recall outcomes from the re-accreditation process.

The interview commenced with the introduction of the research topic. The participant was given a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix B) that outlined the overview and protocols of the research. The researcher was cautious and avoided lengthy conversations that might limit the participant's responses. The pilot interview started with the researcher briefing the participant on the rights of participants. With the agreement to the terms of participation, the participant was asked to sign an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix C). This Informed Consent Form gave assurance of confidentiality to all participants; and they would be reminded and reassured that their identities would be kept anonymous and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time prior to the completion of data collection.

The interview commenced with the researcher welcoming the participant followed by an explanation on the protocols of the research.

The pilot interview went well with the interviewee. The following comments were highlighted.

(a) Although the questions were appropriate, some were leading questions and an additional question was required to bring out more data from the interviewee.

(b) The interview site needed to be shifted to a quieter place to avoid disturbance and it should be out of sight from other staff members.

After the pilot interview, the researcher spoke to her supervisor regarding the inclusion of additional questions and was advised that if it was appropriate to enable richer data collection, then it should be used. The comments from the participant were highly regarded and the additional question was added into the list of interview questions. The researcher kept a note of this change as it was critical for her to be confident that the list of interview questions would generate appropriate data for this research. The amended indicative interview questions are listed on pages 42-43 in an interview schedule.

3.7 Data Collection

The interviewing technique was consistent with earlier studies undertaken on quality assurance by Jones and De Saram (2005, and Andrews and Higson (2008), who made use of face-to-face interviews to allow the interviewees to influence the direction of the interviews to provide rich descriptions of the study.

The interviews were conducted at the College. However to maintain anonymity and confidentiality of staff members taking part in this study, it was held away from the office of each participant. The interviews were held in the next College building to avoid any suspicion of research data collection going on to ensure anonymity of

participants. The interview time and venue were confirmed prior to the interviews. The interviews were made at the convenience of participants. Due to some participants' busy schedule, some interviews had to be postponed at the last minute when the interviewees needed to attend to other urgent matters. New appointments were made. All four case interviews were completed within a month following approval from the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

The procedures with the interviews followed the same sequence as with the pilot interview. All participants were presented with the same revised indicative questions from the pilot interview to ensure data collected were within the aims of the research.

The interview questions were aimed to explore the participants' thoughts about two re-accrediting processes that they had experienced in the last year and how the auditors/inspection teams' comments affected their perception on how institutional quality systems may be enhanced further. Questions were directed to probe the analytical viewpoint on why, what and how the institutional processes can either be maintained or improved as processes. The questions also gave participants the opportunity to freely express their reflections on the concept of quality in education, be able to articulate the difference in processes, the effect it had on the institutional programme, its students, the pedagogy, and the educational environment.

The interviews were audio-tape recorded and each interview lasted between 45 minutes and an hour. An interactive discussion on the issues about quality in education continued after the recording stopped. Notes were taken for possible use for the research with the approval from the interviewees. They were informed that the notes may be used as part of the data collection of the research.

3.8   Transcripts

The audio-taped interviews were transcribed by the researcher within one week of the interviews. The transcript was send to the participant to verify the accuracy of the data and to confirm that they were happy for the information in the transcript to be used in the research. Participants were informed that they could change, add or delete any material in the transcript. Sensitive data which might risk revealing the identity of the participant were highlighted or taken out from the transcript.

Three transcripts were checked via email with the exception of one for which a memory stick was used. Corrections on the transcripts were made by the participants. Some unclear and ambiguous words that could not be deciphered from the tape were highlighted on the transcript. The participants were able to correct these words on the transcripts. Participants whose transcripts were sent via email were asked to delete the transcript from their mailbox to avoid a possible paper trail once the data had been confirmed to be accurate.

They were also assured that the transcripts would be deleted from the researcher's mailbox once the final copies were printed off. The participant who was provided with a memory stick returned the transcripts with changes together with the memory stick. Pseudonyms were used to identify the transcripts for example: Interview 1 was used for the first interview, Interview 2 for the second interview and so on.

3.9   Ethical Considerations

Data collection had begun immediately after final approval was gained from the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC). Due to the compact organisation of the institution, it was agreed that pseudonyms would be used for all participants in the present research. No narratives would be used in the research report to ensure that the participants will not be identified. Only the themes generated from the data would be used in the findings. Any sensitive data that might identity participants would be modified or removed with the agreement of the participants.

3.10   Reliability and Validity

The interviews were audio-tape recorded with the consent of all participants. This procedure was in accordance with research practice as it involves efforts to assure the accuracy and inclusiveness of the recordings on which the research was based. Efforts were made to test the truthfulness and soundness of the analytic claims that were being made about the recordings. The recordings were replayed several times during the process of transcribing the data to ensure all data are being captured. However, Perakyla (1997) suggested that these efforts take on different shapes according to the type of recordings on which the research was based.

I was cautious of the reliability of the data collected when interviewing the participants. Cohen, et al. (2000) recommended when conducting interviews, the researcher should use the same format and sequence of words, and avoid the use of leading questions to ensure a high degree of reliability. I conformed to these guidelines to maximise reliability and to reduce bias in order to achieve greater validity, as recommended by Cohen et al. (2000). The data collected from different participants provided different perspectives on each interview questions.

3.11   Data analysis

After all the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed, I forwarded the interview transcripts to my supervisor. With the help of my supervisor, I analysed the data by identifying themes from the interview data. My supervisor reviewed the themes that I have analysed and we met together to discuss the identified

3.12   Summary

The major factors outlined in this chapter in relation to the present study include the overview of qualitative research methodology and the theoretical position underpinning the case study methodology and the significant decisions made in the process of completing the research.

The analysis of the findings is presented and discussed in full in the following chapter.

Chapter Four

Findings

4.0   Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the findings from the interviews that had been conducted for this study.   The data was analysed with the help from the research supervisor. The findings were summarised into themes to allow the flow of participants' experience and their thoughts be expressed freely.   In this study, only themes were summarized and narratives were not presented, to ensure that participants are not being identified due to the small size of the College.

4.1   Questions

To encourage participants to provide information on their experiences and perceptions of this study, the researcher prepared a list of indicative interview questions to draw insights from them.   During the interview, interviewees were asked the following questions pertaining to the study:

1.   What was your experience of the re-accreditation processes of the New Zealand Qualifications authority (NZQA) and the Council on Chiropractic Education Australasia Limited (CCEA)? Can you comment on each of the processes?   Note: The term 'Australasia' was used to identify both Australia and New Zealand.

2. The audit/inspection team presented what they saw as the 'highlights' and 'lowlights' of the re-accreditation process after audit/inspection. What did you think of their comments? Can you comment on whether the comments made by the audit/inspection team were justified?

3. With reference to the comments made by NZQA and CCEA's teams, in your opinion how important were these comments? Can you comment on the impact the comments had on you or the College?

4. Based on the NZQA's and CCEA's comments, how did you think the institutional processes can be improved or maintained? Can you comment on how these can be achieved?

