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Title: Quality Assurance in teacher education through insider evaluation and stakeholder involvement: A case for programme renewal

Abstract

This paper presents a description of a teacher education programme evaluation which was initiated, planned and executed in an attempt to enhance the quality of the programme's content, delivery and impact. The evaluation was conducted within the framework of academic research, and comprised reports on the perspectives of major stakeholders' (principals, heads of departments, deans and teachers) on whether the Dip.Ed. programme (2004-2009) had met their expectations, and on the benefits and limitations of the programme and the impact of the programme on teachers' practice. In addition to those stakeholders, data were collected from officials of the Ministry of Education who are categorised as the client of the School of Education, who is the provider. Subsequent to the preliminary enquiry into those stakeholder perspectives, a more probing approach was applied to the perspectives of Heads of Departments, SOE staff and Ministry officials. The final phase of the evaluation involved observation of teachers' classroom teaching and interviews with the top and middle management of those schools.

The evaluation was guided by Guskey's (2002) theoretical and conceptual model of evaluating the impact of 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 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.

Keywords: stakeholder involvement; insider evaluation; programme renewal; quality assurance

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Introduction

This paper reports on an approach to establishing best practices in a teacher development programme via an evaluation based on a conceptual framework which drew on the fourth generation evaluation (FGE) model of Lincoln and Guba (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). It is a programme that has been in existence for 42 years and is now being formally reviewed in accordance with the new UWI regulations for programme approval. Within the context of quality assurance, the 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). The University of the West Indies, 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*" (UWI, STA, 2012 b, p.17). (Italics not in original)

Background to the issue

This programme evaluation project began when there seemed to be an urgent 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.

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 which 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, focussing 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. 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 – random stratified sampling - in each educational district served to avoid bias in selecting participants.

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. Ninety-nine HODs and Deans participated from 67 out of 141 schools. 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. A total of seventeen focus group interviews were conducted to gather data from school principals, Deans, and HODs. Individual interviews were held with personnel from the Central Administration of the MOE.

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 Ministry of Education

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

Phase 3

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

Indicators of best practice: How the evaluation process aligned with quality assurance in teacher education

Insider evaluation and organizational learning

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 (Davidson, 2005; Daponte, 2008). Hence the evaluation can be described as insider evaluation, which has as one of the 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
3. knowledge and understanding of the personal impact on programme success

In addition, 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, being 37 years old when this evaluation project began, 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).

Insider Evaluation and its Utility

An 'insider' researcher is one who engages in a study within a setting in which they work (Robson, 2002) or their community (Stephenson & Greer, 1981) where they are "complete members of organisational systems and communities" (Brannick & Coughlan, 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 & Coughlan, 2007, p. 60). 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 et al., 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 as 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 (Stufflebeam, 1983; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Ottoson 2000; Davidson, 2005 & Coldwell & Simkins, 2011). 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 it also facilitates the engagement of a discourse among those persons at the critical site of change, (in this case teachers), with policy makers, 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. The researchers were careful to follow this approach, and involved stakeholders at all levels of the programme. These stakeholders included: The UWISOE, who is the programme provider, the MOE, who 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 that 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 a vis programme improvement and quality assurance follow.

The Process: What was done; stakeholder participation; what was learnt about Quality Assurance and Best Practice

This section 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 teacher's 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. Ali et al (2012) noted that there was variation in the expectations among stakeholders which they ascribed to differences in the stakeholders' roles, needs and beliefs. Nevertheless, there were areas of agreement. According to Ali et al (2012, p.182):

There was 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.
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, e.g. 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.

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 were these expectations justified and met. For example, the MOE and school principals had registered an expectation that having engaged in the programme that 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 and 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, because what it facilitated was an understanding of the epistemological and ontological dispositions of various groups of stakeholders with respect to their experiences in and expectations of the programme. 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 third level of discourse in which researchers focused on developing an agenda for negotiating divergence and consensus in stakeholders claims, concerns and issues was equally as perspicacious as the second, again signalling best practices. 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

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 didn't. 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 are:

- Enhanced pedagogical practice
- Improved instructional design

The principals noted that Dip. Ed. graduates engaged in more student centered lessons; lesson plans and schemes of work improved; 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:

- innovative teaching and learning: greater preparation of participants to lead in experimentation and innovation
- dissemination of knowledge and sustainability of practice through continuous professional development
- teachers integrating what they've learnt on the programme into their teaching
- mitigating challenges within the practice context versus the programme context
- greater focus on nation building

- more focus needed on leadership and being a change agent: greater focus on preparing students as future leaders
- collaboration among stakeholders: greater synergy among stakeholders: MOE, UWISOE, schools, parents and community
- 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-making

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 et al., 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 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" (Taylor, 2014, p.23).

While the SOE engages in the process of programme review and renewal, as part of The 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 which can contribute towards informed decisions cannot be understated. This programme evaluation process has generated data for decision-making through stakeholder involvement.

Programme improvement and policy initiatives

The programme coordinator has the responsibility to formulate 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 The UWI.

In the next section are 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.

Table 1 Policy formulation derived from stakeholder feedback

Stakeholders' Expectation/Concern	SOE Policy Decision	Action
MOE: Insufficient exposure to technology integration (of at least 3 credits)	Increased exposure to technology integration	No. of timetabled hours; funds for increased staffing and equipment/resources 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 distributed to MOE to update clients about the programme.
Programme does not cater to teachers of below average students with learning disabilities (James, et al. 2013, p. 90)	CPD to be planned through the SOE Outreach Unit to cater to such specific needs - needs analysis to be conducted; communication with MOE regarding this concern	

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

Quality Assurance in Teacher Education

The Dip. Ed. programme operates in a context that is dynamic and responsive to a variety of stakeholders. Establishing and maintaining quality assurance 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 (COHSOD, 2013). More overarching oversight of adherence to standards, however, falls within the scope of national accreditation councils.

System for maintaining standards

Operationalising 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 2014 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 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 policy-makers as active partners in promoting research in higher education.

Institutional transformation and excellence

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 who 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 (2003), it is likely that buy-in from major stakeholders would be easily guaranteed.

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 organisation. 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's) Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) has evaluated many European HEIs especially since the Bologna Process in 1999. The Tavares et al. (2010) analysis 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, 2015, 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
- increased formalised use of student reflection
- assessments aligned more closely with stated learning outcomes
- students required to prepare a formal letter to be submitted to Principal and HOD re their curriculum study
- clearer focus on teacher research by providing a separate course on Action Research

Monitoring the processes for continuous learning and ongoing improvement

The Dip. Ed. staff recognises and emphasises now that the programme must be viewed as one stage on the continuum of Teacher Professional Development (TPD) and is 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 strategised for ongoing quality assurance in the context of teaching and learning in the secondary school system, reminiscent of Smidt's thesis that "the basis of development in quality assurance is close collaboration and discussions within and between all stakeholder groups" (Smidt, 2014, p. 5).

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. 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 poses constraints on things including collaboration and instructional 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 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 institutionalisation of best practice in HEIs which involves a strategic approach to developing a culture of inquiry which would include stakeholder involvement and insider evaluation.

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