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QUALITY ASSURANCE IN TEACHER EDUCATION THROUGH INSIDER EVALUATION AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT: A Case for Programme Renewal

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This paper presents a description of a teacher education programme evaluation that was initiated, planned, and executed in an attempt to enhance the quality of the programme's content, delivery, and impact. The evaluation comprised reports on the perspectives of major stakeholders on whether the Diploma in Education (Dip.Ed.) programme (2004–2009) had met their expectations, and on the benefits and limitations of the programme and its impact on teachers' practice. Subsequent to the preliminary inquiry into those stakeholders' perspectives, a more probing approach was applied to the perspectives of Heads of Department, School of Education (SOE) staff, and Ministry of Education officials. The evaluation was guided by Guskey's (2002) theoretical and conceptual model of evaluating the impact of continuing professional development (CPD) on teachers' practice, and by the fourth generation evaluation model of Guba and Lincoln (1989). The sample for each phase was either stratified random or purposive. This research is significant in that it provides a model for programme evaluation that focuses on the role of the stakeholder in determining effective practice in teacher education. It also highlights the process of rigorous programme evaluation and renewal through staff engagement.

Introduction

This paper reports on an approach to establishing best practices in a teacher development programme via an evaluation based on a conceptual framework that drew on the fourth generation evaluation (FGE) model of Guba and Lincoln (1989). The issue treated within this paper is that of striving for quality assurance in a teacher education programme—the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (Dip.Ed.)—offered by the School of Education (SOE) at The University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine. It is a programme that has been in existence for 42 years, and a proposal for revision is now being processed in accordance with the new UWI regulations for programme approval.

To specifically rationalize the current proposal for a renewed Postgraduate Dip.Ed. programme for secondary school teachers, it is useful to know that the programme has been offered by the School of Education, UWI, St. Augustine since 1973, "in response to a request from the Ministry of Education and of pupils in schools who were dissatisfied with the teaching they were getting" (The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. School of Education [UWISOE], 1986). Since then, internal adjustments have been made to course content and assignments. A major change in the late 1990s was the change in the status of the programme from undergraduate to postgraduate to reflect its content. Thereafter, internal changes not requiring system approval were made to improve the learning experience of participants. Such changes included the opportunity for building a community of practice among students, and took into account the teaching schedule of the in-service teachers, which translated into shifts in timetabling of programme sessions.

The current redesign of the programme is evidence-driven. The proposal for the redesigned programme must undergo a rigorous institutional quality assurance process. In 2006, the UWI's Academic Quality Assurance Committee (AQAC) was established. AQAC is a sub-committee of the Academic Boards of each UWI campus and, with regard to courses and programmes, serves to review proposals for and recommend improvements to new courses and programmes. Before reaching AQAC, courses or programmes must be reviewed by the department's Curriculum Committee, the Faculty's Curriculum Committee, and then by the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). There are also proposal clinics that guide the preparation of proposals before submission to the Faculty Board of the relevant Faculty, followed by submission to the Campus Committee of the School of Graduate Studies and Research and to the Board for Graduate Studies and Research. Research conducted by Gift and Bell-Hutchinson (2007) found that the academic staff of UWI are increasingly implementing the recommendations of review teams, and that this is, in part, facilitated by the university's monitoring mechanism. Apart from the technical changes to the programme and review at different levels, this research shows that the basis for the renewal was, in fact, the insider evaluation and stakeholder involvement as strategies for quality assurance.

Quality Assurance in Teacher Education

Quality assurance is a conscious and planned process for ensuring quality in any setting. In higher education, such quality usually includes tangibles, competence, attitude, content, delivery, and reliability. That assurance process may be constituted of systems such as self-evaluation, best practices benchmarking, and external quality monitoring. Stakeholder feedback and student assessment may also contribute to the data to be analysed towards achieving quality (Mishra, 2007). In terms of teacher education, from a systems perspective, the inputs to the programme are the participants, the faculty, the educational processes, and activities enabled by the curriculum and the micro and macro environments of the school, as well as the broader social systems. Additional inputs are the infrastructural and financial resources available to the programme. The output is reflected in the quality of educator graduating from the programme and functioning in the educational context.