5. What type of institutional processes should be improved or maintained? Can you comment on who do you think the institutional processes that you have just mentioned be improved or maintained for?

6. As a leader, how and what staff involvement are necessary to either improve or maintain the said processes? Can you comment, what leadership role was required to make this happen?

7. Who did you think is responsible for driving these quality processes? Can you comment how the quality processes should be driven?

8. What outcomes would you anticipate if the ideas you have mentioned were implemented?

9. What is your perspective of 'Quality' in the education environment? Can you comment what you are your thoughts on 'Quality' in education is?

10. Is there any other feedback that you would like to add?

When my colleagues, the interviewees, were asked to relate their experiences, perceptions and reflections with the above questions, a huge amount of data was generated from the conversations.

4.2   The Difference in Process

All four interviewees felt that both accreditation processes were important to the College because the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) was the national accrediting body for the qualifications of New Zealand, while the Council on Chiropractic Education Australasia Limited (CCEA) was the accrediting body for the Chiropractic profession in Australia and New Zealand.

From their experiences with both accrediting bodies, they felt that the NZQA's process was based more on compliance, which relates to regulations and systems, processes and procedures of the College and the protocols of general education. CCEA's process focused more on the professional base of the profession which was about the content and competencies matching to the profession. The participants thought that although there were similarities, the processes were different in some ways. The accrediting bodies aimed to review previous weaknesses and to check on the highlights to make sure that they were being maintained.

The participants expressed the view that NZQA looked more to how the College compared in relation to other institutions in the New Zealand general educational context. In terms of CCEA, the reviewers looked at the competencies and the professionalism of the overall programme, that is, CCEA looked at the professional level of the programme and compared the College with universities in Australia. On the other hand NZQA's main concern was that the College met prescribed general educational standards as a school. It was like ticking the box on whether each standard was met or not.

The participants suggested that there was a difference in the professional attitude between the two accrediting bodies. The CCEA inspection was more thorough in their inspection process and they discussed with the College's staff members what might or could be done to support students in their learning. The NZQA's team appeared to come to assess the College's facilities and processes, and how they were dealt with, and whether they meet, their prescribed criteria. One interviewee suggested it was like the NZQA people just come in, and sort of did a quick routine and then disappeared. They don't seem to see how and why?

The majority of responses stated that the re-accreditation processes were a valuable way of drawing attention to things that need improvement, for the health, welfare and improvement of the College. As the re-accreditation involved peer review processes, the processes allowed the College to realign its practices with the guidelines and objectives where College might have relaxed a little due to heavy workloads. The peer review processes assisted the College to make improvements, which was good. However, one

colleague commented that the processes was time consuming and intrusive rather than a benefit and said it was like when you are busy trying to see things that need to be done to run the College, teach classes and then, have all these documents to clear for CCEA and NZQA before they arrived and you would think where do I find the time.

4.3   College Improvements

The participants felt that the College had the basic structure but may not know what needed improvement, and that's where NZQA and CCEA inspection provided an impetus.   There was a general consensus from the interviewees that the comments were fair. Both the accrediting bodies gave the College credit for the improvements that had taken place over time.   They noticed the College's improvements and one of the participants commented that the staff really worked hard to try to improve the College's processes such as the moderation process.   Both NZQA and CCEA identified that the following improvements were made:

1.   Student policies and procedures

2.   Five year external moderation plan

3.   Internal moderation – more than 70% assessments moderated

4.   More staff resources added

4.4 Problems Encountered

Although the participants felt that the criticisms were fair, they commented that some of the concerns were ones that the staff had already identified and had started working on. One of the participant commented that they were really only highlighting the things that the staff were already aware of and they were the identified problems so there was nothing that was not already being considered. It also took time to get the processes up and working. The same colleague also pointed out that maybe CCEA and NZQA should put different weightings on how the College should approach some of the concerns, such as timelines, etc. of when to get them completed.

There was consensus amongst all those who were interviewed that there were issues that were beyond the control of the staff and that needed top management's intervention. The participants pointed out, for instance, with CCEA and NZQA comments, especially on workload and the shortage of staff, that this was really a problem. Most of the full-time staff was teaching more than a full teaching load and at the same time performing higher administration duties; the thought of a staff member having to take on another role on top of their workload, can be overwhelming for that person. With CCEA and NZQA having picked up the same concern, the College's management acted promptly on this issue. It accelerated the process with a quicker fix; that is more full-time staff was brought into the team by management and that had relieved the problem.

4.5   Workload/Shortage of Staff

In terms of the shortage of full-time staff, participants when interviewed felt that their workload was high. At times it was difficult for them to cope due to a high workload of teaching or administration. They mentioned that they had to do practically everything. There was not enough administration support to assist with normal or simple typing work. With high teaching workloads they did not have time to keep up with overseeing processes, as they also had part-time lecturers reporting to them and did not have the time to review policies and procedures or administration protocols with these lecturers.

4.6   Awareness of Processes

Interviewed colleagues suggested that due to the shortage of full-time staff, the College had to rely on part-time staff to teach. As most part-time staff have their own time schedules with fixed times, especially if they were clinical practitioners, they did not have the flexibility to be able to attend meetings. This created a problem whereby changes in policies and procedures might have been made, but had not been communicated to them and were therefore not followed. The other problem identified was, many of the part-time lecturers came from different institutions and were not familiar with the College's policies and procedures; they therefore were unaware of the College's institutional processes. They functioned as though the College's policies and procedures were the same as those of the institution they come from.

4.7   Adequacy of Processes

When interviewees commented on the awareness of processes as a problem, it prompted me to ask them whether the College's in-house quality processes were adequate. The majority of them thought that the College's processes were currently adequate. It was simply that some of the staff members did not know them well enough and therefore did not follow the processes. This was especially so for the part-time lecturers. In a way it was also difficult for them to do that when they came in for only a short period to teach and then they were out of the office. This was one of our challenges. As the College grows, with more classes and more students, the College would find more and more processes and procedures may not be adequate. The interviewees mentioned that a variety of different problems may appear from the growing student numbers. The processes and procedures must definitely be evolving and updated regularly because one might say that for one week it was adequate and the next week, a new problem may crop up without a complete policy that can cover it. The interviewees suggested that there was a need to have clearer quality assurance policies that were responsive to students so that the situation can addressed promptly.

4.8   Shortage of Qualified Staff with Higher or Discipline Related Qualifications

All the interviewees acknowledged that they are in agreement with the auditors/reviewers that indeed that the College do have some concerns with the qualifications of some staff. However, the College was constantly working on overcoming this issue. One colleague pointed out that this problem was not limited to our College alone and that on the whole it was hard to find Chiropractic academics whether in Northern America, Australia or Europe. However, they were all in

agreement that as it stands the College had quite a good spread of people with academic experience with specific qualifications in their expertise. For example, the College had a Dean of Basic Sciences who had been a surgeon before teaching basic science courses; the Research Director had a PhD and was a chiropractor; a PhD candidate in psychology teaching psychology was a chiropractor; the Dean of Clinical Education had completed a Diplomate (a postgraduate course name adopted in Chiropractic education) course in Paediatric. She taught Paediatric and was a chiropractor. So, the College had been making sure that the teaching staff was qualified in their teaching areas.

