Using the human capabilities approach as a normative framework to evaluate institutional teaching and learning interventions at UWC[1]

V. Bozalek*

Directorate of Teaching and Learning
e-mail: vbozalek@gmail.com

A. Dison*

Teaching and Learning Specialist
Community and Health Sciences Faculty
e-mail: adison@uwc.ac.za
*University of the Western Cape
Cape Town, South Africa

Abstract

This article uses the human capabilities approach to evaluate an institutional approach to teaching and learning at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). The human capabilities framework makes it possible to examine the impact of social arrangements and interventions on the expansion of valuable beings and doings in teaching and learning. The institutional approach at UWC which involved the development of a strategic plan for teaching and learning and a case study of the teaching and learning retreats for Heads of Academic Departments is examined using the normative framework of the human capabilities approach. The constraints and opportunities regarding the institutionalisation of teaching and learning are illuminated through an analysis of data from a human capabilities perspective.

Keywords: Human capabilities approach; capabilities, functionings, conversion factors, teaching and learning, institutionalisation, strategic plan, teaching and learning retreats, heads of departments.

INTRODUCTION

Involving mainstream academics across the institution in re-examining their pedagogical practices at higher education institutions (HEIs) has recently been put forward as an effective strategy for institutionalising transformation in teaching and learning (D'Andrea and Gosling 2005; Vogel 2010; Winberg 2011). This can be contrasted to an academic 'development' approach where those who are regarded as experts (academic developers) bring enlightenment to mainstream academics who are regarded as 'less than' and in need of development (D'Andrea and Gosling 2005; Manathunga 2006; Vogel 2010). This process, while having the interests of students at heart, could be seen as decontextual and more importantly, as dehumanising

and disparaging towards academics (Vogel 2010). This article makes use of the human capabilities approach (HCA) as a normative framework to evaluate the implementation of a process of institutionalising teaching and learning interventions at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). More particularly, it focuses on one strategy which was adopted to achieve a change in the practice and culture of teaching and learning across the institution – teaching and learning retreats for Heads of Academic Departments (HoDs).

The article begins with a description of the HCA perspective and its relevance as a normative framework for higher education teaching and learning endeavours. The HCA provides a fitting conceptual framework to examine teaching and learning practices at UWC, as a social justice ethos is embedded in both its history (Lalu and Murray 2012) and current mission statement – which states that it aims to seek racial and gender equality and contribute to helping the historically marginalised participate fully in the life of the nation' (UWC 1997).

The institutional approach is then located as one of the possible approaches to higher education teaching and learning. The article moves onto the application of the institutional approach to teaching and learning which was adopted at UWC, providing some background context to the development of the Strategic Plan on Teaching and Learning (SPTL) developed at the institution. The case study explicating the institutionalisation process on the teaching and learning retreats which were developed and implemented for HoDs is then described. These retreats and the broader institutional approach are assessed in terms of the HCA as a normative framework. The article concludes with a consideration of the constraints and opportunities that an institutional approach affords for enhancing teaching and learning.

THE HCA PERSPECTIVE

The central idea of the HCA is that in order to lead a good life and flourish, people need resources that best suit their particular context-specific circumstances (Sen 1984; 1992; 1995; 2001; 2003; Nussbaum 1995; 1997; 2000; 2006; 2010; 2011). The HCA, originally pioneered in economics by Sen, addresses both the particular and the universal. It offers a way of taking into account where people are positioned and what they are able to be and to do with their personal, material and social resources, rather than merely looking at what resources people have and assuming that people are equally placed in relation to these resources (see, e.g. Rawls 1971). Resources in themselves are not a meaningful way of assessing human flourishing and well-being.

