

Semantic and metaphoric reflection on the training of decentralized staff responsible for supporting students in terms of work-integrated learning: a distance education university scenario

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This article provides both a current and a historical perspective, as well as describing the journey of a distance education institution. It contains a synopsis of the imperatives pertaining to work-integrated learning within higher education in South Africa. The article gives its readers a glimpse of the role of decentralized learner support staff at a distance education university in soliciting potential host organizations and placing students for their prerequisite work-integrated learning. It also contains an overview of a week-long seminar. The research entailed both a semantic and a metaphoric evaluation of the training. The findings include an analysis of semantic indicators of the reflection by participants and a review of the metaphors participants used to express their feelings about the seminar. The article concludes with the benefits message subsequently developed. (*Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 2009, 10(2), 121-140).

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The University of South Africa (commonly known as Unisa) originated in 1873 and was initially known as the University of the Cape of Good Hope; it changed its name to Unisa in 1916 (Unisa Online, [sa]; Wikipedia, 2008). One of the most significant changes to have taken place in the 136-year history of the institution is that Unisa became the single distance comprehensive institution of South Africa in January 2004. This happened when the former Unisa merged with Technikon SA and incorporated the distance education component of Vista University (VUDEC). The latter was established in 1981 by the then apartheid government as a multi-campus university to cater for urban black South Africans seeking tertiary education (Wikipedia, 2009).

Technikon SA (TSA) emerged from the former Witwatersrand Technikon's correspondence wing in April 1980 as an independent institution, namely Technikon RSA. In August 1993 the institution re-launched itself as Technikon SA (Unisa Online, [sa]). Technikon— as a type of higher education institution—emphasized cooperative education as a foundation principle (Groenewald, 2003) of their teaching and learning strategy. Cooperative education is a holistic educational strategy that advocates the integration of structured real-life learning experiences into the qualification curriculum, which is a product of collaboration with representatives from the occupational field the qualification is intended for. Around 2004, the World Association for Cooperative Education (WACE) adopted the term “work-integrated learning” to include various forms of real-life learning experiences (Coll et al., 2009).

The former Certification Council for Technikon Education (SERTEC)—a statutory body in terms of the (now repealed) SERTEC Act 88 of 1986, as amended by the (now repealed)

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SERTEC Amendment Act 185 of 1993—accredited technikon qualifications and ensured that standards of education and examination were adhered to. To this end, SERTEC published a manual to provide guidance to technikons (South Africa, 1998). In summary, the manual advocates the following regarding cooperative education practices:

- (i) Mechanisms must be in place whereby the technikon researches educational needs, curriculum development and revision of the established curriculum;
- (ii) Continuous liaison should take place with the employer sectors or client industries through the functioning of regular and representative consultative structures (advisory committees and others bodies) to ensure continuous involvement;
- (iii) Work-integrated learning ideally ought to form part of every program (qualification) and should include the following:
 - structural guides to document the required work-integrated learning
 - administration of work-integrated learning and the necessary student placement infrastructure and procedures
 - the documenting, evaluation and control of work-integrated learning undergone
- (iv) Teaching staff should keep abreast of developments and changes in their fields through regular contact and, at times, even prolonged exposure.

On 22 March 2000, a representative group of academic, professional and administrative support staff gathered to consider the way forward with regard to TSA's cooperative education practices. This institutional workshop came about as a result of conditional accreditation of TSA's cooperative education practices in 1999, a similar outcome to the 1995 SERTEC evaluation. At this meeting the notion of decentralized student support with regard to placements for work-integrated learning had been approved. However, work-integrated learning remains the primary responsibility of academic staff concerned and includes the following tasks:

- Decide on the work-integrated learning curriculum;
- Decide which aspect to delegate/decentralize vs. which to centralize (retain direct responsibility for);
- Provide the work-integrated learning guidelines;
- Market cooperative education practices and identify placement opportunities for students;
- Approve workplace mentors and provide training;
- Ensure accreditation of work or community service sites;
- Ensure on-site monitoring visits (in person or through agents); and
- Evaluate the adequacy of work-integrated learning.

The geographically widespread (for current locations refer to figure 2 in Groenewald, 2009, p. 7) regional learner support function is ideally located and is considered a key roleplayer in terms of work-integrated learning. The responsibilities of these staff include the following:

- Find work-integrated learning opportunities in the regional geographical areas;
- Maintain a database of host organizations in conjunction with academia;
- Provide assistance to students, for example letters of introduction, CV compilation and interview coaching; and
- Match students with work or community learning opportunities.

In contrast to centralized models of cooperative education, the role of the lean TSA central unit included

- coordinating and monitoring standards that were approved by Senate;
- building internal institutional relationships around cooperative education;
- rendering professional advice, guidance, assistance and literature;
- facilitating 'cross-pollination' and exchange of ideas;

- developing materials for the marketing of cooperative education;
- conducting research; and
- serving as secretariat of the Senate committee for cooperative education practices

An advocacy process followed and several refinements of the roles matrix and draft policy were made, which were approved by Senate several months later. Owing to human resource constraints, however, implementation remained inadequate. Several regional management and inter-regional and academic management deliberations were initiated by the central unit in an attempt to urge implementation or explore obstacles. One of these sessions led to a decision to revise the policy. The outcome thereof was a policy with slightly different wording but similar principles, which was approved by Senate. Nevertheless, the revised policy did not accelerate the implementation. Moreover, the pre-merger paralysis and initial post-merger chaos further hampered implementation.