4.9   Comments on the Impact of the Lowlights and Highlights on the College

Participants, when interviewed, were unanimous about the impact that the comments of criticism and approval from the accreditation bodies would have on the College. They commented that these were important because they would actually guide the course curriculum and the programme delivery and align these with the College's objectives. Another point made was that the accreditation feedback helped the College to prioritize strategies; for example, both CCEA and NZQA had identified the workload distribution of certain staff members. The comments confirmed the need for the College to fix those matters as a matter of top priority; and this had worked well, as new staff was being recruited into the College to ease the workload of those original staff concerned.

One participant was quick to point out that it was important to know the perspectives of the accrediting bodies to understand if the institution was delivering a good programme to its customers.   Other colleagues thought that as a team, the staff really needs to be aware of the reviewers' concerns, pay attention to them, and also maintain the College's processes on a long term basis instead of just short term fixes. They suggested that the comments would assist the College to improve, maintain or set higher priorities to ensure that the College met the prescribed standards of the accreditation process. They thought that in a way it safeguarded the College by ensuring that staff was actually following policies and procedures.

4.10   Improvement on Institutional Processes

The general feeling from all who were interviewed was that the College had improved tremendously over the past few years, especially under the leadership of the current President (a job designation used instead of Chief Executive Officer at the College). There were certain things that the College needed to improve however; and other issues needed resolution because those issues had created existing problems. As mentioned earlier, quality processes were always changing, it was also an evolving process. The participants felt that although it was important to have policies and procedures in place, there was also a need to have well trained staff who were able to support other staff members who may be new, or when their immediate supervisors were away, to either teach them policies and procedures or show them where they were located, to ensure that the policies were being followed.

As the interviews proceeded, there was clear evidence that the interviewees were aware that the College needed to make improvements because there was an accountability element that the College needed to take care of.

4.11   Professional Development

There was a general consensus that there was a need for teaching staff without previous teaching experiences to attend some form of professional development training in teaching and learning.   A majority of the participants suggested that new lecturers who did not have previous lecturing experiences should attend Adult Teaching and Learning Certificate courses. Part of the reason was that however expert the new lecturers were in their practices or their field of expertise, it was different when they were transferring knowledge to others. By attending the course, they would learn the required pedagogy to help them understand the different perspectives of teaching and learning.   One participant suggested that although it was an important aspect of professional development, attending the Adult Teaching and Learning Certificate courses should not be made compulsory because many of the staff may had other commitments and it may impose time constraints on them. However, another colleague pointed out that since it was a part-time course it can be done online, this takes away the timing issue and anyone could do it at a time that was suitable.

While there was some consensus on making it compulsory for lecturers with no previous teaching experience to attend the Adult Teaching and Learning course, all participants were in agreement to have the continuation of the in-house teach-the-teacher professional development course taught by senior lecturers. They indicated that bringing in outside experts to teach identified topics of interest was really good as it gives a different perspective on how things may be done. It helped them to think differently about how to do their work better.

An issue brought up by one participant was that although one likes to be a facilitator for the in-house teach-the-teacher course, there was a feeling that other lecturers may question whether one knows more than they did; but then he thought that a lot was learned through the feedback of being the facilitator.

The issue of non-attendance of part-time lecturers was raised as these were the people who really needed development. One participant pointed out that professional development was for everybody and it was important to get all staff on board to improve the teaching skills. There was a need to had well-trained staff in every department and it was important that everyone had professional development in their field of expertise. The staff should create a learning environment at the College where every staff member takes responsibility for their professional development to close the gap in skills or knowledge that they feel they lack.

4.12   Awareness of Institutional Policies and Procedures

New lecturers who had no teaching experience did not realize the importance of standard processes and quality management in an institution.   The participants thought that their lack of background in education caused them not to be aware of this. Several of them mentioned that as far as course content goes, the students got awful lot information but it was the pedagogy part that was lacking. They felt that this was an area of quality that was not being fulfilled and that needed to be improved. Several participants mentioned that the staff should always be a step ahead of doing things to avoid catching up on urgent matters that are related to policies and procedures. They gave their views on how the staff could work in committees where staff can hold discussions to talk and work together to instill growing awareness of the policies and procedures. This was seen as a way to work forward because the participants thought the College currently had the basic structure on which to scaffold improvements.

4.13   Improvement and Maintenance of Processes

When interviewed, the participants were aware that the quality assurance processes were necessary for the survival of the College; otherwise it will be closed. They saw the College as unique in a way, because although funded by the government, the College was a private education provider and therefore if the College did not improve or maintain its quality processes, there was a possibility of losing our accreditation.

The improvement and maintenance of ongoing processes was to ensure the integrity of the programme and the College must not lose track of this. As the College had a niche market and was growing, the College needs to place an emphasis on the quality of its educational programme, and the provision of an educational environment where students take their experiences away with them and let others know of these experiences with the College.

4.14 Accountability

There was awareness from all those interviewed of what the College were currently doing, whether it was improving or maintaining processes, ensuring quality education or providing a good learning environment for students, it was all about accountability. From the accrediting bodies' standpoint, the College was accountable to both of them and could not do without either one of them. They commented that the government, funding bodies, shareholders, the profession, the students, and every staff member were accountable. Without students, the College would not exist, and therefore everybody was accountable to them, in terms of giving them the best learning environment for them to be the best chiropractors. One participant commented that the College was accountable to students by providing good boundaries so that they can grow to become good chiropractors.

4.15   Student Perception

Participants were of the opinion that the current students thought we were tough on them, but that was how the College's approach should be to maintain its standards. Regardless of how good the College programme was, there would always be students who were not happy. But that may not be a bad thing because it makes the staff to take a harder look at themselves and at what was delivered to the students. Otherwise, there was a consensus based on student feedback that students were happy with the programme and with the new College campus and organisation.

4.16   Reputation

The participants also felt that because of the niche that the College had developed in its chiropractic philosophy and techniques, it attracted many students from Australia. Potential students from all over the world had heard of the reputation of the College. With the re-accreditation with NZQA and CCEA, the qualification was portable to most countries all over the world. The participants were particularly impressed with overseas students that they had interviewed who had indicated that they chose this College although they had other options such as choosing between a university and other established colleges in the United States of America. The College programme had a definite point of difference with other university-based programmes in Australia.

4.17 Leadership

Participants indicated that basically all staff members were leaders in their own way. The College, programme, strategic planning and leadership were dynamic. This had given the staff the inspiration to achieve in the administration of the College and the delivery of programmes. Participants also expressed that there needed to be leadership to drive the College to a higher level in terms of improving teaching skills, getting on board to accept processes and formation of policies to support their staff. In a small organisation, they saw working in committees as a way of implementing better policies and procedures and it did not matter whether it was from top to bottom or vice-versa as it was workable both ways. Participants felt that the working and implementation of quality assurance policies and procedures should be supported by the top management.