From an HCA perspective the purpose of teaching and learning in higher education is to provide opportunities for both students and lecturers to progress academically and to evaluate what is meaningful for them. Capabilities are opportunities to flourish or achieve well-being – to do and to be what they have reason to value (e.g. to succeed in academic life; to be respected as lecturers by their peers and students) (Alkire and Deneulin 2009; Unterhalter 2009; Walker 2001, 2006a and

2006b) and the freedom to choose between different ways of engaging academically. *Functionings* as referred to in the HCA perspective are beings and doings which are valued by people and *capabilities* provide the freedom or opportunities to achieve these functionings. *Conversion factors* refer to the ability of the individual to translate resources into desired functionings and may be divided into three categories, namely: personal or internal conversion factors, such as prior teaching experience and academic literacies; social conversion factors, such as higher education policies and power relations (gender, race, class); and environmental conversion factors, such as the physical or built environment (Robeyns 2011). Thus, in a teaching and learning context, from an HCA perspective, it would be important to identify what valued functionings for higher educators might be; what opportunities there are to achieve these functionings; and finally, what conversion factors exist to translate desired resources into desired functionings.

Robeyns (2011) mentions three specific ways in which the HCA can be used as a normative framework in higher education – the assessment and evaluation of *individual well-being*, of *social arrangements* and of *social interventions* including social policies. Social arrangements in society need to expand people's capabilities and well-being rather than constrain them. Thus, regarding higher education teaching and learning, the way in which institutional policies and interventions are planned and implemented should enable higher educators to achieve beings and doings that they have reason to value (Sen 1992). In the article, we make use of the HCA as a framework to evaluate the *social arrangements* at UWC regarding teaching and learning, a particular teaching and learning strategy and a social *intervention* which is part of the policy and its impact on lecturers' academic *well-being*, i.e. what they were able to be and to do as a result of these social arrangements and this intervention.

The HCA is useful as an analytical framework for higher education pedagogy because of its emphasis on critical thought, empathy for difference and connection with others (Nussbaum 1997; 2002; Sen 2005; 2006; 2010; Unterhalter 2009; Walker 2001; 2006a; 2006b). Furthermore, the HCA allows questions to be asked about the extent to which valued capabilities are fairly distributed across the HEI (Walker 2001).

Sen (2003) highlights the importance of public debate and discussion informing decisions which affect people's lives. Thus, from an HCA perspective, it would be necessary for institutional decisions regarding teaching and learning to be accomplished in a democratic fashion. Moreover, agency is seen as a central concept as development needs to take place through the 'efforts and initiatives of people themselves' (Sen 2003, vii). It would thus be of crucial significance to involve academics in an engaged way in the process of improving teaching and learning. The achievement of meaningful change in the institution is consequently dependent on the human agency of all who are involved in the teaching and learning enterprise.

THE RATIONALE FOR AN INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

Winberg[1] (2011) developed a framework where she identified five chronological phases or generations of Academic Staff Development (ASD). She indicated that no one phase is better or worse than another, but that they all have strengths and weaknesses. The first generation of ASD was identified as an emphasis on technique or technology, and is regarded as the crudest and earliest form of ASD, and was developed in the 1980s. It involved a skills-based approach where academics were invited to attend workshops run by academic developers, e-learning teams or HR departments on techniques to improve their teaching methods. The idea was that through providing these sets of skills to academics, students would benefit from the enhanced performance of their teachers. The second generation of ASD in the early 1990s put student learning rather than teaching at the centre of ASD. Marton and Säljö's (1976) distinctions of deep and surface learning and phenomenographic research methods became influential. Ramsden's (1992) promotion of active teaching methods and good assessment activities and Biggs's (1999; 2003) notion of constructive alignment and higher order thinking skills built on the notions of deep and surface learning. The third generation of ASD brought the focus back to the teacher as a reflective practitioner, inviting university teachers to critically reflect on their own conceptions of learning and engage in action research (Prosser and Trigwell 1999; Schön 1983; 1987; Walker 2001). The scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), a similar concept, became popular in Australian, American and British contexts (Boyer 1990; Brew 1999; Healey 2005). The fourth generation of ASD brought it back into the disciplinary domain, challenging the notion that generic academic development teaching and learning could apply out of a disciplinary and departmental context (Becher and Trowler 2001; Boud 1999). This caused a crisis and the minimisation or closing[2] of generic academic development centres (ADCs).