The Dip.Ed. programme operates in a context that is dynamic and responsive to a variety of stakeholders. Establishing and maintaining quality may well be the rudder in this sea of well-intentioned change. Many countries and regions have sought to establish quality in education through the development of standards and accompanying guidelines, with examples being the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA, 2009) and the CARICOM region (Caribbean Community Task Force for Teacher Education, 2013). More overarching oversight of adherence to standards, however, falls within the scope of national accreditation councils.

Operationalizing the establishment and maintenance of quality in education is contingent upon an enabling implementation system. The crucial role of policy, procedures, and culture in supporting quality assurance is captured in ENQA's emphasis on policy and procedures in the work of higher education (Eurydice, 2006). Translating policy, procedure, and culture into strategic and meaningful maintenance of standards requires that specific activities be identified and enacted. Suggestions of such activities are seen in the 2014 Task Force report of the American Psychological Association (APA; Worrell et al., 2014). Based on the premise that "the data and methods required to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher education programs ought to be informed by well-established scientific methods" (Worrell et al., 2014, p. 1), the APA report offers some justification for the use of three methods for assessing teacher education programme effectiveness: value-added assessments of student achievement, standardized observation protocols, and surveys

of teacher performance. Upon an analysis of the effectiveness of those three programme assessment measures, they make 13 recommendations for the maintenance of quality in teacher education programmes, most of which are linked to the appropriate and effective collection of data and conduct of data analysis.

This is supported by the report on the 2014 Bologna Process Researchers' Conference (Matei, 2014), which laments the lack of research in higher education institutions (HEIs) to inform policy, and recommends the creation of efficient mechanisms that study and assess internal activities and work in order to support the achievement of the institution's mission. It also recommended having policymakers as active partners in promoting research in higher education. Research relevant to teacher education in the Caribbean which was conducted by Jennings (2001) concluded that policy was insensitive to the practical realities of the classroom, and that policy tended to perceive teacher training as the panacea for problems whose solutions actually reside in economic and social changes. Such findings should indeed inform decision-making in teacher education.

An overall vision of transformation toward excellence would need to be led by transformational leadership, which must deal with both threats and opportunities in the relevant contexts. In their report of findings from a study of 23 educational institutions that sought to effect institutional change and transformation, Eckel and Kezar (2003) advised that change leaders must firstly make the case that change is needed, and that transformation requires a collaborative approach and ought not to be reactive; but, ideally, should be proactive. But what stimulates this case for change? If the proposed changes arise out of evaluation data as proposed by the APA study by Worrell et al. (2014), it is likely that buy-in from major stakeholders would be easily guaranteed.

So that within the context of quality assurance, this paper addresses the issue of the value of stakeholder involvement in the enhancement of programme planning, delivery, and outcomes. It reports on a research project, the ultimate goal of which was to create an innovative, culturally relevant, indigenous Dip.Ed. programme through systematic, sustained inquiry that involves stakeholder inclusion. The research process and methodological approach proved effective as strategies in programme evaluation and thus can be postulated as best practices: "A best practice is a technique or methodology that, through experience and research, has proven to reliably lead

to a desired result" (http://searchsoftwarequality.techtarget.com/definition/best-practice). UWI, St. Augustine proposed a definition of the concept "best practice" as:

> *an intervention, process or approach, which has contextual relevance for the University of the West Indies*; is exemplary in its ability to produce superior results when assessed against the goals set and/or against similar practice in the relevant core area; *engages internal and external stakeholders*; is *efficient in terms of resources (human, time, financial*); is well-documented; *has utility and is recognised beyond the practice site*. [emphasis added] (Harvey, Quamina-Aiyejina, & Arthur, 2012, p. 17)

The approach adopted by this research is reflective of both of the above definitions of best practice in that it used stakeholder feedback as reliable data to inform programme evaluation. It also utilized a data collection framework based on a framework conceptualized by experts in the field (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The best practice adopted through this research, as defined by UWI, has the ability to produce superior results, in that the stakeholders from whom feedback was sought are key to the programme on several levels: some have been participants, some are policymakers in education, some design and deliver the programme, and some are decision-makers and collaborators in the school system. All these stakeholders impact the programme in some way or the other. The research process enabled understandings beyond the practice site through the exploration and explanation of data at various levels of the stakeholder framework. The intervention was manageable in terms of effort, time, and financial resources.