The merger between Unisa and TSA occurred along with several dramatic changes in the higher education landscape of South Africa. One of these changes was the establishment of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the Council for Higher Education (CHE). The HEQC implemented a number of criteria related to work-integrated learning, specifically with regard to

- (a) accreditation of programs/qualifications (South Africa, 2004b); and
- (b) institutional quality assurance audits (South Africa, 2004a).

The Department of Education (DoE) further gazetted an imperative that “it is the responsibility of institutions which offer programs requiring WIL [work-integrated learning] credits to place students into WIL programs” (South Africa, 2007 p. 9). The Unisa regional structure plays a key role in this regard. In summary, the DoE and HEQC imperatives include the following:

- inclusivity (Nkomo 2000) regarding *curriculum design* and development, taking into consideration national and regional *needs of stakeholders*;
- an *obligation to place students* where work-integrated learning is part of the curriculum of the qualification;
- effective *management and coordination*, with responsibilities and lines of accountability clearly allocated;
- provision of adequate *infrastructure* and resources;
- *learning contracts or agreements* clarifying the objectives and outcomes of the learning process, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the institution, students, mentors and employers involved;
- regular and *effective communication* between the various parties;
- regular and systematic recording and *monitoring of progress* of the student’s learning experiences;
- *mentoring* that enables the student to recognize strengths and weaknesses; to develop existing and new abilities; and to gain knowledge of work practices; and
- *academic as well as workplace-based assessment*.

The Vice Chancellor of Unisa made some very important remarks about the role of the regional centers during his opening speech at the Johannesburg centre (Pityana, 2005). He said that at the meeting of the Council of Unisa, which took place from 30 September to 1 October 2005, it was signaled that Unisa must redirect its strategy and business model, adopt a customer orientation, and focus its energies and resources on learning support. Regional learning service centers are therefore very important, not merely an administrative convenience, since they are required to facilitate learning and offer a range of assistance

programs to learners. The regional structure is illustrated in figure 1—indicating, among others, the placement of students for prerequisite work-integrated learning. The Vice-Chancellor also said that Unisa is committed to making learning centers available throughout South Africa, as well as elsewhere on the African continent where the volume of students justifies it. The staff of such centers knows the social context of students and are capable of responding to the learning needs of the students, which again is assumed to include the work-integrated learning needs of students (Pityana, 2005).

Generic job descriptions apply to several of the student-interface support staff in regions. Although the larger regional offices do allow for some degree of specialization of staff, a considerable amount of multitasking is required of the staff at smaller regional offices. The key performance areas of regional officers, for example, include (1) pre-registration and registration; (2) processing of assignments; (3) tutoring system administration; (4) a collection of academic learner support—including work-integrated learning, peer collaborative learning and academic literacy programs such as reading, writing and numeracy; (5) ICT support; and (6) administration of resources, logistics and general office administration. In certain cases it is a matter of survival from one day to the next, which seldom allows for proper planning and focused attention. In a discussion during a centre visit, a staff member inadvertently mentioned their reluctance to render certain student support. In the ensuing discussion, a metaphor was used of a donkey refusing to move when driven too hard.

Although some ad hoc placements of students for work-integrated learning took place, large-scale implementation of this support service has generally been inadequate owing to resource constraints. The approved posts within regional structures are based on agreed norms with regard to student numbers within a geographical area. The university as a whole was initially overstaffed after the merger, with the result that it could not populate vacant posts in the regional structure. While these factors delayed implementation, the central unit diligently continued to fulfil its role by, for example, undertaking the following tasks:

- Implemented summaries of the work-integrated learning of various qualifications, based on a template generated through a collaborative process, and kept these up to date;
- Was instrumental in the implementation of a database for capturing host organizations and student placement management, as well as the training of users and the implementation of an intranet interface to simplify data capturing;
- Provided various marketing materials for regional office staff;
- Served, with guidance from the office of the academic planner, as convener of the policy formulation process for the new comprehensive institution (Unisa Online, 2005);
- When a single student administration system materialized, it initiated mechanisms to identify students in need of work-integrated learning placements;
- Developed a comprehensive step-by-step administrative guide;
- When implementation of the latter was not forthcoming, it initiated corrective measures;
- Developed a comprehensive online manual, available through the intranet, to guide roleplayers;
- Implemented a CV submission initiative to assist students with priority placement needs;
- Ensured that all relevant documentation of individual students was accessible online, through Workflow;
- Retained liability insurance and kept the essential data up to date;
- Provided online templates of letters students may require from regional staff; and
- Developed a memorandum of agreement template that adheres to Unisa's due diligence specifications and made it available online.