The fifth generation, and the approach which is foregrounded in the current context at UWC, was the institutional view of ASD. It focused on a systemic view of institutions and how strategic planning and infrastructure could be used to support the teaching and learning project (see, e.g. Ramsden 1998). New senior positions such as Deputy Vice-Chancellors and Deputy Deans of Teaching and Learning were created to drive and implement these plans across institutions. The implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the Higher Education Quality Framework (HEQF) through the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and the growing audit culture and requirements from professional bodies in South African higher education placed new expectations of re-curriculation on academic departments. This also led to new institution-wide roles for academic development staff, many of whom were re-conceptualised as teaching and learning specialists or managers. Although these five generations are useful categorisations marking periods of academic development discourses, we are mindful that these identified categories are not discrete and moreover, merge into each other and are used eclectically in the domain of teaching and learning in higher education.

We will now provide a fuller discussion of the institutional approach, which is foregrounded in the article.

Vogel (2010) notes the dangers of a strategic and more centralised approach to teaching and learning which could be implemented superficially, with the motivation of academics to engage with these processes being largely ignored. Furthermore, the appropriation of teaching and learning by senior management may be seen as part of a managerialist approach and either be rejected or regarded with suspicion by academics. However, an institutional approach need not be a managerialist one if it incorporates the needs of students and lecturers both generally and within their disciplines. Academics need to be able to identify with the strategic plan, own it and practise it in their own contexts if it is to be a living document. Thus, there is a need for academics to become creatively involved in the process of their own capability enhancement with regard to their teaching and learning. It is well established that the primary identity for academics is not the institution where they work but their disciplinary affiliation (Becher and Trowler 2001; D'Andrea and Gosling 2005). It is therefore effective to incorporate a strategy which incorporates the generic needs of staff but which works with the distinctiveness of their discipline.

According to D'Andrea and Gosling (2005, 7), 'learning occurs through participation in social practices in which meaning is constructed and negotiated and identities formed and re-formed'. This learning is facilitated by opening up spaces where new conversations can be held across differences and taken-for-granted assumptions can be interrogated (Bozalek 2011). The arrangement of conversations and interactions across disciplines and institutions to create new communities of practice outside of an academic's home department is important for learning to happen (Bozalek et al. 2010; D'Andrea and Gosling 2005).

It is important to bring on board academics in leadership positions, such as HoDs, who have the authority to make changes in curricula and course design and align curricula with graduate attributes, disciplinary learning outcomes and assessment and teaching and learning tasks. This is particularly the case in professional education, which is holding HoDs responsible to lead the process of recurriculating their programmes with specified exit level outcomes. It is thus important to create the resources, space and time for HoDs together with their disciplinary colleagues, to engage and reflect on teaching and learning, assessment and curricula in order to make changes on an institution-wide scale. D'Andrea and Gosling (2005) and Kanuka (2010) concur with the argument for involving leaders with power and authority to take forward the teaching and learning project in the institution so that all staff can become involved in the needed changes.

It was for these reasons that the Director of Teaching and Learning and a small group of Deputy Deans of Teaching and Learning and Teaching and Learning Specialists decided to embark on experiential task-based workshops with HoDs in order to align their curricula. This process of immersing HoDs in an intense three-day workshop gave them the opportunity to concentrate on examining their own courses or modules from new perspectives with peers from other faculties. This type

of focused retreat has been found to be conducive for the creative actualisation of learning capabilities of academic staff (Vogel 2010).

The reliance upon a 'pockets of innovation' approach to academic development, where enthusiastic educators share their practices with their peers, has been found to fall short in that these initiatives become neither widespread nor institutionalised (Vogel 2010). According to D'Andrea and Gosling (2005), research has shown that change agents within institutions often remain isolated and initiatives to raise the status of teaching and learning are vulnerable once central funding has been removed. Thus, unless initiatives are part of a strategic plan which is embedded institutionally and directed at the entire staff, efforts such as working with students or individual lecturers or innovators tend to remain peripheral. This is an indication that an institutional approach has a better chance of effecting change in an institution.

It was for these reasons that UWC decided that the best way to transform teaching and learning would be an institutional approach; however, it also incorporated all of the other generations of ASD which have been outlined in this section of the article. The SPTL which was developed and the background to its development will be discussed in the following section, which reports on an attempt to engage in a process of putting the power back into the hands of mainstream academics in their particular context through a process of institutionalising teaching and learning at UWC.