4.18 Outcomes

Participants suggested that the College should work in a more proactive way as problems would then be easier to sort out before they become one. As for the accreditation bodies, it would be easier for the reviewers to analyse what policies and procedures are in placed when they realise that the staff are more aware of how policies and procedures worked. Participants thought that it would take time to get everybody buying-in to this practice and it would need to be a long term development. Another input from one participant was that the quality processes should become more streamlined to function better. The processes would then be better communicated to other lecturers especially the part-timers, and new staff would be better assimilated into the quality processes.

4.19   Quality in Education

There were varying perceptions amongst the participants with respect to quality. One participant suggested that it was about excellence and good value and the expectation was high.   The participants expected students to get what they expected although this would cost a lot of money. From their standpoint, students were buying the service of the College, a qualification and an education; they expect a quality education and the College needed to show them that what was provided within the College's niche role, was of better quality than what they might get from other institutions; it was something special and of excellence.   In addition, another participant stated that it was the determination to give students the best service that made an excellent programme, one that could turn them into the best chiropractors who can go out into the world and change the lives of the people in the best possible manner. Another participant added that it was the integrity of the programme that to have an excellent programme, we needed excellent people to deliver the programme and reputation was everything. Another participant put 'Good Teacher' at the top of their list.   This participant suggested that it was not enough to have good policies and procedures in place, but an institution needed also to have good teachers. The participant felt that a good teacher drove good policies because they were passionate and student focused. Quality was really about the good learning environment that the College needed to provide for students.

4.20   Summary

The findings outlined in this chapter had been articulated by the participants. Furthermore, the findings enabled me to identify some emergent themes across the participants as a group.

In addition, the reflection of the experiences from the participants in this study presented a wide range of phenomena that related to the quality assurance system of the institution. The characteristics of the common themes are the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Five

Discussion

5.0   Introduction

This chapter is an overview of the findings from the interviews that have been conducted for this study in relation to relevant literature theory. Findings from the face-to-face interviews were summarized into themes in chapter 4 to allow the flow of participants experience and their thoughts to be expressed freely.

5.1   Quality in Education

For an organisation to excel in quality there is a need to know how members of the organisation perceive and what they understand by the term quality. This study revealed different definitions of quality being the interviewees. This was consistent with the literature (Brennan & Shah, 2000; Harvey & Green, 1993; Green, 1994: Harman, 1996) that stated that the conceptualization of the term 'Quality' is problematic

The findings revealed that participants perceived quality as being about excellence, good value for money and meeting expectations as criteria for quality in education. They also perceived that 'Quality' is special, best service, transformational and involves integrity. The interviewees perceived that in view of students as consumers, who are buying the service (education) and the product (qualification) of the College, there is an expectation that it met all the stated quality requirements. This would mean that the College would need to ensure that the service, as well as the qualification that it delivered, met stakeholders' quality standards.

The concepts of 'Quality' in education by staff members provided a platform of understanding in the cultural environment of the College. As indicated by Harman (1996) quality deals with a number of complex ideas and as a relative concept, it was only meaningful to particular people at a particular point of time. The College is unique in its own way and therefore there are certain perspectives that staff will relate to differently in their concepts and to them the measurement of what quality is differs from others.

To provide better planning and the implementation of quality assurance processes for institutional improvement, I would argue the need to have a unified understanding of the quality concept at institutional level which was not featured in the findings. There needs to be a consensus between administrators as policy makers and lecturers as implementers to have a clear perception of quality in order to avoid potential conflict with the implementation of institutional processes. This would be consistent with Woodhouse's (1996) suggestion that it would be ideal if the articulation of quality is presented as a unified voice to enhance the credibility of the conception of quality at institutional level.

5.2   The Importance of Accreditation

Reflections from participants revealed that both the re-accreditation processes were of importance and that they were a necessity for the survival of the College. It had been acknowledged that the approval of re-accreditation from the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) and Chiropractic on Chiropractic Education Australasia Limited (CCEA) meant that the College had been approved as meeting the standards set by both the accrediting agencies, or the "stamp of approval' by McBurnie (2000, p 25).

The interviewees reflected that, as a small private College it was important to obtain dual accreditation. For the College to operate in New Zealand, it needed the endorsement of NZQA's accreditation approval. On the other hand as a chiropractic professional College, it needed a chiropractic regulatory body to acknowledge that the curriculum delivered met the professional competencies of the profession.

Findings suggested that in gaining the accreditation from CCEA, the College graduates would be able to be registered with the chiropractic boards around the world provided they meet the required professional requirements of boards in Europe, Asia, Australia and the United States (limited to the legislation of different states). However, under the 1997 Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act, graduates from the College who were registered with the New Zealand Chiropractic Board could register to practise in Australia without having to sit the Australian Chiropractic Board examinations (Ministry of Economic, 2009). It was also revealed that although the College's graduates were able to register and work in the United States, it had been brought to the College's attention that it could be problematic in some states, as pointed out earlier in the literature by Woodhouse (2000b), due to the imposition of different regulatory standards by different states.

In view of the accrediting processes, findings indicated that although both the processes were similar, they were different in many ways. It was revealed that the NZQA's process were more compliant based, more regulatory, and thus more controlling, while the CCEA's process were based on the content of the curricula that matched the chiropractic profession competencies. The interviewees related that discussion sessions were always held between the staff and CCEA inspection team on how improvements could be made. The interviewees suggested that it was the comments that could bring about change to the institutional process systems.

The literature revealed that globalisation had increased the importance of portability and mobility of qualification that can take graduates around the world (Harman, 2000; Van Damme, 2000; Woodhouse, 2001). My findings revealed that the College had made every effort to ensure that the qualification delivered met both national and international standards. By doing so, the College's approach was in line with the international educational stance on comparability of standards of its qualification around the world. In 1999, the Central and Western European powers brought the latest reform into higher education in Europe declaring the 'Bologna Process' to work on greater consistency and mobility across their higher education systems (Barrows, 2000). The New Zealand educational agencies and other tertiary education organisations had endorsed that they would work on comparability mechanisms to ensure that New Zealand's tertiary education system relate to all international models (Ministry of Education, 2008a). While the approach was taken by governmental agencies in Central and Western Europe, there were indication of growing resistance from both academics and students. This was featured in a recent report by the New Zealand Education Review (2008) that Spanish students protested on the streets complaining about the Bologna Development Process raising their concerns about cost and workload sustainability. The implication that has been highlighted is that the governmental agencies who are involved in the Bologna Process do not share the same ideology with the academics and students.

It was noted from the findings that accreditation was an important process for the College. Two types of accreditation were identified, each with a different process. Getting approval for accreditation was recognition of credibility and this indicated that the College had received the "stamp of approval" (McBurnie, 2000, p 25) from the national and external professional accrediting bodies. The amount of work that had been carried out in order to obtain international accreditation from CCEA signified the comparability of standards in its quality assurance systems. Accordingly, the College's practice was consistent with other higher educational institutions around the world, working on mobility and comparability of its qualification through accreditation.

