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**Planning the Imaginary:
Assessing the Marketing of Lifelong Learning
And its Impact on Institutional change
*Work in Progress***

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Abstract

In 1997 the University of the Western Cape (UWC) adopted a new Mission Statement. The aims were formulated in 10 statements and one of them reads: 'Encourage and provide opportunities for lifelong learning through programmes and courses'.

This statement sets the pace for the establishment of UMILL (University Mission Initiative Lifelong Learning) which started exploring the concept of Lifelong Learning in terms of UWC's legacy in Distance Education, Continuing Education and Part-time studies. Four studies emerged in 1997 and 1998, which were used as a basis for the establishment of a Division for Lifelong Learning (DLL) in December 1998. Since the establishment of the Division a number of new areas have been developed under the broader umbrella of lifelong learning: Workplace Learning and Policies and practices of Recognition of Prior Learning.

In August 1999 UWC launched its first marketing campaign "It is Never too Late to learn" which mainly targeted Adult Mature learners with an interest for part-time studies. In those days many people perceived Lifelong Learning as being equivalent to part-time studies and part-time studies as being equivalent to after hour's studies. From the ensuing campaigns since 1999 a lifelong learner emerged who was part-time as well as full-time, was a mature learner of an average age of 27 years for women and 23 years for men, who wanted good services and high quality programmes during all working hours of the university.

The marketing campaigns solicited many queries from prospective and current students, queries that hint at the need for institutional change.

The paper assesses areas of enquiry and contestation embedded in 262 Email queries and shows how they point towards the need for institutional change.

Overture post-1994

On 27 April 1994 the first free democratic elections took place, thus creating the dawn of what is popularly known as the creation of “The New South Africa. “ This newborn democratic baby started its life among great expectations. There were high expectations about the implementation of new plans in all sectors of life. Education was no exception. An immense investment was already made prior to 1994 in the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI), which brought together the countries expertise in the entire gamut of education ¹

The grand vision was there, in line with the one-liner on one of the entrances of our university “let the doors of learning be opened for all” ², which according to many students from the historically disadvantaged communities implied “access for all and free of charge”. This utopian vision emerged in the students’ protests on 1995-1997 when a small militant section in the student body saw unconditional access to tertiary education as a birthright. Access to tertiary education for those who had been denied access in the past became an important issue. In addition did the often appalling track record of skills development in the private and public sector raised many concerns about how tertiary education could contribute to the development of a well trained and motivated workforce. The debates were not new, not even for South Africa, but under the new dispensation after 1994 there was a greater sense of urgency to tackle this situation through policy development and through the creation of an infrastructure that would guarantee in the long term upward mobility for all. Thus did we witness the coming of the

National Qualification Framework

The South African Qualification Authority

The Skills Development Act

The Skills Development Levy

The restructuring of Higher Education in term of size and shape and funding formulas

New financial Aid systems for students in tertiary education.

Ideally were these new systems also meant to optimize access for the mature learner, who in most cases was a student who had to juggle her/ his requirements of work, the family, the community and study. These learners did not necessarily always meet the entry requirements of tertiary education, but were often highly motivated to gain access to tertiary education. The new funding formula for tertiary education, to be adopted in 2004, however is not an encouragement for part-time enrolment and enrolment via alternative access. The first group will count for less FTE than in the past. Although the policy documents of the National Department of Education (of

¹) Reports of the various NEPI Research groups, published by Oxford University Press / NECC in 1993 also covered Adult Education. Prof. Shirley Walters (then director the Centre for Adult Education and Continuing Education (CACE) at UWC and Prof. Zelda Groener (present director of CACE) participated in the Adult Education Research Group.

²) Based on the Freedom charter of the ANC as adopted in Harare in the 1960’s.

June 2002) recommended 5% of all places at tertiary institutions to be reserved for students who come in via alternative access (e.g. RPL) has this policy not been translated into favorable budgetary relief or support.

The Position of the University of the Western Cape (UWC)

Since the mid eighties UWC has implemented an open door policy and gave access to students from all Historically Disadvantaged Communities. UWC has the biggest and oldest part-time programme in the province of the Western Cape, dating back to 1962. It is with this programme as a basis that the University embarked on its long way to transform itself into a lifelong learning institution. In 1997 the University of the Western Cape (UWC) adopted a new Mission statement. The aims were formulated in 10 statements and one of them reads: 'Encourage and provide opportunities for lifelong learning through programmes and courses'.