THE SPTL AT UWC

The audit of the HEQC of UWC recommended a number of changes regarding teaching and learning, which were taken into account when the SPTL was developed in 2009. In addition, institution-wide research across all faculties was conducted in 2008, surveying both student and staff needs relating to teaching and learning. These findings were used to collectively develop the SPTL as well as the development of the UWC Charter on Graduate Attributes (hereafter the Charter) with the Director of Teaching and Learning, Deputy Deans of Teaching and Learning and Teaching and Learning Specialists in faculties. From an HCA, using student and staff needs to collectively develop the SPTL and the Charter is significant in that it bases institutional policies on real and concrete needs and experiences (see Bozalek forthcoming for further information on this). UWC's Institutional Operational Plan (IOP) of 2010–2014 was developed simultaneously with the SPTL and foregrounded the goal of providing students at UWC 'with an excellent teaching and learning experience that is contextually responsive to the challenges of globalisation and the needs of a society in transition' (IOP 2010–2014).

The following strategies were developed in response to the above identified needs and considerations:

1. Enhance and promote the status of teaching and learning at UWC

The SPTL foregrounded the recognition of teaching and learning as a core function which is equivalent in value to research in the institution. For teaching and learning to be taken seriously, it was put forward that rewards for attempts to improve teaching practice, such as peer review processes, attendance of professional development courses on teaching and learning, reflective practice and research into teaching and learning be given.

2. Develop and promote the SoTL at UWC

The SoTL which was adopted by UWC was an expanded version of SoTL which encompasses all of the following being accomplished:

•   research-led (incorporating research into curriculum);

•   research-oriented (students are taught the process of research in the undergraduate curriculum);

•   research-based (the curriculum would be inquiry-based; students would research the subject matter rather than be given content);

•   research-informed (academics would be involved in researching their own pedagogical practice, basing it on prior research rather than 'common sense') (Griffiths 2004).

These dimensions of SoTL speak to the human capabilities concern with developing critical reasoning and an emphasis on the agency of both students and academics.

3. Professionalise teaching through formal and informal education for academics

A number of studies have shown the beneficial effect that education on teaching and learning for academics has on the quality of university education. Gibbs and Coffee (2004) studied the effectiveness of university teacher training in 22 universities in eight countries and found a range of positive changes in teachers and students in the groups that had training and a corresponding lack of change or negative consequences from the untrained group. Similarly, Prosser et al. (2006) in a Higher Education Academy (HEA) study of 32 accredited teaching and learning programmes of HEIs in the United Kingdom found significant positive impacts on teaching and learning, such as the participants becoming more student-focused in their practice. Other recent studies have also reported convincing evidence that teaching improved through professional development courses (Postareff et al. 2008; Weurlander and Stenfors-Hayes 2008). These studies provided an impetus for UWC to professionalise teaching and learning through formal and informal courses for academics.

4. Infuse technology into teaching and learning and promote the use of e-pedagogy

Formal professional development using technology to improve teaching and learning was seen as important and courses have been collaboratively developed by all four HEIs in the Western Cape to achieve this. Technologies to promote student-centred and flexible learning as well as research into innovative teaching and learning using technologies was also identified as being important to develop and implement.

5. Develop an infrastructure for teaching and learning

In order to give effective leadership in teaching and learning at UWC, a Directorate of Teaching and Learning was developed in 2008 which provided an overall central structure for the implementation of the SPTL. Faculty teaching and learning committees which would feed into the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee established in 2008 were set up to develop, implement and monitor faculty teaching and learning plans and to engage with these and specific issues identified as important for the improvement of teaching and learning.

6. Embed graduate attributes into an aligned curriculum and plan, revision, establish and align academic programmes

Both the previous IOP (2004–2009) and the HEQC audit emphasised the need to develop UWC graduate attributes. The intention was to develop these attributes at an institutional, faculty and disciplinary level and to align curricula to embed these attributes in teaching and learning activities and assessment tasks. Subsequently, the Charter was developed in 2009, and a process of alignment in faculties and departments has been initiated since then.