Background to the Issue

This programme evaluation project began when there seemed to be a need to review and improve the programme due to concerns raised by stakeholders over time. It was also an opportune time for renewal due to the recent emergence of competing providers. The SOE staff involved in the evaluation saw their own involvement and that of other stakeholders as essential, in that it created an opportunity for collaboration, and it would lend more depth and meaning to decision-making in the programme renewal process. Moreover, the SOE research team did not want to limit the evaluation effort to stakeholders' views about the programme, but set out to use stakeholders' expectations, claims, and concerns to direct programme enhancement. A major feature of this project is that it is insider evaluation, and thus assumes a reduced time frame for implementing changes that may be deemed useful.

The following section provides deeper expositions on how the evaluation process utilizing stakeholder engagement and insider research serves as a quality assurance mechanism, as well as a best practice approach.

Methodological Approach Adopted

A fourth generation evaluation (FGE) strategy was selected. Our evaluation was approached from a team perspective, with each member sharing varied experiences and backgrounds that allowed the team to analyse the perspectives of stakeholders in order to guide the evaluation. Guba and Lincoln (1989) explain that the FGE methodology adopts a hermeneutic approach. This methodology utilizes comparison and contrast to create a joint construction of all participants' views and realities. Still, the researchers submit that they adapted the FGE approach, focusing particularly on stakeholder involvement in programme evaluation.

In following the FGE methodology, the team developed an agenda for negotiation, based on the expectations, claims, concerns, and issues raised by the identified stakeholders. Guba and Lincoln (1989) define the terms *issues*, *claims*, and *concerns* as follows:

Issues: Any state of affairs about which reasonable people may disagree

Claims: Assertion that there is a benefit to the evaluand

Concerns: Assertions that there is something unfavourable to the evaluand

The evaluation was able to identify areas of consensus. The process took place as follows:

- identifying the stakeholders
- ascertaining their claims, concerns, and issues
- providing a context and a methodology for gathering and critiquing these
- arriving at consensus within and among groups of stakeholders
- creating an agenda for negotiation when consensus was not reached
- collecting and providing information for negotiation
- providing a forum in which negotiation can take place
- presenting a report for stakeholders, and reviewing unresolved issues

There were adaptations to the "hermeneutic dialectic negotiation" described by Guba and Lincoln (1989, p. 151) due to time and other constraints. In the preliminary phases, focus groups

were used instead of individual interviews, thereby allowing access to a wider range of participation in a short space of time. Instead of interviews, questionnaires were administered to the entire cohort of teachers (2004–2009). The questionnaire comprised open-ended responses only. Consensus meetings encouraged feedback and negotiation through the use of open-ended oral questions as well as written responses from participants.

Chavez (2008) points to one complication with insider-led research as bias in the selection of participants. However, our sampling strategy was meant to avoid and/or reduce bias in selecting participants, while allowing for selection of persons who could contribute meaningfully given their positions and responsibilities within the education system. Purposive sampling was used to select high-ranking personnel from the Central Administration of the Ministry of Education (MOE) and school principals. Through stratified random sampling, one Head of Department (HOD) and one Dean from each of the eight national educational districts were selected, with permission from the MOE. In total, 91 HODs and Deans participated from 67 out of 141 schools.

Individual interviews were held with personnel from the Central Administration of the MOE, and a total of 17 focus group interviews were conducted to gather data from school principals, Deans, and HODs. Seven members of SOE staff conducted interviews within the eight educational districts. Participants reflected on their expectations of the programme, their experiences, and their perceptions of the impact of the programme.