This statement set the pace for the establishment of UMILL (University Mission Initiative Lifelong Learning) which started exploring the concept of Lifelong Learning in terms of UWC's legacy in Distance Education, Continuing Education and Part-time studies four studies emerged in 1997 and 1998. These were used as a basis for the establishment of a Division for Lifelong Learning (DLL) in December 1998 ³. Since the establishment of this Division a number of new areas have been developed under the broader umbrella of lifelong learning: Workplace Learning and Policies and practices of Recognition of Prior Learning ⁴

Starting to Promote Lifelong Learning

It is never too late to learn". With this slogan UWC launched its first marketing campaign to promote Part-time and Continuing Studies. We write August 1999. The campaign mainly targeted Adult Mature learners with an interest for part-time studies and continuing education . The campaign was initiated by the newly established Division for Lifelong Learning (DLL), whose staff members ⁵ were well versed in the principals of Lifelong Learning, but had little experience with the practical implications at the level of institutional change ⁶.

In those days at UWC most staff members perceived Lifelong Learning as being equivalent to part-time studies and part-time studies as being equivalent to after

³) Shirley Walters, Lifelong Learning by 2001. 'Giving Content to commitment', UWC, September 1997. SAIDE, An overview of distance education and resource based learning initiatives at the University of the Western Cape, UWC, September 1997, Task group on Continuing Professional Education, Continuing Professional Education at the University of the Western Cape, Survey results. UWC October 1997, Jos Koetsier, Lifelong Learning at UWC. A study of the part-time accredited programmes, UWC, October 1998.

⁴) For the RPL programme see the paper of Alan Ralphs and Natheem Hendrikcs, RPL Building a Quality Model for Access to Higher Education by Non-Traditional Learners in South Africa, also presented during this conference.

⁵) DLL had at that time 3 staff members (a part-time head for 40%, a full-time staff member and a consultant), no secretariat and 3 part-time "co-opted" staff members from other Departments.

⁶) In partnership with the University of Missouri, St Louis , USA, DLL worked on a system of indicators and characteristics elements of a lifelong Learning Higher Education Institution See the paper of Shirley Walters, Realizing a Quality Lifelong Learning Higher Education Institution? A working Paper, also presented during this conference.

hour's studies. From the ensuing campaigns since 1999 a lifelong learner emerged who was part-time as well as full-time, was a mature learner of an average age of 27 years for women and 23 years for men. They wanted good services and high quality programmes during all working hours (08:30-22:00) of the university.

DLL had since 1999 initiated institutional policy discussions, which argued for institutional change driven by principles of lifelong learning. The first marketing campaign of 1999 was to promote the same principles.

Shifts in imagining lifelong Learning

The first campaign in 1999 was a generic campaign. The first ads portrayed in a playful and artistic way mature, professional and successful learners. They served as role models. The ad contained a caption with their life story. The ad invited the public to order the first edition of the Part-time prospectus, either by e-mail or by phoning in ⁷. The campaign also aimed at changing the image of the university, which was tarnished by unfavorable media reports about student actions and retrenchments between 1995 and 1997. The campaign promoted UWC as a high quality provider of part-time and continuing education courses and it was hoped that it would increase the part-time enrolment at the University.

From 2002 onwards the campaign became more thematic, by profiling a mature part-time learner (over 50), a RPL student, a family of father and daughter who graduated on the same evening in March 2002 and persons in the workplace. The ads contained reply slips, which allowed a more in-depth assessment of the feedback and the prospectus contained a business reply card, which allowed prospective students to order an undergraduate or postgraduate application form.

Responses solicited by the Marketing Campaigns since 1999

The shift from a Generic to Thematic campaigns produced a big increase in queries, as is shown in Table 1 overleaf.

⁷) From 2000 onwards this prospectus was accessible on [www.uwc.ac.za /dll/](http://www.uwc.ac.za/dll/) . Since then the number of queries from abroad increased, starting with Argentina, 11 countries in Africa 4 in Asia , 2 in North America, 2 in Europe and Australia.