7. Develop a responsive teaching and learning environment including improved virtual and physical spaces for flexible learning

Currently, students at UWC do not have access to flexible learning spaces where they could access virtual and physical spaces which lend themselves to personal, individual and group learning. Ideally, this would require a centre which could meet students' learning needs in this regard to develop 21st century learners in a globalising world.

8. Enhance epistemological access through responsive teaching and learning programmes that adequately address students' learning needs

From the research conducted on student learning needs (Bozalek 2010b), it was established that there were a number of areas which needed attention to enhance epistemological access. In response to this, initiatives such as a pilot year-long

orientation programme in first year were introduced in three faculties. The strategic plan also identified learning activities, which increase students' responsibility, motivation and involvement, as needing to be increasingly used to involve students in the learning process and enhance retention and throughput. This involvement once again speaks to the human capabilities foregrounding of student agency.

The SPTL provided the basis on which a general implementation plan on Teaching and Learning at UWC was developed, as well as aligned faculty implementation plans which were developed by the end of 2010. Faculties' implementation progress is monitored and evaluated through the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee and through monthly meetings of the Director of Teaching and Learning with the Deputy Deans of Teaching and Learning and Teaching and Learning Specialists. Departments are now developing their aligned plans so that the implementation happens on the ground. A very significant vehicle for the implementation of the SPTL was the Teaching and Learning retreats, which will be described in detail in the next section.

TEACHING AND LEARNING RETREATS

The Teaching and Learning retreats for HoDs were initiated in 2010 by the Directorate of Teaching and Learning.[3] These residential three-day workshops were held off-campus in a beautiful rural setting. The setting was significant from an HCA perspective as it provided an environmental conversion factor for capability expansion of the lecturers. A central aim of the retreats was to enable the participants to align the elements of their module or course from the perspective of constructive alignment (Biggs 1999; 2003). Thus, participants were required to bring with them a course or module on which they were working. The retreats provided an active, experiential programme in which participants applied what they were learning to their own course. Participants were encouraged to reflect on their own curriculum development practices in a systematic and in-depth manner (Bozalek 2010a). HoDs were expected to share the knowledge that they had gained in the workshops with members of their departments by engaging in a process of alignment of the whole curriculum.

Prior to attending a workshop, HoDs completed detailed needs assessments about their own practice and after the workshop a post-needs assessment. These practices are highly significant from an HCA perspective, which places emphasis on recognising the diversity of needs and appropriate responses to needs to achieve capability expansion.

Each day of the workshop was devoted to a different aspect of curriculum alignment – analysing and mapping course content; student learning needs and graduate attributes; developing clear learning outcomes; planning appropriate teaching and learning activities; assessment and evaluation.

The retreats were developed by a group of Deputy Deans of Teaching and Learning and Teaching and Learning Specialists at UWC drawing on and adapting a model

proposed by Saroyan and Amundsen (2004). During the process of development and implementation, the facilitators gathered data from a number of sources and engaged in ongoing reflection about the retreats. An independent researcher was employed to gather additional data and conduct the analysis.

Here we focus on two aspects of the retreats within the context of the UWC SPTL, namely: (1) curriculum alignment; and (2) the ripple-down or cascading model of institutional change. The retreats were clearly aligned to the UWC strategy of professionalisation of teaching through formal and informal education for academics (Goal 3). Furthermore they related closely to most of the other goals of the UWC SPTL. We will now show how the retreats contributed to implementing the strategies of enhancing and promoting the status of teaching and learning (Goal 1); developing a teaching and learning infrastructure (Goal 5); and enhancing epistemological access of students (Goal 8). From a capabilities perspective, providing the institutional space to achieve valuable beings and doings for higher educators is crucial and these professional development workshops provided such a space.

The retreats aimed to cultivate a reflective and experiential approach to improving teaching and learning (Boud 1993). The programmes assisted all participants, including Deputy Deans of Teaching and Learning, Teaching and Learning Specialists and the lecturers themselves, to develop their own teaching expertise as well as to prepare them to assist with staff development in their faculties. In this way, a teacher-as-learner approach was adopted to the implementation of the SPTL, as has been referred to by Harvey and Kamvounias (2008). From a capabilities perspective, the retreats provided an opportunity to connect with others as teachers and learners.