Data collection was organized in phases to allow for reflexivity during the process. Following are further expositions on the phases:

Phase 1 represented the initial collection of data as follows:

- Interviews with principals, Heads of Departments (HODs), Deans, and key personnel from the MOE
- Questionnaires from key personnel from the MOE

In **Phase 2,** the initial data were analysed and presented to the stakeholders who participated in the first phase:

- Presentation of initial findings to principals for discussion and to gain feedback
- Presentation of initial findings to teachers, HODs, and Deans for discussion and to gain feedback
- Questionnaires to SOE staff

During this phase, the feedback sessions also provided opportunities for each stakeholder group to respond to other stakeholders' perspectives. For example, during the second meeting with each stakeholder group, participants were provided with, and responded to, data from other groups as follows:

1. Principals: data from MOE personnel as well as from HODs
2. HODs and Deans: data from MOE, HOD, and Deans as well as teachers' data
3. SOE staff: data from MOE, HODs, Deans, teacher demographics, teacher data (the entire research team was involved in the presentation of findings)
4. Teachers: Presentation of data from all stakeholder groups to teachers in Trinidad and simultaneously in Tobago (via videoconferencing)

In addition to building consensus, these feedback processes served as a strategy to enhance objectivity, given that we were operating as insider evaluators and were familiar with the participants. Objectivity was achieved by: building trust with participants; guaranteeing confidentiality in reporting; collecting written comments that were provided anonymously; audiotaping interviews to provide an accurate account of participants' views; and hiring independent research assistants to transcribe interviews. Data analysis involved reading and re-reading of transcripts and documents, as well as discussions among team members, which led to agreement about the interpretations of data and the meanings ascribed, with feedback sessions to participants who responded to the findings presented.

Phase 3 involved:

- Observation of teachers in the classroom
- Interviews with teachers and their principals and HODs, and exploration of their teaching contexts

Indicators of Best Practice in the Evaluation Process

An "insider" researcher is one who engages in a study within a setting in which they work (Robson, 2002) or in their community (Stephenson & Greer, 1981), where they are "complete members of organisational systems and communities" (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007, p. 59) and have an "explicit research role in addition to the normal functional role" (Coghlan & Holian, 2007, p. 5). Insider

researchers are "native to the setting and so have insights from the lived experience" (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007, p. 60).

Through insider research, practitioners "choose to research their workplaces to make improvements to…practices. This methodology maximises their knowledge of organizational life in order to understand and make change" (Galea, 2009, p. 4). This evaluation research was initiated by the SOE team, who as designers and implementers of the programme are described as internal evaluators (Daponte, 2008; Davidson, 2005). Hence the evaluation can be described as insider evaluation, which has as one of its advantages timely use of information gleaned from the evaluation. While there are some challenges that internal evaluators face due to the social and political factors at the organizational level, according to Daponte (2008, p. 62), among the benefits of having internal evaluators are:

1. reduction in time needed to learn about the programme;
2. access to organizational documents; and
3. knowledge and understanding of the impact of individual personalities on programme success.

In addition, there is contextual knowledge that adds further authenticity to the evaluators' role as facilitators or mediators of negotiated consensus, and there are the added value outcomes such as organizational learning and capacity building from staff involvement in the evaluation. In relation to the Dip.Ed. programme, which is a mature programme, the intent was ultimately on improving the programme. According to Davidson (2005), evaluations can be conducted for the purposes of improvement, for example, "to explore ways of improving a mature product, service or program" (p. 16).

As insiders, we had the advantage of being able to explore some of the more complex issues, one of which was the issue of role duality that arose during our research into the programme (Costley, Elliott, & Gibbs, 2010). In positioning ourselves in conducting the research, we were both faculty and researchers. We on the team, as insider researchers, interrogated our colleagues on staff who were considered stakeholders in the evaluation process. At the same time, we interrogated ourselves by becoming part of the research process. Our position as insiders therefore afforded us the benefits articulated by Bonner and Tolhurst (2002, as cited in Unluer, 2012, p. 1), namely, having a deeper understanding of the culture within which the programme operated; being

part of a greater level of intimacy, especially among colleagues, so as to illuminate "truth"; and being part of the general flow of the programme as it played out over the course of a year and from year to year. Even as insiders, members of the team had "knowledge of the historical and practical happenings of the field" as existed in the teacher education landscape (Chavez, 2008, p. 479). We had personal knowledge and easy access to information and the thoughts of colleagues who, although not part of the team of researchers, were themselves involved in the programme. Further, given the long-standing history of the SOE as a provider of teacher education and training for decades, the principals and teachers who were our major stakeholders were graduates of the Dip.Ed. programme.