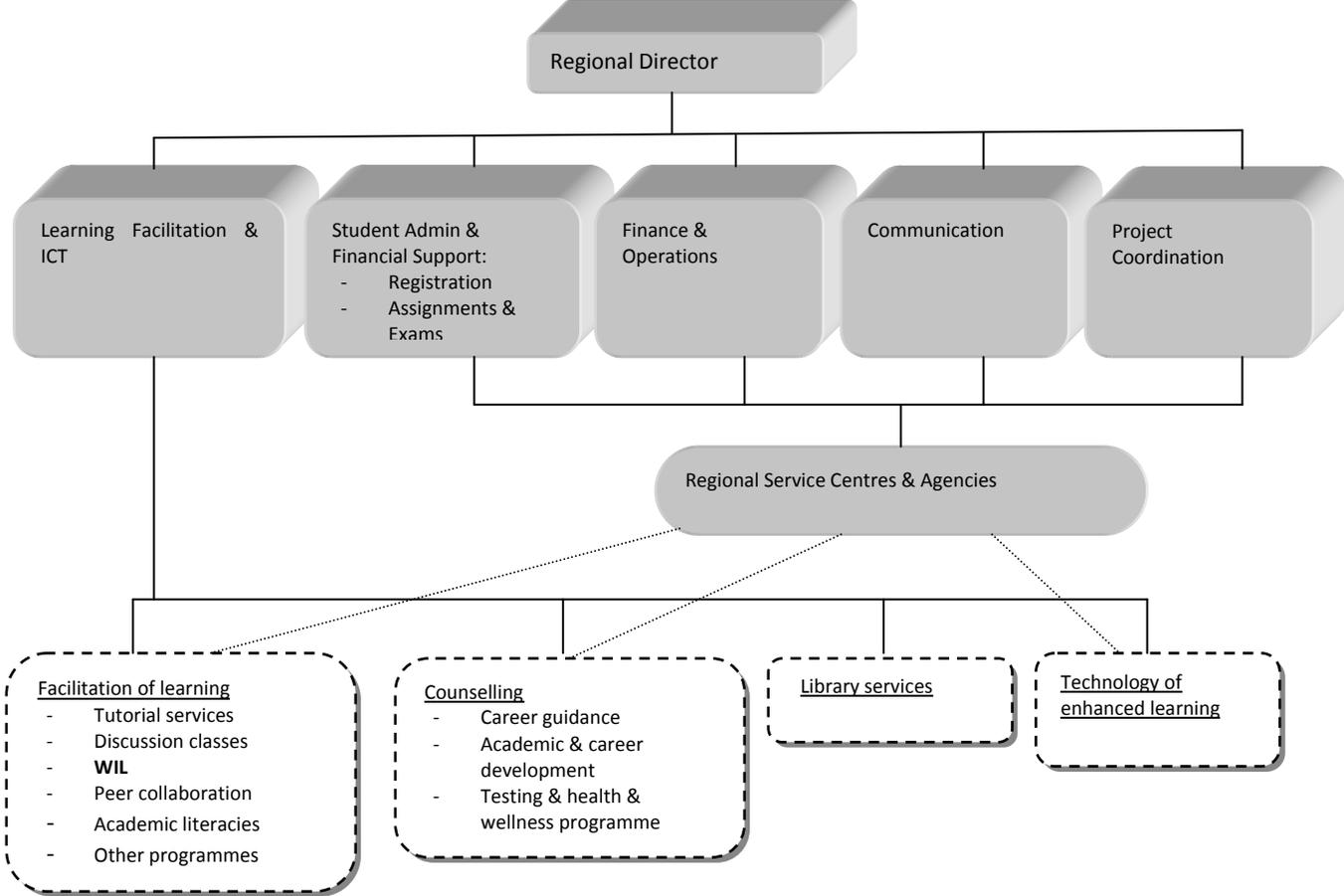


FIGURE 1
The Unisa regional structure of functions

Sapiential (literally “having wisdom”) ‘pressure’ from the central unit resulted in the Executive Director: Learner Support exercising his authority by urging regional directors to nominate specific individuals, whose key performance areas (KPAs) are contracted in terms of Unisa’s integrated performance management system (IPMS), to render services pertaining to work-integrated learning. A special week-long seminar was developed and presented by the central unit, based on the following eight *lines of logic*:

1. Product knowledge was considered a foundational logic. About 5½ hours, spread over the first three days, were set aside and academic staff responsible briefed regional colleagues about the WIL component/s of various qualifications within 4 of the 5 Unisa colleges;
2. The imperative context pertaining to work-integrated learning was considered to be another foundational logic; it was regarded as essential that regional colleagues understand what the imperatives are;
3. The third logic focused on the role, responsibilities and major activities of regional staff (Table 1). Following the foundational aspects, this part of the program focused on the *how* (step by step with illustrations) to make resources available, the systems behind these, where to get information, how to go about activities, and what the performance objectives, targets, standards and measures are. This logic also clarified the role of regional staff in the value-adding chain, as well as the deliverables and receivables of each roleplayer therein, thus contextualizing work-integrated learning within the overall learner support operational plan;
4. The fourth logic was reflective in nature in that participants had to formulate appropriate standards of good quality with regard to the various major activities of regional staff responsible for work-integrated learning service delivery;
5. The fifth logic turned the first three lines of logic on their side and considered them from the perspective of the needs of students, in other words, assuming that “the customer is king”. This part of the program also included relevant documentation and collaboration with the Directorate for Counseling, Career & Academic Development (DCCAD) (Unisa Online, [sa]);
6. Considering the challenging task of soliciting suitable host organizations, an entire day of the program was devoted to sales skills training. This logic links up with logic 1, product knowledge, and converts the features of the products (students) into benefits for potential host organizations. Networking; researching potential hosts; the first 15 seconds of the telephone call to secure an appointment; presentation; and “closing the deal” were some of the topics addressed. A literature review and a follow-up brainstorming session by video conferencing was held after the seminar to produce a standardized benefits message aimed at potential host organizations, as well as a standardized first 15 seconds of the telephone call;
7. The seventh logic entailed a brief look at the imperatives concerning monitoring and, in particular, the lessons learnt from the pilot studies undertaken in the fourth quarter of 2008 (Groenewald, 2009); and
8. The eighth logic brought everything together in that the participants had to draw on what they had learnt and formulate action plans for their specific geographical responsibility area.