5.3   The External Evaluation Process

Reflections on the comments regarding the external evaluation process by the auditors from NZQA and the inspection team from CCEA, findings revealed that the comments regarding the College's quality management systems were fair. The participants felt that there were some quality processes that needed improvement.

It was evident that the findings revealed that the staff members worked hard to improve the quality assurance systems such as the moderation process. Findings revealed some concern about comments by the external audit/evaluation team with regard to some already identified concerns that had already been highlighted by the College during the self-evaluation process. The interviewees argued that the College had already taken action to start work on the identified concerns. Some quality processes took time to complete and was still at a work-in-progress stage when the external audit/evaluation took place. The participants expressed the view that there was an expectation that the auditors/inspection team members should have a different approach when addressing these concerns, such as allowing a timeline for completion instead of expressing the concerns.

While the findings revealed that participants felt that the auditors/reviewers' comments were fair, the issue raised may not be justifiable. The participants argued that if concerns had been identified during the self-evaluation process, then the comments should not be raised as a concern; however, maybe a timeline for completion was a suitable response rather than being signaled as a concern. This argument also raised the question of the process of the auditors/evaluation team. As mentioned in the literature review, Gynnild (2007) had questioned the appropriateness of how the outcomes of external evaluation were measured. Should the auditors/evaluators question an honest reflection of the administrators? Harvey (2002b) highlighted that the self-evaluation process would only be useful if administrators were able to provide honest self assessment of weaknesses within their quality assurance processes. He indicated that the less threatened the administrators felt, the more honest reflection outcomes would be

provided.   Murdoch (2005) indicated that individuals (administrators) would not disclose certain information if they felt threatened because of the need to protect themselves. Thus, any exclusion of information would impact the accuracy of the self-assessment/evaluation process.

The findings on the impact of the comments given by the auditors/inspection team revealed that the interviewees were receptive to their comments. It was suggested that the comments would enhance the institutional quality management systems that were currently weak and provided opportunities for the College to work harder for continuous improvement. A summary of the interviewees' perception of the auditors/reviewers' comment are outlined below:

- The comments actually guided the course curriculum, the delivery of the programme

- The comments helped to align the College with the guidelines and objectives

- The comments assisted the College in prioritising its strategies such as staff workload distribution

- The comments accelerated the College's to fix both NZQA and CCEA's primary concerns on the programme

- The comments reinforced the meeting of stakeholders' requirements as part of the quality assurance mechanism

- The comments promoted teamwork and organisational culture change by increasing awareness of all stakeholders' concerns, by paying attention to them and maintaining the processes on a long term basis instead of just a quick fix.

It was evident from the above that the comments from the auditors/reviewers had reinforced the thought process of the interviewees. The indication from the above findings revealed that at institutional level there was a lot of work to be done to ensure continuous improvements to the internal quality assurance processes to meet stakeholders' needs. Murdoch (2005) recommended that mechanisms should be put in placed to address issues and recommendations from self-assessments/evaluations, as well as follow-up procedures and activities. This would ensure that ongoing improvements might be made before the next re-accreditation process.

5.4   Accountability

Interviewees expressed their awareness of importance of who the stakeholders were and the necessity to utilize this as a strategy for the College to thrive in a competitive educational market. According to the interviewees, with the understanding of who their stakeholders were, they were able to maintain a position where they could be accountable to them

Interviewees regarded students as the most important stakeholders, and without them, the College would not exist. They suggested that it was not good enough to solely ensure quality assurance processes were in place within the institution in order to ensure the provision of quality education and a good learning environment for students. They insisted that good teaching and learning outcomes were important to students, as well as student's learning experiences. In this way, they felt that the College would fulfill its obligation to the students. However, as highlighted in the literature review, the accreditation process or funding agencies' measurement of accountability indicated little evidence that accreditation resulted in actual teaching and learning quality or student's learning experiences. The accreditation process meeting the quality standards of the accrediting agencies as highlighted in chapter 2, paragraph 2.8.

Findings revealed that the interviewees were aware of the College's responsibility to funding agency such as the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). They had acknowledged that as the College is a private educational provider, the provision of the College's educational programme must meet TEC's prescribed accountability quality assurance procedures and be responsive to the needs of society. While TEC's measurement of the programme is value for money and outcomes on how it meets all the stakeholders' needs, funding guidelines from TEC had no indication on the measurement of good teaching and learning outcomes for students (Tertiary Education Commission, 2006).

Interviewees perceived that the College should be responsible to the Chiropractic profession. They indicated that the maintenance of a quality programme that ensured graduates met the standards of entry level chiropractic graduate profile competencies (New Zealand College of Chiropractic Graduate Profile, 2008) were of great importance. In this respect they felt, not only was the College accountable to the profession but was also responsible to the wider community, as the interviewees viewed that incompetent chiropractors would jeopardize the health provision to the community as a whole.

My findings from this study revealed employees as stakeholders of the institution should not be taken for granted. Evidence had shown that the auditors/evaluators were concerned with the welfare of the staff. They highlighted the fact that the heavy teaching and administrative workload of the College's staff was a concern. Their concerns led to the College's prompt decision to employ more staff resources. This was a reflection that the auditors/evaluators were not only concerned with external stakeholders but also with internal stakeholders of the College. In a study by Gift and Bell-Hutchinson (2007) on quality assurance and the imperatives for improved student experiences in higher education, they suggested that to sustain improvement in the quality of student experiences, appropriate human and physical resources were necessary to make this happen. Thus, as suggested, the balance of adequate human resources and physical resources were required to maintain quality improvement.

5.5   Institutional Improvement

Findings suggested that staff were committed to institutional improvement.   They perceived that while the current quality assurance processes were adequate at this point in time, the processes would be outgrown with a growing student population. Strategies were suggested by them to include making use of clearer guidelines to change existing policies and procedures to meet new requirements.   They also suggested the incorporation of broader scoped criteria to meet with different situations as they arose an example would be the criteria on what are valid and not valid grounds for appeals.

5.6   Learning Organisation Culture

Training and development of staff members were highlighted as an important strategy to improve teaching standards and other specific skills to meet students' as well as other customer's needs by the interviewees.   Highlights below were compiled from the findings of the study.

1) The importance of professional development for every staff member was highlighted. This included the need for well-trained staff to be in placed at the College in the field of their expertise (administration, marketing, and accounting or management skills).

2) The standards for all teaching staff must be raised. The Adult Teaching and Learning course had been recommended and attendance be made compulsory for all new lecturers who do not have previous teaching experience. New lecturers had great knowledge and in course content, the students gained a great deal from their field of expertise but it was the pedagogy [teaching and learning styles] that was lacking.

3) The creation of a learning environment at the College where every staff member would take responsibility for their professional development in order to close the gap for skills or knowledge that they lack. It was recommended that staff could do this by either furthering their education or attending courses/seminars to upgrade themselves their skills experience.

4) The continuation of the in-house teach-the-teacher course where senior lecturers facilitate pre-determined educational topics of interest for all staff members who were interested. However, another proposal was to bring in external expertise to teach or deliver certain topics of interest for the staff. External expertise would bring along different perspectives on how things be done that might help the staff to think differently.