Stakeholder Involvement in the Evaluation Process

Stakeholder involvement is an essential part of the evaluation process, as it ought to be if the goal of the evaluation is to improve the quality of the programme and its delivery (Coldwell & Simkins, 2011; Davidson, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Ottoson, 2000; Stufflebeam, 1983). The study was guided by the philosophy that stakeholder participation in programme evaluation not only enhances the credibility and validity of the evaluation (Brandon, 1998), but also facilitates the engagement of a discourse among those persons at the critical site of change (in this case, teachers); and with policymakers, supervisors of policy implementation, and providers. Given that the evaluation was focused on amassing the views of a wide range of stakeholders, the Guba and Lincoln (1989) FGE model of programme evaluation was used as a theoretical framework. This model advocates a process that involves all stakeholders in the learning community in the evaluation, which facilitates netting a wide range of views of the persons who are affected by the outcomes of the programme, and subsequent dialogue and consensus building among persons about the various perspectives that emerged. The researchers were careful to follow this approach, and involved stakeholders at all levels of the programme. These stakeholders included: the UWISOE, which is the programme provider; the MOE, which ostensibly is the client; the graduates of the programme (teachers); the school principals; the heads of departments; and deans.

The FGE model was chosen by the researchers, particularly because it promotes a hermeneutic approach to utilizing stakeholders' views during the evaluation process, which allows for the claims, concerns, and issues of the various groups to be negotiated and to arrive at some consensus. It is this feature of the process and the synergy it afforded that highlighted stakeholder

involvement as a "best practice" in conducting programme evaluations. Even more so, the data collected as a result of this synergistic approach made it possible for the researchers to make insightful recommendations to improve the programme. Deeper expositions on the actual process of stakeholder involvement undertaken by the researchers, the findings, and what was learnt vis-à-vis programme improvement and quality assurance follow.

The Process

This section presents the phases of the process, what was learnt from stakeholder participation, quality assurance, and best practice. As such, it focuses on the results, insights, meanings garnered, and the implications of these for programme improvement and quality assurance. Data were collected from all the stakeholders to determine what their experiences and expectations of the programme were and whether these expectations were being met, and how teachers' practices had changed as a result of participating in the Dip.Ed. programme. Data were collected using focus group interviews and questionnaires. These data provided a first level discourse on stakeholders' views of the programme under evaluation in terms of experiences, expectations, and practice, which were documented in Ali et al. (2012) and James et al. (2013).

According to Ali et al. (2012):

> There was general consensus among stakeholders that the programme should impact on (a) pedagogy/classroom practice, (b) relationships among members of staff by facilitating collaboration and collegiality, and (c) the school as an organization. (p. 182)

While acknowledging that the programme had benefits, stakeholders identified aspects that needed improvement, such as:

- student teachers tended to revert to old practices post Dip.Ed.
- some content areas were insufficient, for example, problem solving and critical thinking skills, technology skills, lesson planning and assessment, and the programme delivery should be based more on experiential learning
- communication across stakeholders such that each is aware and informed of what the other is doing (Ali et al., 2012)

These findings were presented to the stakeholders via different forums and at different times. In terms of the *outsider* perspectives, school principals, heads and deans, and MOE officials were

invited to the UWISOE and the findings from all stakeholders were presented to them. The presentations to teachers took place at a different time, when it was convenient to gather the widest group of them. Still, they too were presented with the findings from all the various groups of stakeholders. From an *insider* perspective, the findings were also presented to the staff of the UWISOE. In keeping with the hermeneutic approach, discussions with stakeholders regarding the meaning of the findings followed the presentations, thus taking the discourse to a next level in terms of stakeholder involvement.

This second level discourse proved to be quite insightful to both the researchers and the participants. Firstly, it provided the opportunity for all stakeholders to find out what each expected of the other, and to discuss whether and in what circumstances these expectations were justified and met. For example, the MOE and school principals had registered an expectation that having engaged in the programme teachers should be "moral agents of change." Some teachers and UWISOE staff did not understand what was precisely meant by the concept "moral agent of change," and as such at first vehemently opposed the notion of this being an expectation of them. On the one hand, teachers interpreted the concept to mean providing religious direction and, on the other, the UWISOE staff who objected felt that the time frame of the programme did not allow for that level of axiological engagement with student teachers. Some also, like the teachers, needed clarification on the meaning of the concept.