The literature review purposefully sketches the background of former technikon-type higher education institutions that merged with traditional universities. The background includes the origins of the work-integrated learning coordination model of the newly formed distance education university. It then zooms in on the multiple functions expected of the learner support staff responsible for service delivery to students in terms of work-integrated learning. Against this backdrop, the content of a week-long seminar is outlined and the major activities of the abovementioned learner support staff presented. The idea to publish transpired when the richness of the qualitative end-of-seminar evaluations were observed. The aforementioned serves to contextualize the research undertaken. The next section explains the method of data collection and analysis in order to reflect on the seminar.

TABLE 1

The major activities of regional staff tasked with work-integrated learning (WIL) as key performance area (KPA)

Major activities	Resources and systems in support of activities
a) Identify those students in a particular geographical area that need WIL support. (This is a proactive approach, whereas major activity (f) is reactive.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spreadsheet of priority students needing placements kept up to date online. - Report available on (a) unemployed students in a region and (b) students needing placements. - Relevant documentation of individual students available through Workflow.
b) Recruit host organisations willing to offer students opportunities to undergo prerequisite WIL.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outline of each qualification's WIL requirements, available online. - Details of Unisa's liability insurance, available online.
c) Arrange/present "work-wise" skills preparation and CV writing skills training sessions for students in need of appropriate in vivo learning opportunities with a suitable host organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Directorate for Counseling, Career and Academic Development services outlined online.
d) Facilitate the selection of relevant students in need of prerequisite in vivo learning for such available placement opportunities. (Major activities (a)–(c) culminate in this one.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CVs of students online, available through Workflow. - Academic records of students online, available from the Student Administration System.
e) Facilitate memoranda of agreement (MoA) with organizations that accept Unisa students for their prerequisite in vivo learning. (Major activity (e) logically follows major activity (d), but may also be a direct outflow of major activity (b).)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Template of MoA available online. - Necessary due diligence template available online. - Details of Unisa's liability insurance, available online.
f) Support students who approach regional offices (about WIL) directly with regard to an appropriate opportunity to complete prerequisite in vivo learning in order to graduate. (This is the 'reactive' version of major activity (a), but is necessary for many qualifications where the academic staff concerned failed to introduce the WILQuest.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Automated letter of introduction to potential host organizations, available through the Student Administration System. - CV template available in pamphlet form and online. - A variety of letter templates available online, for use as circumstances dictate. - Information about alternative avenues to seek potential hosting organizations, available online.
g) Coordinate the monitoring of students undergoing WIL. (This major activity is dependent on academic departments/staff's acceptance of the proposal.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report of students per study unit – for monitoring purposes – available through Student Administration System. - Standard monitoring templates available online. - Individual student locality information, available online.
h) Administrative functions regarding all of the above. (The administrative manual on Staff Online serves as a guide.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A comprehensive step-by-step administrative guide, available online.

METHOD

End-of-seminar evaluations often take the form of a series of Likert-scale statements or questions. Starr-Glass (2005) remarks that this feedback often leaves us with a curious vagueness about what seminar participants actually experienced and what we might do differently next time. He adds: “In a metaphorical sense, we have examined specified topographical features of the course landscape, but have not engaged with the experiences of those who journeyed across the terrain ...” (2005, p. 196). The purpose of evaluation is to obtain information about the strengths and weaknesses of a seminar in order to learn from it and/or to make instructional and administrative decisions. The flaw of evaluative feedback is that we generally ask seminar participants about the objectives that we have defined and their reactions to our seminar design. Starr-Glass urges that we should rather, from a constructivist approach to learning, try to appreciate the unique constructions of participants in terms of what the seminar meant to them. With the aforesaid in mind, the end-of-seminar evaluation instrument had been purposefully designed. Based on the evaluation instrument of Starr-Glass, participants were given three short exercises to do at the end of the week-long seminar:

1. **Semantic indicators**—Write down six to ten words that come to mind when you think back on this seminar (for example informative, helpful, comprehensive);
2. **Simple metaphors**—It is often easier to express feelings indirectly, by means of comparisons (for example: *This seminar was like entering a dark forest because I was cautious as to what I might discover.* Devote a few minutes to reflecting on your feelings about this seminar. Now write your own sentence, including the words “like” and “because”; and
3. **Extended metaphors**—Take the sentence that you wrote in number 2 and expand it into a short story that describes the seminar in a metaphorical (indirect) way/using metaphorical language. (For example: *It was like going into a dark forest. I was not sure where we were going. I came across unexpected and puzzling trees and plants. I was not sure what all of them were, but they were interesting and exciting. Then I discovered that the forest was actually not as dark as I had imagined. I was able to enjoy the forest and eventually emerged safe, but changed.*) Now write your own story. Be completely honest. Please write legibly.