1. Curriculum alignment

'Constructive alignment', based on the view that students construct meaning and learn by actively participating in learning activities, was the approach which was adopted in the workshops (Biggs 1999; 2003; Shuell 1986). Thus, instead of the lecturer transmitting knowledge to the students, he or she should create a learning environment where students engage in learning activities that facilitate the achievement of the learning outcomes for the module. Furthermore, according to this approach, there needs to be alignment between course objectives, learning outcomes, learning activities and assessment tasks. Biggs (1999, 58) argues that aligned teaching, where expectations are communicated explicitly, can narrow the gap between more and less academic students: 'Good teaching is getting most students to use the higher cognitive level processes that the more academic students use spontaneously'. Thus, through encouraging curriculum alignment and building the capacity of lecturers, it was intended that the strategy of the retreats would contribute to enhancing students' epistemological access (Goal 8). This approach is compatible with the notions of student agency, valuable beings and doings and sensitivity towards particular needs and differences which are emblematic in the HCA.

Participants found the concept of curriculum alignment and their engagement with it on the workshop very useful. One participant wrote that 'developing

outcomes for my work and learning to keep in mind students' cognitive development while doing so was a new and liberating experience for me' (Letter to facilitators). Another participant said that most of his students were not academically oriented, self-driven learners. From the workshop, he had 'gained a new sense of how proper curriculum alignment may well go a long way towards capacitating such students for the teaching and learning process' (Post Workshop assessment).

The experience of developing a concept map of a module was a tool which enabled the participants to map out the curriculum of their module and explicate what they wanted students to learn (Novak 1998). A concept map could also be used to communicate the conceptual structure of the module to the students. While going through this developmental process, Margo, one of the facilitators, went through a tremendous learning process. She said that doing the concept map made her realise that the course she was teaching was 'not just about learning physics, it's about learning to think like a physicist and to see the world as a physicist does'. Thus, this facilitator was beginning to engage with the notion of valuable *being* as a physicist and 'seeing through the eyes of a physicist' rather than teaching decontextualised knowledge. She also indicated that her realisation of the importance of 'the wider issues around science in relation to society and effects on the environment' and being 'more *creative* in thinking about assessment approaches and also to be more *explicit* about what the course was about' (our emphases). The creativity and transparency referred to here by Margo indicate that in her role as a course facilitator and as teacher, her capabilities were being expanded.

Anna, a senior lecturer in a Humanities discipline, said that working on the concept map had 'certainly changed' her teaching practice when she taught her next module after the retreat. She explained what she had learned through working on the concept map and then working in a small group on the retreat as follows:

> What I realise is that the ideas that I use in my teaching are actually threshold concepts, they are concepts that some people have never thought of or that they might resist very strongly. And so working in a small group with colleagues ... these ideas were so foreign and strange, it made me realise that I needed to unpack them a bit more and actually put that concept map on an overhead and go through it and talk about the connections, as opposed to taking for granted that I could talk more quickly and take people with me. I think it made me realise that I need to explain more.

The consciousness that Anna developed regarding her use of threshold concepts and the scaffolded process of developing her concept map further capacitated her to develop activities to promote critical thinking, as highlighted in the HCA. Anna said that the retreat was invaluable and 'quite humbling because you think you've been a teacher forever and you think you know what you're doing'. However, going through this process had made her aware of the need to 'make things more visible and more conscious'.

2. The ripple-down model of institutional change in relation to teaching and learning

One of the underlying objectives of the retreats was to promote teaching and learning at UWC generally. In order to achieve this, the aim was to involve senior staff members who were academic leaders. This was intended to achieve two purposes. Firstly, the idea was that there could be a ripple-down effect of knowledge and practice of curriculum alignment principles. Secondly, the support of academic leadership figures would attach academic credibility to teaching and learning as an activity to be prioritised at UWC. As mentioned above, the involvement of Deans and HoDs has been one of the factors found to contribute to the effectiveness and sustainability of professional development programmes (Kanuka 2010). Peter, one of the participants, confirmed that the retreats and the way that they were organised sent a message which emphasised teaching and learning as a core activity in the university. He commented that 'the retreat provided an opportunity to focus on teaching and learning as part of an academic's core business [which tends] to be neglected amongst all the other demands of academia'. Thus, it can be deduced that these retreats were one part of a process of providing institutional arrangements to enhance the status of teaching and learning.