This second level discourse with stakeholders proved to be an integral part of the evaluation process, making it noteworthy as a best practice in that it facilitated an understanding of the epistemological and ontological dispositions of various groups of stakeholders with respect to their experiences in and expectations of the programme, thus extending the utility of the evaluation and the recognition of its value beyond the practice site. This facilitation in turn allowed researchers to view the programme with lens that saw more deeply, thereby making it possible to draw conceptual conclusions and make recommendations for improvements in the programme, based on an understanding of why particular groups of stakeholders expect certain content and outcomes of the programme. The stakeholder engagement at this level was an intervention that enabled the triangulation of data, which increased its reliability; a feature of best practice.

The third level of discourse, in which researchers focused on developing an agenda for negotiating divergence and consensus in stakeholders' claims, concerns, and issues (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), was equally as perspicacious as the second, again signalling best practices.

Issues

Disagreement among stakeholders arose about the understanding that teachers should fulfil the role of "moral agents of change." The disagreement was two-fold, in that there was disagreement as to whether teachers should perform this role and the meaning of the concept. While the MOE officials, school principals, and some members of the UWISOE staff felt that teachers should perform this role, the teachers did not. Consensus around this issue is yet to be negotiated.

Claims

The majority of participants indicated that the content of the programme was meeting their expectations and delivery. The areas where some positive changes were noted were enhanced pedagogical practice and improved instructional design. The principals noted that Dip.Ed. graduates engaged in more student-centred lessons, lesson plans and schemes of work improved, and lessons were more theoretically based and better delivered. Participants also observed that Dip.Ed. graduates were more collegial and shared their knowledge with other staff formally, via in-school workshops; and informally, via conversations with colleagues.

Concerns

The main issues that were of concern to the stakeholders related to areas that were deficient in the programme from their perspective:

- innovative teaching and learning: greater preparation of participants to lead in experimentation and innovation
- insufficient dissemination of knowledge and sustainability of practice through continuous professional development
- teachers not integrating what they've learnt on the programme into their teaching
- inhibiting mitigating challenges within the practice context versus the programme context
- need for greater focus on nation building
- more focus needed on leadership and being a change agent: greater focus on preparing students as future leaders
- need for collaboration among stakeholders: greater synergy among stakeholders—MOE, UWISOE, schools, parents, and community

- more impact on professionalism: increased knowledge and understanding of the teaching service regulations

Agenda for Negotiating Consensus and Divergence in Claims, Concerns, and Issues

The areas identified as concerns by stakeholders were targeted for negotiation. The meetings held with various stakeholder groups provided the opportunities to clarify their claims, concerns, and issues. Based on their discussions, there was **consensus** among them that the following **issues** regarding the programme required further discussion:

- collaboration among stakeholders
- sustainability and dissemination: transfer of knowledge and change in practice
- getting teachers to use more innovative strategies and methods in teaching
- getting teachers to see themselves as agents of change, albeit moral agents of change
- the programme goals
- the way forward
- changing mindset and attitudes of all stakeholders
- teachers becoming reflective practitioners

The results of the evaluation process, which involved stakeholders at various levels, proved to be valuable in guiding the providers (UWISOE) to improve the quality of the programme by using data to make decisions regarding policy formulation and enactment. Further expositions of how this was done are detailed in the next two sections.

Using Data for Programme Improvement and Policy Formulation

*Data and decision-makin*g

The trend toward data use for decision-making is currently receiving attention at all levels of the education system; from primary education to higher education. Proponents for the use of data cite several reasons, including: policy development and enhancement, quality assurance, accountability, monitoring and evaluating student achievement, and programme improvement (Bichsel, 2012; Jonson, Guetterman, & Thompson, 2014; Menon, 2014; Schidlkamp & Kuiper, 2010). However, Schidlkamp and Kuiper (2010) point to a distinction between data and information, and report that there is no direct link between data and decision-making. Between

data and decision-making there is a necessary step—interpreting the data. They suggest that it is information obtained from interpretation of data that informs decisions as "information has meaning, relevance and purpose" (p. 482). Clarifying the process of decision-making even further, Menon (2014), as well as Taylor (2014), refer to the importance of systematic research as well as of reflection and judgment in decision-making.