The submissions of individual participants were transferred verbatim to a single data collection. The words (semantic indicators) were sequenced according to perceived similar meanings. A few participants gave semantic indicators for specific days, which were kept separate. A few participants made comments, which were also kept separate. The meanings of all the words (semantic indicators) were looked up on Dictionary.com; the meanings were then added to the list of words (semantic indicators) and the words were grouped according to similar meanings. Sitz (2008, p. 179) cautions that this method of analysis is potentially flawed because the entries for words in dictionaries usually imply

- stable, uncontested meanings of words;
- universal meanings, assuming common meaning regardless of second language users;
- discrete meanings, clearly demarcated for each word; and
- complementary, but mutually exclusive, meanings of words.

Sitz further remarks that a lexical approach clearly overlooks the discursive dimensions, as well as the rhetorical and constructive potential. He points out the research findings concerning the “messy nature” of meaning assigned, as well as “meaning below the surface” (2008, p. 179). He continues by emphasizing situated, dynamic and multidimensional meanings. He also points out the social locus, existence of sense-making and sense-giving—“the social constructive nature of discourse” (2008, p. 180) and the “power relations in

discourse” (2008, p. 181). The linguistic expertise of the second author allowed for insights that the first author may not have noticed. Once the words were organized in groups of similar meaning, the frequency of words used was determined by reverting to the individual submissions. The lexical meanings were then used to derive the likely connotations.

The simple and extended metaphors of individuals were further combined and transferred verbatim —as units—and crudely sequenced according to similarities. With hindsight, we realized that strictly speaking, by using the word “like” in the example of the evaluation instrument the example is not a metaphor, but rather a simile. Metaphors do not use the word “like” or “as” in making the comparison; metaphors simply state or imply that one thing *is* another, for example: he was a lion in battle. A metaphor reveals similarities through difference—it indicates correspondences of dissimilar phenomena. The metaphor brings forth possible likeness—“the better the metaphor, the more striking and surprising the correspondence” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000, p. 89).

Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) indicate that the interest in metaphors came about as a humanist-inspired reaction to rationalism. Gaddefors (2007, p. 173) makes mention of “insights from metaphor theory” and “how metaphors take part in the construction of the environment”, which has been the purpose of the use of metaphors, namely to find out how the seminar participants experienced the special seminar. Gaddefors (2007, p. 175) also makes mention of “linguistic trope” or the linguistic *figure of speech* involved in metaphors. Most of the participants were second-language English speakers, a factor which must be taken into consideration when considering the metaphors they used. The constructivist-evaluation method of Starr-Glass (2005) represents a generative, interpretive and sense-making (Gaddefors, 2007) use of metaphors, which is equated with two of the uses of the Inns (2002) taxonomy indicated in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Taxonomy of six uses of metaphors (Inns 2002, p. 308)

Examining the root metaphors—those that underlie complete discourses (pre-understanding).
Use of metaphors as tool for research.
Use of metaphors as teaching tool.
Metaphors as generative tool for creative thinking.
Metaphors as tool for deconstruction and questioning of assumptions that are embedded.
Metaphors as tool for predominant influence of perception and interpretation.

This section of the article starts by remarking that Likert scale-type seminar or course evaluations, so-called happiness indices, render vague results at best. Therefore a constructivist approach of what the seminar meant for participants was used instead. The process of analysis of the data—the semantic indicators and metaphors of participants—is explained briefly, supported by relevant literature. The second author of the article played a very important role in terms of objectivity and control to ensure truthfulness with regard to presenting the metaphorical data in particular.

FINDINGS

The findings are presented in three categories: the semantic indicators (reflection on the words used by participants in their evaluation); a reflection on the metaphors participants used; and the benefits message developed after the seminar.

The Semantic Indicators

Table 3 reflects the meaning-groups of the words participants used to indicate what came to mind when they reflected on (thought about) the seminar. This table is sequenced from most to least frequent use of particular words by the seminar participants. The eight meaning-groups do overlap to some extent, for example informative and developmental; procedural and precise; as well as moved to action and equipped. The fact that *informative*, *helpful* and *comprehensive* were used as examples in the instruction must be taken into consideration with regard to their contribution to the high frequency rating of the first two meaning-groups. A few participants used terms that denote specific seminar content, which are not reflected in Table 3. Some participants made use of evaluative words, rather than descriptive words, to express their views. For example: *The seminar was necessary, needed or essential; also that it was good, brilliant, successful and effective*; and one remarked that *the seminar was sociable*. Of particular interest is the Dictionary.com usage note pertaining to the contemporary buzzword “empowering”. The word originated in the mid-17th century with the legalistic meaning “to invest with authority, authorize”; shortly thereafter it was used to convey “to enable or permit”. Clearly, the original meaning has been overshadowed by political and pop psychology usage. For example, the civil rights movement sought political empowerment for its followers. Various political persuasions needed a word to portray to their constituents a feeling that they are or are about to become more in control of their destinies: empowered. The Dictionary.com panelists frown on psychological empowerment because it is reminiscent of the self-help movement, which is notorious for trendy coinages.