During the first retreat in January 2010, the Deputy Deans Teaching and Learning and Teaching and Learning Specialists realised that it would be constructive for them to have regular meetings in future. These meetings were planned to 'promote coordination and effective leadership and implement strategic plans on teaching and learning' (Bozalek 2010a). They have been taking place regularly since then. In this way the programme of retreats contributed to the implementation of Goal 5 of the SPTL which is to develop an infrastructure for teaching and learning. The retreats and the regular meetings serve an additional purpose of connecting these academics into communities of practice.

The impact of the ripple-down model of teaching and learning development has varied between different faculties and departments. Workshop participants have used different methods of rolling out the curriculum alignment programme of the retreat workshop. Some faculties and departments have been more responsive than others. Faculties employed a range of different approaches to roll out what had been learnt in the retreats, such as off campus retreats for entire departments and departmental seminars. In one Faculty, for example, the workshop model began to be rolled out soon after the first retreat. Two HoDs from this faculty attended the first retreat and subsequently planned a series of five workshops for their departments together with the Faculty Teaching and Learning Specialist. This departmental series of workshops was based on the Retreat programme but adapted for the Faculty. According to Patricia, one of the first HoDs to roll out the programme, the lecturers in the Faculty tended to be very committed to their teaching and their students. The workshop facilitators drew on this commitment and enthusiasm to motivate the staff to attend the workshop. In addition they introduced another factor which acted as an incentive. The Faculty ran programmes for health professionals and the lecturers

were required by the Health Professions Council (HPCSA) to gain a certain amount of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points in a year. The facilitators registered the series of workshops with the HPCSA so that participants would gain CPD points for attending the workshop and fulfilling the requirements which were to produce a module guide encapsulating the principles of curriculum alignment. This formalisation of the process was a way of providing social arrangements needed as conversion factors to achieve the valuable beings and doings of the teaching and learning retreats in the disciplinary context.

Some of the past participants of the retreats felt confident to run workshops covering similar content and using similar methodology to that which they had experienced on the retreat. Others felt that going on one course had not prepared them sufficiently to play that role and that they needed assistance from some of the facilitators or teaching and learning specialists. This was recognised by the team leader of the facilitating group who said one could not assume that 'after a three-day workshop ... somebody is now in a position to go and teach all the people in their faculty'. One HoD who was interviewed had found the curriculum alignment concept in the course to be an eye-opener. He thought that as many lecturers as possible should do the workshop. However, he was critical of the cascading model, saying, 'just the idea of sending a HOD or a Dean – it's a good idea, I mean, to cascade it down to everybody else, but you know what, practically speaking I don't think it's really doable'. He said that these types of workshops should be run by Teaching and Learning specialists and implied that he would not personally be involved in rolling out the retreat programme. In this way, he resisted the institutional approach to teaching and learning, placing the sole responsibility for staff development on the thinly stretched teaching and learning staff. The assumption that HoDs will automatically be convinced of their responsibility for rolling out the alignment of curriculum in their departments is shown here to be erroneous. For this HoD, the facilitation of teaching and learning practices for his curriculum and with his colleagues was obviously not a functioning which he valued for himself. Institutional approaches will only work if they are seen to be valuable for a critical mass of higher educators.

FACTORS THAT ENABLE AND CONSTRAIN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH

There are many factors which are conducive to the implementation of an institutional approach to enhancing teaching and learning, as well as constraining factors.

The Strategic Plan on Teaching and Learning is an essential part of the new Institutional Operating Plan (IOP) (2010–2014) of UWC and was developed alongside it. There is support for the implementation of the Teaching and Learning Plan from senior management, and the Plan requires that senior academics – Deputy Deans and HoDs – drive the implementation process. In addition a large part of the work of implementing teaching and learning policy is located in faculties. Most faculties have a Deputy Dean of Teaching and Learning and a Teaching and Learning

Specialist to drive policy, and faculty Teaching and Learning Committees have been established with departmental representatives. All these social arrangements are conducive for the development of desired capabilities for teaching and learning.