The findings revealed the interviewees' interest and commitment to improving professional standards of staff. Based on the above, it can be argued that the participants are very much into developing and building a culture of learning. Senge (1990) termed the culture of learning by an organization as a "learning organisation" in which he states:

> "organisations (the College) where people (the staff) continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and continually learning to see the whole together" (p 3).

He based his rationale on the idea that organisations that are flexible, adaptive and productive will excel and for this to happen, he argued, organisations need to discover how to tap into people's commitment and capacity to learn at all levels.

The participants revealed their desire to bring about developmental change. Hannan and Silver (2000) described this change as occurring only when groups and individuals voluntarily desire to bring about perceived improvements to their practice in order to better support learning. However, Hannan and Silver (2000) argued that although the desired improvements may not always occur, it is the practitioner's desire to believe what enhances improvement that motivates the change.

5.7 Awareness of Institutional Policies and Procedures

The interviewees noted the lack of staff members' awareness of institutional policies and procedures and suggested the need to raise the awareness of institutional policies and procedures in order that the quality management systems worked. Indication from findings revealed the weakness of some of the quality managements systems were contributed to by new or part-time staff who were not aware of the importance of quality assurance processes at the institution. The interviewees who had worked in other smaller organisations suggested the replication of creating working committees to instill an awareness of quality assurance where staff can hold discussions, talk and work together. They perceived that the use of working committees would give the necessary directions that were required to strengthen the quality assurance processes for continuous improvement. This fits with what Murdoch (2005) found in her studies on reflections of self-assessments, that in order for continuous improvement to take place, there was a need to create general awareness and sensitivity of continuous improvement culture to improve quality assurance at an institutional level.

5.8 Student Perceptions

Findings revealed that understanding student perceptions might be a strategy that could assist the College's approach to maintain its standards. Perceptions from findings indicated that not 100% of students would think that the College had done a good job of delivering a good programme. One colleague suggested it was understandable that regardless how well we might deliver the programme, there would always be students who were not happy. However, the interviewees were open to critiques and perceived this as an avenue to take

hard look at how the programme had been delivered to the students. It was suggested that in the past, students had thought that the College had been lenient, and bent the rules to accommodate their needs; however, as reflected by the findings, the interviewees thought that this was not true.

5.9   Reputation

It was revealed in the findings that reputation was an important aspect for the College to attract students to the College. The interviewees perceived it was the niche that the College had developed in terms of its chiropractic philosophy and techniques that had attracted students to the College. Indications suggested it was the reputation of the College that attracted potential students from other parts of the world and the interviewees were impressed with overseas students whom that they had interviewed chose this College although they had other options, such of choosing a university and or attending other established colleges in the USA. The interviewees mentioned that potential students told them that is the teaching of the chiropractic philosophy and techniques that had attracted them. The interviewees suggested that the College programme certainly had a point of difference with other university-based programmes in Australia. The College's programme is based on healthy lifestyle whereas the Australian programme is more therapeutic based.

While the College cannot compete with the 'elite' status of universities (McBurnie, 2000) and the perception of students in favour of enrolling at universities, it can certainly build a reputation for itself in terms of its niche. So far, the College had benefited from this reputation in terms of student enrolment from overseas.

5.10   Leadership

My findings revealed the perception that basically every one was a leader in their own way. It revealed that because of this perception, staff was inspired to achieve beyond their current achievement and commitment to quality assurance.   However, the interviewees felt that there was a need for better leadership to drive the College's quality management systems to a higher level.   This indicated that the interviewees were receptive to different types of leadership styles such as top to bottom or vice-versa but they perceived the implementation of quality assurance processes at all levels must be supported by top management in order for it to work.   This fits with what Lewis and Smith (1994) cited by Murdoch (2005) suggested, for any quality initiative to succeed, it must have clear visible commitment from top management

5.11   Outcomes

In terms of quality outcomes, the findings suggested that there were lack of awareness on how the quality management systems were supposed to work in some areas and with staff members. The interviewees had suggested work should be done to resolve this issue.

They proposed that quality assurance processes should work in a more integrated way in order to address problems before they arose. The intention of this proposal was to make it easier for accreditation bodies to understand what the College had been doing. It was perceived by the interviewees that by doing so, the College would then be more integrated and as staff become more aware of how the quality management systems work. However, the interviewees anticipated that this strategy would take time to get everyone buying-in to processes or culture and until this has been resolved it could be a

long term strategy. As the quality processes became more streamlined it would function better. A better communication loop was anticipated to better assimilate new staff into the quality processes. Again in Murdoch's (2005) findings, her respondents realized that the creation of continuous improvement culture was a long term process and it would take time to implement the strategies.

Relating to the experiences of the re-accreditation processes, findings revealed that the interviewees were receptive to several comments from the auditors/inspection and that they perceived it would bring improvement to the institutional processes. They suggested that:

- It was a valuable process to reinforce the need for improvement.

- It was for the health and improvement for the College

- As it was a peer process, it would assist the College's realignment its guidelines and objectives that might have been neglected due to high teaching and administration workloads.

- The College had the process structure, but was slacking, and the re-accreditation process encouraged the College to put priorities to ensure improvements were made.

5.12 Challenges

Needless to say, the findings provided a wide range of perspectives which were positive in bringing about strategies for improvement. However, the findings also revealed a number of challenges that needed to be addressed. The indications from findings revealed that the participants were receptive to the identified challenges and took them as opportunities for improvement.

The perceptions from participants were that the College being a small private institution, resources was scarce, and, as highlighted by the auditors/inspection team, there were cases of some staff members' workload being high due to a shortage of qualified staff. Findings revealed staff has heavy teaching and administrative workloads which made it difficult for them to cope and perform well at the same time. They indicated that having part-time lecturers reporting to them and not having the time to go over policies and procedures or the administration protocols with them had created less adherence to some of the policies and procedures which could be avoided. The reliance on part-time lecturers had created many challenges for the College. Some of the challenges revealed were:

- Part time lecturers had fixed schedules especially if they were also clinical practitioners and were not flexible to attend meetings. This created a problem whereby changes in policies and procedures might have been made but because the part time lecturers do not attend the meetings and therefore the policies and procedures were not been communicated to them. This could be the reasons why policies and procedures were not followed.

- They came from different institutions and were not familiar with the College's policies and procedures; they therefore were unaware of the specific institutional processes. They functioned as though the College's policies and procedures were the same as the institution they came from and were not aware of the difference in processes.

- Part-time lecturers do not know policies and procedures well and therefore do not follow the quality management processes. This was due to the fact that they only came for in a short time to teach, and then leave.

As can be seen, the reliance on part-time lecturers had created a real problem; this problem had affected the College's performance in system's quality, and was one of the reasons why the quality management systems had not functioned well and the suggestion that it might be a hindrance to the College's reputation. Glasman, Cibuka and Ashby (2002) revealed the possibility of educational programmes that had an over-reliance of part-time staff often suffered from poor reputations.