The Metaphors Used By Participants

Schmitt (2005) concurs with the Starr-Glass method used to evaluate the seminar by stating that metaphors can be used in qualitative research by eliciting them directly from the research participants. As in Deacon’s (2000) experiment relating to market research, valuable and surprising descriptions were forthcoming. Some of the participants, however, did not follow through with their metaphorical descriptions—the descriptions were not always well organized and logical. For example:

I was like a hungry lion, who wants a prey[sic]. In other words, I was hungry for knowledge in order to implement WIL correctly, with caution. Then I discovered that the presenter is a brilliant researcher, who has got a lot of knowledge and organized [sic].

There are numerous reasons for this tendency: the time allocation for completing the evaluation exercise might have been insufficient; perhaps the participants were in such a hurry to leave (it was the last item on the agenda) that they did not pay enough attention in selecting the most appropriate metaphor to explain their feelings and experiences and therefore could not follow through with it; or perhaps it was because most of the participants were second-language users of English. According to Littlemore and Low (2006), a distinction should be drawn between linguistic and conceptual metaphors. In a linguistic metaphor, the choice of words themselves is very important, as they have to convey the precise meaning that the speaker/writer has in mind. Conceptual metaphors, on the other hand, can be said to represent ways of thinking in which speakers typically depict abstract ideas as easier, more understandable concrete entities. What is important for the purpose of this article is that, according to Lakoff (1993), conceptual metaphors are used to express emotions and feelings (abstract concepts) in terms of concrete items such as places, substances and containers. This is what the seminar presenter had in mind with the specific task given to the participants.

TABLE 3

Summary of semantic indicators used by participants in evaluation of the seminar

Meaning-group	Words used	Frequency	Meaning description
Comprehensive-informative	<i>Informative</i>	14	The meaning conveyed is assumed to mean providing or disclosing information; pertinently instructive; many details that would assist participants with implementation; of a large scope and thorough; and inclusive. An additional connotation of making more meaningful with knowledge; advantageous and potentially producing good results is also inferred.
	Information giving	2	
	<i>Comprehensive</i>	6	
	Inclusive	1	
	Relevant	2	
	Detailed	2	
	Enriching	1	
	Fruitful	1	
Practical-procedural	Beneficial	1	The connotation is that of giving assistance; to serve a purpose; and of practical use to produce results. The meaning further pertains to action; designed for actual use; adopting means to an end; manner and ability of a particular endeavor; a body of specialized procedures or methods.
	Total	30	
	<i>Helpful</i>	10	
	Useful	1	
	Practical	2	
	Techniques	2	
	Skills	1	
Moved to action	Procedures	1	The gist is understood to mean to move to action through joining with others; to be part of; to assume something in common; to be given courage, confidence and hope; to be stimulated by assistance; to be enabled and given authority; to enjoy support, encouragement and assistance; and to be in a state of readiness.
	Total	17	
	Motivating	4	
	Sharing experiences	3	
	Encouraging	3	
	<i>Empowering</i>	2	
	Supportive	2	
Emotional	Work collectively	1	These words portray two contrasting emotions: eight participants convey an engaging emotion and six an overwhelming emotion. Some found the seminar of great interest, even entertaining and captivating; spurring on; rouse to vigorous action; and occurring on a high degree. Others perceived the seminar as absorbing; testing one's endurance; intellectually mind-blowing; loaded down; laden with many responsibilities; causing feeling of discouragement or bafflement; and also drawn out or moving rapidly.
	Preparedness	1	
	Total	15	
	Emotional	1	
	Interesting	4	
	Fascinating	1	
	Stimulating	1	
	Energetic	1	
	Intense	1 = 8	
	Emotional	Challenging	
Mind-boggling		1	
Laden		1	
Frustrating		1	
Spinning		1 = 6	
Total		14	

TABLE 3 *continued*

Summary of semantic indicators used by participants in evaluation of the seminar

Precise	Analytical	2	The meaning here implies proceeding by analysis and dividing into elemental parts; also definitely or strictly stated; clearly expressed and delineated; succinct or brief in form but comprehensive in scope; also keeping up with the times, latest ideas, standards, techniques or information; but also inclined to judge or find fault.
	Precise	2	
	Concise/to-the-point	2	
	Up-to-date		
	Critical	1	
	Evaluative	1	
	Total	10	
Equipped	Organized	2	The notion implied is an organic structure providing whatever is needed; to be fitted out; to be furnished with resources, having ability and to be autonomous. The derived meaning further portrays that it is possible to carry through; to accomplish because of being capable and participants believe in their abilities. The connotation further suggests clarity and cooperation.
	Equipped	1	
	Achievable	1	
	Confidence	1	
	Independence	1	
	Well-resourced	1	
	Access	1	
	Aligning (role clarification)	1	
Total	9		
Development	Development	2	The words used convey the act or process of developing; of a significant event unfolding; of maturing; it conveys the root sense of “to lead forth from”; it implies the imparting of a specific body of knowledge or of skill; to give instruction; exposition of a subject; it further implies a gradual increase or betterment to gain expertise.
	Educational	2	
	Teaching	1	
	Lecturing	1	
	Growth	1	
	Professional	1	
	Total	8	
Eye-opener	Eye-opener	2	The connotation is a startling revelation that makes the eyes open; an act of pioneering a new endeavor; an act of inducting or inducing.
	Ground-breaking	1	
	Introduction	1	
	Total	4	