Table 1				
Response trends to the marketing campaign 2002 “ It is never too late to learn”				
Situation as per 28 May 2003				
Indexed on the basis of the 2000 campaign				
Type of Campaign	Generic No reply slip	Generic + reply slip	Generic + Reply slip + Business Reply card	Thematic + Reply slip + Business Reply card
Items	1999	2000	2001	2002
Responses to Marketing Campaign: Numbers	502	1646	1679	1) 1719
Responses to Marketing Campaign: Index	30.4	100	102	104
Requests for application forms via a business reply card in the prospectus			210	272

1. This figure covers the period 9 August 2002 – 28 May 2003, which is 292 days or 80% of the running time of the previous year.

In addition the following shifts were observed:

1. A strong increase in e-mail queries, from less than 10% in 1999 to over 20% in 2002
2. A strong increase in follow-up queries from less than 10% in 1999 to over 35% in 2002.
3. A change in constituency: the campaign now attracts part-time as well as full-time students and the distinction between the two groups gets more blurred since 2002 ⁸
4. The component of students who want to enter the University via Recognition of Prior Learning has substantially increased over the last two years.
5. There is an increase in queries from foreign students.
6. Increasingly the Division for Lifelong Learning is approached with queries that have to be delegated to other departments and which are not necessarily part of the core business of DLL's niche area part-time and continuing studies.

⁸) Since 2001 the contact particulars of the Division for Lifelong Learning (DLL) are listed in the undergraduate and post-graduate application. The forms invite students who are interested in part-time and continuing education programme to contact the Division. The number of students who approach DLL via that route is increasing. This became evident when we analyzed the queries during registration time.

Nature of the queries

Most queries are about study career advice and administrative issues. In addition DLL received complaints about the non-showing of lecturers, wrong venues, teaching methods , exam time tables that do not take into account the needs and commitments of mature learners, problems with transport during after hours and lacking provisions for financial aid for part-time students..

As part of the internal assessment of the marketing campaign I analyzed the e-mail queries that came in between 5 Aug – 11 March 2003 (N=262). They represent the most elaborate written response to the campaign. These 262 queries addressed 65 different issues from all faculties. Table 2 summarizes the findings per issue ⁹ and Table 3 lists the queries per Faculty / Department

Table 2 Marketing Campaign “It is Never too late to Learn” 2002 Summary of the distribution of E-mail queries per issue(N=262) Period 7 August 2002 – 11 March 2003	
Issues	%
Application Forms	17
BCom (general and specific) EMS	14
Management Courses: EMS	7.2
Other EMS courses (e.g. accounting)	4.8
Recognition of Prior Learning	5.3
Registration	1.9
Financial assistance	0.8
Others: mostly 1 or 2 queries per issue (about 1 % each)	53.8

Queries about courses offered in the Economic and Management Science Faculty (EMS) formed the largest single category (26.0%) followed by queries about Admission / and Registration (17%).

Table 2 Marketing Campaign “It is Never too late to Learn” 2002 Summary of the distribution of E-mail queries (N= 262) over Faculties and Gender Period 7 August 2002 – 11 March 2003			
Faculty / Departments	N	%	Gender

⁹) The 262 e-mails were analyzed with a simple content analysis in Excel by using the following 7 categories 1. Response time to queries. 2. Gender distribution. 3. Issues queried. 4. Faculty choice. 5. Department / subject choice. 6. Country from where the query reached us 7. Referrals and comments:

			F	M	NS
Arts	22	8.4	9	10	
Community and Health Sciences	30	11.5	10	19	
Dentistry	0	0	0	0	
Education	14	5.3	7	5	
Economic and Management Sciences	68	26	36	31	
Law	28	10.7	15	11	
Science	20	7.6	6	13	
Division for Lifelong Learning	36	13.7	17	18	
Finance / Central Admin	2	0.8	0	2	
Registration / Admission	5	1.9	3	0	
Faculty / Department Not Specified	37	14.1	19	13	
Total	262	100	122	122	18

The pattern of queries followed the enrolment patterns per faculty. The highest number of queries were about courses in the Economic and Management Science Faculty (26%) followed by “Recognition of Prior Learning” related queries and DLL (13.7%), Community and Health Sciences (11.5%) and Law (10.7%).

There is an overall gender balance (122/122)

Further assessment of the response data

In addition to the e-mail queries DLL captured data of telephonic queries. Per 28 May over 200 phone-calls were analyzed. Most callers wanted detailed study career advice, either as prospective students (the majority) or as current students.