The aim of the UWC approach to teaching and learning is that enhancement of teaching and learning takes place as a part of core academic work, rather than through an add-on model. An institutional culture needs to be developed which values teaching and learning to the same extent that research is valued. There is a process of opening up a new intellectual space for teaching and learning which is critical, reflective and informed by theory and the teaching and learning policy explicitly aims to support and nurture development of SoTL (Boyer 1990).

The observation was made by a number of participants of the retreats that a culture of valuing learning and teaching at UWC was emerging. There were shared discourses about education developing within some faculties, and there were communities of academics engaging with each other about teaching and learning. It seemed that these developments were part of the prevailing institutional climate as well as an outcome of the retreats.

Patricia, who was involved in organising a programme of workshops in her faculty, commented on the importance of connection and public dialogue (Sen 2003): 'As we have had more exposure to workshops and discussions, and with our series of workshops, we're hoping to create communities of people talking across departments about issues around the curriculum, around competencies, around the professions'.

Facilitators and participants referred to a language that was being developed for talking about teaching and learning. The retreats were helping to develop 'a critical mass of people who speak the same language and can have common conversations' (Margo).

CONSTRAINTS

The implementation of an institutional approach to enhancing teaching and learning has encountered the types of constraints commonly experienced at universities. Many academics are welcoming and willing to embrace changes relating to teaching and learning. However, academics are under pressure to meet multiple demands and additional expectations of them with regard to teaching and learning can be met with resistance. If pedagogical interventions are seen as injunctions coming 'from the top' and if academics do not understand the meaning and value of requirements of teaching and learning policy, they may feel resentful and adopt a compliance approach which will not lead to meaningful change.

While institutional policy is signalling that teaching and learning should be seen to be on the same level as research, there are still deeply rooted institutional and international higher education cultures and practices where research is accorded more value than teaching and learning, for example, criteria for promotion etc. Furthermore research is seen as distinct from teaching and learning by most

academics, with higher value attributed to research. SoTL has not yet been embraced by a great number of academics and it tends to be seen as less valuable than traditional disciplinary research. Lastly, the implementation of an extensive and far-reaching policy with limited resources is very challenging. This refers to both material and human resources, which the HCA reminds us is essential to effect change and promote valuable beings and doings.

CONCLUSION

An institutional approach to teaching and learning, which involves mainstream academics who have the authority to drive the process of embedding graduate attributes and curriculum alignment, such as HoDs, can be seen as an effective way of transforming teaching and learning in higher education, as is corroborated by D'Andrea and Gosling (2005) and Kanuka (2010). The importance of engaging with these academics in a conducive setting in a deep rather than superficial way, paying careful attention to their needs and taking the process forward in a supportive and systematic fashion are all processes which are important for expanding teaching and learning capabilities.

This article has shown the importance of conversion factors such as the personal (teaching and learning competences), the social (teaching and learning policies and infrastructure) and the physical environment (the caring and peaceful venue where retreats are held) to be central for achieving teaching and learning capabilities. In addition to this, interactive and supportive teaching methods in connected communities provide opportunities for reflection and revision of curricula and teaching practices. Successful endeavours to enhance teaching and learning institutionally should consider not only what resources are provided to the lecturer, and what his/her needs are, but also what conversion factors exist to acquire the functioning. However, it must be noted that attention to capabilities and the conversion factors needed to achieve functionings cannot be the responsibility of pedagogical realm alone, thus one would have to examine other institutional policies and practices and the general social arrangements both nationally and internationally to establish their influence on the achievement of improvements in teaching and learning.

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NOTES

1   As part of the orientation to an NRF project on professional development in higher education, Chris Winberg, acting Director of the Fundani Centre for Academic

Development at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, gave a presentation where she distinguished between five chronological phases or generations of ASD.

2   This happened at UWC in the mid-1990s when the ADC was disbanded and academic development officers were appointed to work in Faculties instead of a generic centre.

3   The retreats were made possible through SANTED funding which was devoted to developing the newly formed Directorate of Teaching and Learning, focusing on students' access and success.

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