As the majority of the participants were second-language speakers of English, it is relevant to look at the way in which the use or meaning of the metaphors is influenced by the speakers' sociolinguistic competence. When second-language speakers make use of metaphors to describe abstract concepts such as feelings and emotions, their degree of illocutionary competence is of great importance. This means that the participants who were second-language speakers of English had to understand not only the words they used for their metaphorical descriptions, but also the message that they wanted to convey by using those specific words.

Unfortunately, despite some areas of overlap in meaning between various languages, metaphoric expressions of meaning may differ extensively from language to language owing to cultural differences and culture-specific experiences. An interesting example of such differences occurred during the seminar when the facilitator used the term “breadcrumbs” to refer to navigation of web pages. A breadcrumb trail indicates to the internet or intranet user

her/his current location in a series of web pages and how to navigate back to previous pages (W3C, 2008). The breadcrumb trail is a browser history displayed in a continuous line, progressing from left to right, starting from the home page, and contains each link visited, excluding the last one (Iteracy, 2009). All links are clickable, to take the user back to the relevant web page (Motive, 2004).

All the English and Afrikaans first-language speakers immediately understood that the reference was to the breadcrumbs that were to lead Hansel and Gretel (the fairy tale by the Grimm brothers) safely out of the woods. The African languages speakers, however, did not make this connection, not because a lack of English language skills, but owing to insufficient culture-specific references concerning these European bedtime stories. Linguistic skills can therefore be seen as secondary to culture-specific knowledge. Therefore, with reference to metaphors, Bachman (1990) describes the ability to interpret cultural references and figures of speech as sociolinguistic competence.

The various metaphors used by the attendees to evaluate/describe their experience of the seminar are grouped and analyzed in terms of Bachman's (1990) illocutionary competence model. The term "illocutionary competence" refers to a speaker's ability to use language, in the form of the speech act, effectively within the communication process. Illocutionary competence with reference to the use of metaphors can be divided into four functions, namely ideational, manipulative, heuristic and imaginative.

Ideational functions: According to Bachman (1990), these refer to language usage as an exchange of information as well as an exchange about the *feelings* about that information. As metaphors are often used to convey a person's evaluation of a situation or experience (as was required of the attendees of the seminar), the ideational functions of the metaphors can illuminate the true feelings and emotions of the workshop attendees.

Littlemore and Low (2006) mention that when speakers do not understand the metaphor used, misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the issue might occur. During the evaluation of the seminar, however, the facilitator instructed participants to choose their own metaphor, that is, one which they felt would appropriately describe their feelings and experiences concerning the seminar. Attendees could therefore choose metaphors that they were comfortable and conversant with.

The following metaphors clearly illustrate the feelings that the participants wanted to convey:

It was like a first time mom going into labor, because you are cautious as when that most talked about pain will strike. The seminar is like a labor ward, you know that you are going to get (pains) information but what kind will it be – interesting or what? At the end of the seminar (long labor) the end product is delivered. The challenge is to take back what you got and put it into practice. Challenge of long list of unemployed students with less companies to place students (challenge of crying baby all night that needs your attention)[sic].

The intense emotions of fearful anticipation in the first section of the description, followed by the overwhelming challenge described in the last section clearly show what the participant experienced in relation to her/his responsibility concerning WIL, as well as his/her expectations of the seminar.

The following was a more positive metaphor:

The seminar was like looking down on the valley after climbing a mountain. I climbed the mountain and after this difficult exercise I reached the summit and saw the beautiful valley with lots of flower[sic].

The effort of struggling with work-integrated learning prior to the seminar is clearly depicted by the metaphor of climbing a mountain. The participant feels that the seminar itself was the climax—it enabled her/him to see the beautiful valley with lots of flowers. The emotions depicted are clearly that of effort and reward.

Manipulative functions. The primary purpose of utterances with a manipulative function is to affect the world around us, according to Littlemore and Low (2006). These metaphors/utterances are used to get things done, to control or alter behavior of others, and also to establish relationships. In the evaluation exercise, attendees of the seminar used specific metaphors to convey specific messages to the facilitator: commands and reprimands (dressed in metaphoric form, they sound less harsh), commendations (metaphors selected to portray positive feelings of gratitude and satisfaction) and recommendations (suggestions that attendees would perhaps not have had the courage to make outside the safety of the selected metaphors). Figurative language in this instance was thus used to perform manipulative functions. The following metaphors used by the seminar attendees are examples of the manipulative nature of figurative language:

The seminar was like coming to TRC [sic], because the facilitator was very bitter when we started but gradually changed as he realized that people were interested in his seminar.

