



*The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor*

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**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**HETL: REACHING THE SUMMIT 2015**

***Educational Mobility***

**UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY**

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Educational mobility has always lurked in the background as a sticky, unresolved dilemma. But the possibilities offered by ICTs, and the mobility that it brings with it, has brought it to the fore as an issue that perhaps requires new ways of thinking, perceiving and doing.

One suspects that much of the resistance to such mobility relates to issues of institutional and academic reputation, degree conferrance powers and benefits, subsidy allocation and of course, the ever present elephant in the room, *quality*. And while we seem to be eager to adopt technologies that will save us money, make us money, or make our lives a bit easier (even in the face of limited longitudinal research) we seem less enthusiastic to embrace the kinds of co-operation and collaboration - the effort of will – that would be required to effectively “share” our students on the one hand, an make provision for them to articulate legitimately within our education systems on the other.

Taken to the next logical level, would we be comfortable working with our international peers on models of credit accumulation and transfer? Technology certainly implies that it is possible – even desirable. I would suggest that this remains the biggest bugbear to

enrolment by students seeking formal quality assured qualifications online. They *want* a formal, internationally recognized and acknowledged qualification and certificate. Rightly so. For the masses that are now purportedly able to access education, a certified qualification is the gateway to a whole new, more prosperous world. Until such time as we have buy-in from our students in that regard, we will continue play “pass the hot potato.”

While the idea has been mooted globally for some time and while a number of initiatives have been launched, thus far, there has been quite limited sharing and willingness to really interrogate CAT, as a viable option for greater access (with success) to higher education.

Obviously there are many policy, capacity and logistical implication, and the question that we have to ask as individual institutions, as nations and as global players, is whether or not this is something that we genuinely want to engage in. This is a conversation that needs to be had globally. It is very easy to speak of access, social justice and the demise of ivory tower institutions on the one hand. It is quite another matter to move from talk to action. Are our institutions any more accessible to the less privileged than they were a decade ago – or do we continue to exclude them because of policies and systems that are calculated to entrench the very privilege that ICTs are supposedly able to overcome? In fact, if we were truly honest we might admit that much of the current discussion is subjective and territorial and not based sincerely on the best interests of our students and our country’s socio economic development.

One discerns however, that globally, governments would like to see this situation being changed in such a way that our students are taken through our systems efficiently and successfully and that they emerge as quality graduates and productive, active and engaged citizens. Higher education institutions are being called to come on board and to contribute to the debate, and in many cases (such as that is my country South Africa), to the successful implementation of policies that have, and are being crafted for that very purpose.

So I thought I would update you very briefly on the progress in South Africa on the issue of educational mobility.

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act (Act 67 of 2008) required that the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) develop Policy for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) after consultation with the three Quality Councils. This is the first

time a National Policy on CAT has been developed in South Africa and its introduction has been given a high priority as one of the tools that will positively contribute to the facilitation of lifelong learning. Our *Policy for Credit Accumulation and Transfer within the National Qualifications Framework* was gazette on 2 December 2014 – so it is in fact, brand new!

The purpose of the CAT policy therefore, is policy is to:

1. Facilitate the development of credible, efficient and transparent processes both for the accumulation of credit within qualifications and for the transfer of credit between qualifications both within and between the Sub-Frameworks of the NQF.
2. Provide for the development and implementation of CAT as an integral component of qualification design within the NQF and its Sub-Frameworks.
3. Benefit individuals seeking to progress between qualifications or part-qualifications on the NQF, and between these qualifications and the world of work.
4. Arrange for the accumulation of credit and for the transfer of credit into a single differentiated system.

The Policy is based on the principles of *Access for success; Articulation by design; Comparison based on credible methods; Complementarity, and transparency*, which will guide the work of all organisations and institutions responsible for developing, quality assuring and/or offering qualifications in the NQF

Where there are differences in prerequisites, the rigour of the curriculum, or the topics covered, the relevant authority may require the learner to do supplementary work before credits are awarded. This supplementary work is determined in a fair, consistent and transparent manner, using credible methods, and in consultation between the two institutions. The amount of credit awarded for transfer may be set by a pre-existing agreement, or may be decided by the authority responsible for the programme into which credit is being transferred. The amount of credits will vary according to the comparability of the outcomes gained to the outcomes required.

The policy has implications for a range of practices related to the completion of qualifications on the NQF, and progression between qualifications in the NQF. For example, the development of qualifications needs to provide for CAT. The Policy also

has implications for admission committees in higher education, the allocation of credits through RPL, the use of advanced standing, and agreements on recognition of qualifications by recognised professional bodies.

The CAT Policy draws on existing good practice, while also providing a strong impetus for change. It promotes articulation between qualifications within and across the three Sub-Frameworks of the NQF and has the potential to improve access to the world of work. As well as setting out the principles on which the CAT system is based, the Policy explains aspects of the operation of the system and sets out the specific roles of SAQA, the Quality Councils, education institutions, skills development providers, recognised professional bodies, and workplaces. The Policy recognises that the context across the three Sub-Frameworks of the NQF differs substantially and this fact was therefore carefully considered in the drafting process.<sup>1</sup>

The CAT policy undergirds the provision made in our new White Paper for Post School Education and Training : *Building an Expanded, Effective and Integrated Post-school System* (RSA 2013 and our Policy for the Provision of Distance Education in South African Universities: *in the context of an integrated post-school system*. Both speak to inclusive access with success and articulation that will ensure that students enjoy lifelong learning and are not allowed to fall through the cracks because of drop out, stop out for whatever reason. Clearly we will not compromise on quality. I would like to believe that we have in place a policy that offers genuine, quality progression for students in a higher education system that encourages, rather than inhibits by throwing up barriers that may not be serving individual or national interests.

I look forward to some interesting debates and viewpoints on this most interesting and important topic as we mature into our appreciation and conceptualization of the real benefits of ICTs for the students of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

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<sup>1</sup>SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY, No.972 2 December 2014. *Policy for Credit Accumulation and Transfer within the National Qualifications Framework*. No.38275 GOVERNMENT GAZETTE, 2 DECEMBER 2014. Available at: [www.gpwonline.co.za](http://www.gpwonline.co.za)