1. There was great need for one dedicated *call-center* that could handle all possible academic and administrative queries across Faculties and Departments. Often callers had moved backwards and forwards through the University’s telephone network.
2. Although detailed calendars of each Faculty are available as printed copies as well as JPG’s on the university website *additional study path information* was seen as crucial
3. There was a great need for *accurate information about fees*, full-time as well as part-time. The website of the University only lists full-time information and a rough indication what the part-time costs are per year.
4. Prospective part-time students were often amazed that the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) did not provide *bursaries / loans for part-time students*.
5. Often callers had the impression that administrative and academic staff was not sufficiently trained to answer all queries. They recommended that *Staff development* should be in place to keep the administrative and academic staff informed about the latest developments.

6. Callers expressed the need for *after hours services*, which should incorporate counseling especially, study career advice, administrative services, transport services, affordable after hours child-care.
7. There was a great need for *counseling* and workshops that could assist students with planning their studies more realistically. Time management skills and understanding about how to make realistic commitments were seen as indispensable.

Discussion and conclusions

- Call center, Study paths and information about fees

The responses from callers show that there is a great need for up-to-date information about academic and administrative matters across the institution.

Since 2002 UWC has embarked on the development of an IT based flexible response system, which will be web based. This response system linked to a centrally developed course management system, should guarantee standardized formats in line with the legal requirements of accredited course delivery. It will ultimately include all full-time, part-time and Continuing Education Course (e.g. short course with a credit value below 119 Credits according to the standards as developed by the South African Qualification Authority. The Division for Lifelong Learning DLL specifically contributes to the part-time and Continuing Education components as part of her mandate. The experiences gained through the marketing campaign will be used to fine-tune the response system.

The system will also make provision for the detailed calculations of course fees, whether these be short courses or full-time degree courses. The system will be made available in stages and it expected to be fully operational in 2005. In line with these developments the student administration and registration have been overhauled

- Financial aid for part-time students

This issue is a recurring issue in the marketing campaigns since 1999. In the state sponsored National Student Financial Aid Scheme no provision have been made for bursaries / loans for part-time students. In 2002 DLL has initiated a discussion with NSFAD about this issue. The mater is currently addressed at executive level of the university and needs to be explored further in the context of the new funding formula and the policies around alternative access as it affects institutional change at University as well as at national level.

- Staff development

The assessment of the marketing campaigns has been shared with the various forums and relevant Senate Committees on Campus ¹⁰ and since 2002 in workshops for

¹⁰) The Marketing Recruitment Support Forum (MRSF) with (non) academic marketing representatives of all Faculties and DLL The forum was initiated by DLL in 2000; the Senate Student Enrolment and Management

Lecturers teaching on the part-time programme. The issue of staff development as related to part-time and continuing education programmes, workplace learning and recognition of prior learning has recently been discussed in an extensive round of talks with the Deans of all faculties. DLL has offered workshops that address the issue that are both relevant for understanding the dynamics of the part-time programme and the needs of staff and students.

- Services and counseling

Providing proper after hours services (Administrative support, Catering, Child Care, Computer Access, Counseling, Orientation Programme, Library facilities, Security, Transport, Child Care) have been addressed as areas for improvement since the first research report about the accredited part-time programme in 1998. Some of the areas have been surveyed separately to give a firmer base to the analysis of queries that came in via the marketing campaign ¹¹. DLL's contributions aimed to sensitize stakeholders on Campus to embark on a process of quality improvement. The biggest hurdles form the development of administrative and counseling after hour's facilities. The problems have now been identified. But there is still a lack of capacity. In addition a number of HR / Labour relations related issues still have to be addressed and resolved to allow staff members to take up flexible work schedules.

Conclusion

The queries that have been solicited by the 4 Marketing campaigns since 1999 exposed areas where further development is needed. Most of these areas were already identified by previous research and have increasingly come under the attention of University staff members who are responsible for institutional change. The mere fact that during each campaign these issues show up as recurring issues shows that the institution is not yet able to fully respond to the already identified needs for institutional change. In that way our callers function as a barometer for the progress that UWC is able to make to fulfill its commitment to Lifelong Learning.

Bellville, 11 July 2003

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Committee (SSEMC). MRSF members report to this committee, the Senate Orientation Committee (SOEK) and the DLL Board.

¹¹) In 2001 DLL conducted a transport needs survey among part-time students in and contributed in 2002 to a survey about the needs for Child Care during after hours. The registrar initiated the Child Care survey.

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