Taylor (2014) cautions that:

> performance indicators can and should inform decision making...but they should not be seen as a substitute for reflection and judgement....In reality, policy should be shaped by strategy and needs and performance indicators have a crucial role in underpinning this approach, but should not simply reflect indicators of prior performance. (p. 23)

While the SOE engages in the process of programme review and renewal as part of UWI's mandate, and as a strategy to ensure programme relevance within an increasingly competitive environment of higher education, the essential question is, "How can we ensure that the SOE's programme remains relevant and of a high quality?" The need for relevant and timely data that can contribute towards informed decisions cannot be overstated. This programme evaluation process has generated data for decision-making through stakeholder involvement.

Programme improvement and policy initiatives

The programme coordinator has the responsibility for formulating policy with regard to the programme, and to make relevant changes with input from staff and stakeholders. The revisions and policy statements are then submitted for review and approval in accordance with the quality assurance processes determined by UWI.

The next section provides some of the programme improvement and policy initiatives undertaken, based on the interpretation of data collected during the research project and in accordance with the strategic direction at the SOE to maintain programme relevance. The evidence was used for decisions at two levels. At one level, the data were interpreted in relation to the current programme that is being delivered, and at the second level for programme renewal in light of external circumstances within the teacher education landscape.

Table 1 outlines some decisions made based on the findings indicated in Column 1.

Table 1. Policy Formulation Derived From Stakeholder Feedback

Findings: Stakeholders' Expectation/Concern	**SOE Policy Decision**	**Action Required**
MOE: Insufficient exposure to technology integration (needs to be least 3 credits)	Increased exposure to technology integration	No. of timetabled hours to be maintained at 36; funds for increased staffing and equipment/resources need to be provided
Inadequate communication between SOE and stakeholders (MOE, SOE) as reported by Ali et al. (2012, p. 190)	Mechanisms devised for improved communication with MOE	Reports of evaluation findings to be distributed to MOE to update them about the programme
Programme does not cater to teachers of below-average students with learning disabilities (James et al., 2013, p. 90)	Design programmes to cater to the CPD needs of educators	CPD to be planned through the SOE Outreach Unit to cater to identified needs based on needs analysis Communication with the MOE to address these needs
Inadequate focus on teacher professionalism, teacher identity, and changing teacher attitudes (James et al., 2013, p. 90)	Inclusion of appropriate programme goals and learning outcomes in renewed programme design	Inclusion of pertinent sessions in redesigned programme to reflect new goals and learning outcomes

Changes as a result of evaluation

It might be evident that an insider-propelled and democratically constituted change agenda would be more likely adopted by insiders. It may be argued that self-reflection is an adequate tool to stimulate change within an organization. However, the political reality of most contexts is one

where broader policies are imposed upon institutions such as HEIs. Accreditation is one such policy. In the European context, the European University Association's (EUA) Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) has evaluated many European HEIs, especially since the Bologna Process in 1999. The Tavares et al. (2010) analysis, as cited by EUA (2014), showed that the IEP could be useful for improving quality, since the evaluations were generally accurate about problems each university faced, and presented clear recommendations and suggestions for improvement. The IEP 2014 reports comment that the extent to which the IEP "would be effective strongly depended on the university's will to analyse, discuss and use its results internally" (EUA, 2014, p. 35). In the context of the UWISOE, both stakeholder involvement and insider evaluation factored into the redesign of the Dip.Ed. programme. Research by Herbert, Yamin-Ali, and James (2015); James et al. (2013); and Ali et al. (2012) has been able to impact the structure of the programme, which, according to James et al. (2013), participants found to be "restrictive, burdensome and overwhelming" (p. 94). Stakeholder input has impacted the redesign in ways such as:

- programme with fewer credits
- more relevance (e.g., use of teacher-generated case studies in an attempt to attend to school context; merging of educational foundation studies with issues in education)
- blended mode
- substantial (3 credit) module on technology integration for teaching and learning
- school input in teaching practice through critical peer involvement
- wider range of assessment formats aligned with stated learning outcomes
- students required to prepare a formal letter to be submitted to principal and HOD re their curriculum study
- a revision of the action research component