It was revealed from the findings that there were issues beyond the control of staff members that need top management's intervention. Interviewees indicated that staff workload and the shortage of staff had created a real problem in which their performance was affected and was one of the reasons why the quality management systems were neglected. However, findings revealed that with the highlighting of this problem by the accrediting bodies, it had accelerated the College's management to recruit more staff into the College.

Although findings had revealed minor weaknesses of the College's management systems there were other circumstances that might have contributed to the highlighted weaknesses that were beyond the control of staff members. It was not to say that excuses should be made, however the contributing factors should still be looked at.

Summary

This chapter summarizes the discussion on the findings. Several themes had appeared to be consistent with other research literature. While the findings were positive, as representatives of a College the participants could reflect on the best practices and congratulate themselves. There were certainly some challenges that needed to be worked on.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

6.0   Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusion of the research. A brief summary of the research finding and my discussion of them are provided, followed by the strengths and limitations of the study are discussed. The conclusion is based on the findings from the descriptions made by participants of their own experiences and perceptions of quality assurance, after they had undergone two re-accreditation processes at the institution, and on the literature. The implications from the findings are proposed, with potential future research being suggested.

6.1   The research findings

This research sought to address the following research question: *How can institutional processes be maintained or improved through quality assurance processes?* The findings presented in this dissertation are derived from four interviewees' perceptions on quality assurance approaches on how to strategize the enhancement and improvement in quality assurance in a professional tertiary provider in New Zealand. Different factors appear to underpin the motivations as to why and how the College engages in its experience with the accreditation processes.

Understanding the Concept of Quality

Findings revealed that each staff perceived quality in education in a different way. The cultural environment creates the uniqueness of the institution and the way staff perceives the term quality. There was evidence of passion for their profession and their approach to understanding that quality was relative to the environment they were in. Added to this, the interviewees revealed that the concept of quality was perceived as dependent on each participant's role in the institution as the degree of the emphasis on quality is different although there could be similarities.

The Importance of Accreditation

There was a unanimous awareness of the importance of accreditation to the institution. Participants found the New Zealand Qualifications Authority as more regulatory and controlling where criteria were assessed with a tick off box as either met or not met, while the peer assessment process approach of the Council on Chiropractic Education Australasia Limited (CCEA) was matching the evaluation against competencies with discussion for improvement.

The importance of achieving dual accreditation, that was, the national general accreditation as part of the general education in New Zealand and the professional accreditation for the Chiropractic profession, was to ensure creditability of the qualification delivered. Also, maintaining the achievement of the CCEA's accreditation was a confirmation of comparability of standards that would enable international mobility of the professional qualification.

The External Evaluation Processes

Findings revealed that the external evaluation processes were rigorous processes. While these were beneficial to the institution, the preparation work seemed overwhelming and intrusive. Feedback from the external evaluation processes had had a positive impact on the institution. It provided the institution with a mechanism to reflect and challenge its current quality assurance system. This enabled the institution to further improve its quality measurements for seeking re-accreditation.

While perceptions on the overall external evaluation processes were perceived to be fair, there was argument over the assessment procedure by auditors/evaluators on the way concerns that had been highlighted in the self-evaluation were being raised as a concern by them. This reflection may be a weakness in the assessment procedure of the accreditation agency.

Accountability

The staff was clear in their perception of the type of accountability required by each of the stakeholder groups. Findings revealed that staff saw quality assurance as an important aspect of accreditation. They believed that quality assurance processes were effective tools that can contribute to the improvement capacity for accountability, competition and outcomes of the institution.

Adequacy of Quality Assurance Processes

Findings revealed that although participants perceived the current quality assurance systems to be adequate, they felt that in the future they may not be adequate to ensure that the needs of a growing student population are met.

Strategies for Quality Assurance Processes Improvement

Findings revealed that while there were challenges to the current quality assurance processes within the institution, the participants look at these as opportunities to improve the College systems. Views on strategies emerged from the findings, such as the creating of a learning organisation with the provision of professional development and self development for success; raising awareness of institutional policies and procedures to improve current problematic quality assurance systems; raising student perception of the institution; branding of the institution; and improving leadership roles to improve quality management systems.

The Strengths and Limitations

A number of strengths can be identified in this research, including the following:

First, the use of a case study as a research methodology for the present study was appropriate. The research had sought to explore the quality assurance processes of a private professional institution in the first instance, rather than making a conclusive judgment based on its existing processes. Furthermore, in order for strategies of improvement to be made, it was appropriate to gather insights from senior management staffs who were employees of the institution.

Secondly, the exploration identified positive insights from staff experiences, as well as constructive suggestions and strategies for continuous improvement of the institutional processes that may contribute to ongoing accreditation and the success of the College.

Thirdly, the research contributes to the limited New Zealand literature of quality assurance research based on staff perceptions, especially at a private professional institution.

Fourthly, the engagement of College employees had provided the opportunity for the staff members' voices to be heard and furthermore, to validate their experience at the institution itself.

Finally, the impact of the research process contributed to my personal and professional development and my deeper understanding of the overall concepts of Quality in Education.

While this study might be the first to capture insights on the subject of quality assurance of senior management staff in a professional private tertiary institution in New Zealand, the use of findings should be used with caution. There were some limitations that should be noted, particularly in relation to the level of generalization of the findings. The present research project was conducted in one small private professional tertiary institution and every institution is different. Staff in other tertiary institutions may not have the same cultural experiences (chiropractic philosophical experience), in particular the same influence of professional characteristics as this institution. Participants were asked a wide range of questions to stimulate their reflection on experiences that were related to the quality assurance processes in regard to accreditation. Participants involved had different senior roles in the institution. The generalization from a small sample of participants from a small institution may be problematic as it may not be representative of larger institutions.

While limitations exist, I am confident this research has contributed to myself and to other staff members who have participated in this research. It provided insights into the influences that may not be included in large-scale research designs. In particular, by using a case study approach and interviews, staff members' unique experiences and the characteristics of their involvement were captured at an individual level. The findings serve to highlight the importance of exploring beyond broad categories often used to cluster staff so that contributing factors that can impact improvement of institutional processes can be identified more accurately.

Consideration needs to be given to the existence of the influencing factors identified in this study and their significance to the improvement of institutional processes. Reflections on the research findings would possibly bring changes into the organisational practice of the institute.

Implications

The findings of this study contributed to a number of suggestions for better practice in the institution to enhance improvement in the institutional processes that might assist the College to thrive in their competitive market. Based on the findings, I suggest that this research highlights the need for greater consideration of different aspects that influence the institutional processes of quality assurance at the institution. I would argue that the present findings could bring awareness to other staff members in the following ways:

First, the findings from the present study have indicated that understanding of the concepts of quality, quality assurance and mechanisms for improvement was important. However, with the differing individual perspectives, there was a need to adopt common understanding on the concepts to meet the common objectives of the institution. This could be achieved through suggested committee meetings in the development of these concepts.