Monitoring the processes for continuous learning and ongoing improvement

The Dip.Ed. staff now recognize and emphasize that the programme must be viewed as one stage on the continuum of teacher professional development (TPD), and are now promoting the programme as such. The "Dip.Ed. Plus" concept has germinated, and plans are afoot to design courses and workshops to supplement teachers' learnings on the Dip.Ed. It is envisaged that

stakeholder involvement must be strategized for ongoing quality assurance in the context of teaching and learning in the secondary school system, reminiscent of Smidt's (2014) thesis that "the basis of development in quality assurance is close collaboration and discussions within and between all stakeholder groups" (p. 5). As such, the empirical evidence provided by this study leans towards a model for programme evaluation, as illustrated in Figure 1. The model outlines an approach to conducting teacher education programme evaluations that is premised on deep, meaningful stakeholder involvement. It is a process model that is interactive, and this characteristic enables it to be both proactive and reactive to the influence of the internal and external environments. *Internal* refers to the programme providers; and *external* refers to the macro system levers, such as the religious, socio-political, socio-economic, and others; and to the micro system levers, for example, school, community, and the key stakeholders, such as the MOE, school staff, and their representatives.

The processes that should take place in the conduct of the evaluation comprise the core operations of the model. The process begins with an internal self-review by the provider, which essentially involves, but is not limited to, the provider reflecting on its programmes in terms of content, delivery, clients, and relevance. This reflective process should then initiate an insider evaluation based on research. This evaluative stage draws heavily on garnering a broad range of inputs from key stakeholders on the value of the programme; whether it is meeting stakeholder expectations and if not, why; and what can be done to make the programme more relevant and effective in meeting the educational needs of the society. The model proposes that this stage of the process should be iterative, in that data collected from the various stakeholders are presented to them, their feedback is noted, and collectively stakeholders begin negotiations to arrive at consensus based on the claims, concerns, and issues that arise during the data presentation and feedback process. Included in the model also are the possible outcomes of the evaluation, which are action oriented. Thus, the outcome of the evaluation may lead the providers to redesign the programme, or continue it as is. The evaluation may also trigger policy formulation, capacity building, or programme discontinuation, but it certainly inspires organizational learning. Reflection on the evaluation outcomes can then lead to further self-review, which restarts the evaluation process.

The authors submit that the processes described should be nested within an environment that values institutional visioning, awareness of external environments, and quality assurance.

Figure 1. A process model for programme evaluation (Yamin-Ali et al., 2016).

Conclusion

The evaluation sought to collect data from stakeholders to improve the quality of the programme. The modified FGE methodology used in the evaluation, which allowed for stakeholder involvement and a hermeneutic approach to data analysis, unearthed strategies in programme evaluation that the researchers advance as best practices. Such practices point to:

- the collection of reliable data through the use of multiple sources whose perspectives may differ due to their varied positionalities
- the use of a research-based methodology framework advocated by theorists in the field (Guba & Lincoln, 1989)

- the production of superior results, which were the useful data that impacted progamme improvement
- the methodology that facilitated understandings in settings outside of the practice site, to include major stakeholders who might have been far removed conceptually from the programme development experience
- the use of insiders who planned and worked with shared understandings that minimized effort, time, and financial resources

The project initiative is one step in developing a culture of inquiry—one in which we systematically collect and use data as an essential part of the process of decision-making. Notwithstanding that the process is time consuming and requires sustained commitment, there are many benefits to using this approach. From the findings and action taken, the merits of conducting an insider evaluation of a programme in higher education are evident. Within the academic context, which has historically been perceived as individualistic and elitist, and which poses constraints on factors including collaboration and institutional learning, this evaluation process brought us to a new understanding of collegial relationships and made us more sensitive to stakeholders' perspectives; creating the collaborative bridge between the SOE and other stakeholders. Insider evaluation researchers need to be ready for the kinds of experiences the process puts them through in terms of reflection and reflexivity. The serendipitous kinds of learnings gained while conducting the evaluation enhanced the personal and professional development for the team that conducted the evaluation. The team of insider researchers developed to the stage where they were sharing a common language within the context of the ramifications of the evaluation, thus facilitating greater ease of analysis, interpretation, and synthesis. To conclude, this paper proposes the institutionalization of best practice in HEIs, which involves a strategic approach to developing a culture of inquiry that would include stakeholder involvement and insider evaluation.

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