Secondly, the issue of quality assurance in our institution had previously received little attention except when there had been a forthcoming audit/evaluation. Consequently, the findings of this study are intended to provide valuable baseline information of the tools of quality assurance for the institution's administrators/faculty members and researchers, and it should be an established system. Each and every staff needed to be aware of all policies and procedures and be encouraged to take the responsibility to close the gap where inconsistencies or lack of understanding of policies or procedures has been identified.

Thirdly, while the findings indicated the understanding of whom the institution was accountable to, there was also an indication that there was a lack of awareness especially in part-time staff due to their individual circumstances. However, as this study was at an institutional level with individual participants, I would argued that all staff had a responsibility to the institution and therefore whether a person was a full time or part-time staff member the awareness should be universal. On the other hand, it was also the responsibility for the managers to ensure this awareness was shared. As accountability was taking centre stage across all educational sectors, this was therefore an important aspect of the improvement programme for the institution.

Lastly, the present study indicates the need for the creation of a learning organisation where all staff members take their own responsibility to further develop their skills and expertise in order to survive within a competitive market environment. As a professional institution, meeting competencies was the ultimate goal; therefore, closing each individual staff's job competency gap is important to enable the full functioning of the institution. As suggested in the findings, there is a need to encourage staff to take responsibility for their self-development. The achievement of this may enable the institution to have more qualified staff and to develop more ideas on the journey towards excellence.

6.3 Suggestions for Future Research

Understanding the complexities and the management of quality assurance systems in an institution is important.

While the main outcome of this study was the gathering of data and the utilization of information for the improvement of existing practices at the institution on quality assurance systems, equally important was the formulation of quality assurance policies which were relevant and desirable for the future of the institution. Further research could be conducted that builds on the results of this study to determine the appropriate quality assurance systems and processes to support these systems for institutions in line with the needs of the government, society, employers and students.

6.4   Conclusion

This exploratory study has contributed to the building of a personal knowledge and awareness of the importance of quality assurance management processes to support the institution to meet accreditation standards. The study also provided the awareness of how different strategies and approaches in quality assurance systems can enhance improvements into the existing systems. It is hoped that other researchers from other professional private tertiary institutions will draw upon, and extend my findings into other areas of research on quality assurance processes. Quality in education is complex; I challenge other researchers to build the knowledge base in this field, especially in New Zealand.

Finally, I would like to conclude my personal accomplishment in this study by saying that my passion had been fulfilled with pride and 'Quality was my passion and my pride'.

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Appendix: A

Summary of Accreditation Highlights and Lowlights

NZQA:
Highlights:
- Significant improvement in financial outlook
- Quality facility for teaching and learning
- Enhancement of the College's efforts to provide academic activities in support of the teaching and learning through the re-organisation of College management structure and re-distribution of duties and responsibilities of senior academic portfolios and the appointment of additional staffing resources

Lowlights
- Quality and timelines of moderation of assessments
- Preparation and correlation of assessment items with Course items and objectives. An evidence of mismatch between course objectives, assessment weightings and assessment activities
- The limited number of academic staff with higher or discipline specific qualifications and/or academic experience necessitates the need for engagement and/or consultancy with experienced and/or discipline specific external academics to assist the College to achieve the necessary academic activities and standards in providing a Bachelors Degree

CCEA
Highlights:
- Team of passionate staff
- Improvement programs like moderation of assessments
- Level of accessibility of documents

Lowlights
- Policies to safeguard program integrity and quality of student performance
- Staff workload
- Relevant skills and qualifications of teaching staff
- Clinical training resources/clinical science education approach
- Student competencies/graduate profile

Participant
Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

17th July 2008

Project Title

Working Title: Exploring experiences of the Re-accreditation Process: A Case Study

An Invitation

You are invited to participate in this research project that has been designed to explore experiences and insights on the re-accreditation process. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any time prior to the completion of data collection with no adverse consequences.

What was the purpose of this research?

It is hoped that through this study, insights gathered may build understanding that underpins 'Quality' in education that may enhance teaching and learning through quality improvement and change cultures of the institution.

How was I chosen for this research?

You have been chosen for this research project because of your personal experience and your involvement in the re-accreditation process last year.

What will happen in this research?

You are invited to participate in a face-to-face interview. The interview may take about an hour. The interview would be audio-recorded with your permission. The recording of the data is to enable the interviewer to be able to listen to you intently on what had been transpired during the interview. If you do not wish to have your conversation audio-recorded during the interview, notes may be recorded in writing. The data will be transcribed and a copy of the transcript will be forwarded to you to ensure that the data is correct. You may correct and/or delete any part of the transcript should you feel it is inappropriate. The data collected will be subsequently analysed.

What are the discomforts and risks?

I personally do not foresee that there may be discomforts or risks for this research project as my role at the College is more administrative rather than managerial. The aim of the research is designed to collect your perspectives on how institutional processes can be improved. It is aimed at collecting positive inputs to turn challenges into opportunities.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

If you feel any discomforts or risk; you can request to stop the audio tape from recording the conversations. You may also request the tape recording to be erased.

What are the benefits?

By participating in this research project you will be providing valuable information on your personal perspectives that underpins Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement in the education environment.

How will my privacy be protected?

No individual names will be identified in this project and pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity. However, due to the size of the organisation and the small number of participants involved, there is a possibility that you may be identifiable in the process. As the researcher, I will be cautious in this respect and will do my best to ensure that this situation will be minimised.

Only themes and not quotes generated from the interview will be presented in the report.

All relevant data collected will be carefully stored. Only my research supervisor and I will have access to the information that is provided.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

I recognise that your involvement in this project requires some sacrifice of your time. There will not be any payment for your involvement but we hope your contribution to the research is a sufficient reward.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

I offer you a chance to participate in this exploratory study through face-to-face interview. Your perspectives are valuable to this research.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Please sign the consent form per the attached to confirm your involvement.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

It is anticipated that the project would be completed by the end of December 2008. You would be sent a copy of the report via email once the report had been completed.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

If you have any concerns regarding the nature of this project, you can contact my Project Supervisor, Andy Begg through email: andy.begg@aut.ac.nz or at telephone no: 09-921 9999 extn 7355

If you have concerns regarding the conduct of the research, you can notify, the Executive Secretary, AUTEC, Madeline Banda, through email: *madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz* or at telephone no: 09-921 9999 ext 8044.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Researcher Contact Details:

Janise Heow, email address: janheo80@aut.ac.nz

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Andy Begg, andy.begg@aut.ac.nz, telephone no: 09-921 9999 extn 7355

Consent Form

For use when interviews were involved.

Working title: **Exploring experiences of the Re-accreditation Process: A Case Study**

Project Supervisor: **Andy Begg**

Researcher: **Janise Heow**

○ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information

Sheet dated ……………………...

○ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

○ I understand that notes would be taken during the interviews and that they would also be audio-taped and transcribed.

○ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I had provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.

○ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, would be destroyed.

○ I agree to take part in this research.

○ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one):

Yes○   No○

Participant's signature:

......................................………………………………………………………

Participant's name:

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Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 10/10/08
AUTEC Reference number 08/141

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.