Also compare the following extract from a metaphor used:

We should grow and not make the seminar a battlefield.

This extract also refers to the discord—and the intensity of it, as experienced by the participant—that was prevalent during the first two days of the workshop. It thus indirectly reprimands the participants who were responsible for the discord.

The majority of the participants/attendees felt that the central unit responsible for work-integrated learning should be more involved on a regional level. This led to attempts to manipulate the facilitator (as a representative of the central unit) to become more involved and to give more assistance to regional staff members. The following excerpts from the metaphors are indicative of such attempts, conveying subtle messages of need for assistance:

This seminar was like obtaining pieces of the WIL puzzle and seeing where these should go to create a picture, because I had not had this information previously. ... I enjoyed working on the WIL puzzle very much as I would like to build the WIL puzzle easily and successfully.

Sitting alone in the cold quietly can be very frustrating.

Heuristic functions. “Heuristic is an adjective for experienced-based techniques that help in problem solving, learning and discovery. Heuristics are rules of thumb, educated guesses, intuitive judgments or simply common sense” (Wikipedia, 2009). With the purpose of the evaluation exercise in mind, heuristics can also be defined as readily accessible, though loosely applicable, information that can be utilized in the problem solving process used by human beings (and machines).

According to Littlemore and Low (2006), this component of illocutionary competence refers to trial and error or other ad hoc devices to learn and teach others about the world around us. As the attendees had to think of ad hoc analogies to explain their personal experience or feelings to the facilitator, the heuristic function of the various metaphors, as depicted below, is obvious:

I felt like a Formula 1 car (Ferrari) that goes around the tract [sic] without any purpose to win the race, but then I realized I have to stop and fill the car with petrol and also to change the tires to enable me to win the race, even though

there is flaws [sic] in the car (product). If I don't win, then I certainly made a serious effort to win. I also realized that it will take time to win [succeed] and to be able to offer and maintain an effective WIL program for our students in Unisa.

This seminar was like flying an airplane, You go up in the clouds and do not know where you are. It was moving on further and further and then the clouds start to clear out when it comes to landing [sic].

Another aspect of the heuristic nature of metaphors is that individual metaphors give only a partial view of any given topic; therefore it is natural that multiple metaphors will be used in describing the same topic. Each of the metaphors used gives specific insight into a specific aspect of the topic described. The variety of metaphors used by the participants bears testimony to this aspect of heuristic function. When comparing the metaphors below, it is possible to identify the positive and negative aspects; potential and success; challenges and difficulties; and perhaps even unrealistic expectations (impossibilities) concerning work-integrated learning and the seminar:

Positive Aspects:

It was like the crack of dawn, because it revealed many things I did not know and shed light on operation [sic], theory and stakeholders – and their roles.

Because the seminar file is so comprehensive it is like a lamp lighting the WIL road to informed action. The light of the comprehensive and informative file will light the road of WIL for me, enabling me to see and find the needed information and effectively plan where I need to proceed and take the needed actions.

Negative aspects: included the reference to a battlefield and the first-time mom going into labor.

Potential and success:

It is like learning to ride a wave, one minute you are fine the next minute you fall. At the beginning of the seminar you are scared to get into the water. After a few trials you become confident. When you continue to ride most of the time you will continue to fall but there will be one or two times that you enjoy the ride.

It was like discovering a world that was there (existed before) but never tapped into, because I was always assuming. I was really excited to be equipped in order to tap into this world. I really feel that I am ready to assist the students who need placement.

Eye opener or runner faced the big wall [sic]. I was like the runner who run, but now he/she can finish it. Now I am like the runner who has technique or running and finish is not far [sic].

Challenges and difficulties: There were references to a first-time mom going into labor; a hungry lion; and sitting alone in the cold.

Impossibility of WIL:

This seminar was like entering the space [sic], because the scope and opportunity for WIL is as wide as the horizons you can see. WIL is like the stars in the sky – calling and bright – inviting you to explore and challenging opportunities [sic], full of promise of unity for colleagues and students.

Note that the above reference could also be used to illustrate potential.

Imaginative functions: This component of illocutionary competence refers to our ability to create and extend our environment for purposes such as the aesthetic or humoristic or creative. It is interesting to note that, according to Lakoff and Turner (1989), very few creative utterances are complete innovations; most are extensions or elaborations of existing metaphors. When studying the metaphors used by the attendees, the extension of the environment via the use of imagination is clear. Metaphors that likened the seminar to entering space or that portrayed the participant as a hungry lion serve to illustrate this idea.

When studying the various metaphors used by the seminar attendees, it is clear that work-integrated learning was perceived by each and every one as a challenge, a difficult task—perhaps even a daunting one. As the seminar evoked a number of emotions—positive as well as negative—the facilitator gained much insight into the feelings and experiences of the regional staff members responsible for work-integrated learning service delivery by asking them to evaluate the seminar using metaphors of their own choice.

The Benefits Message Developed After the Seminar

Literature concerning the benefits of work-integrated learning is mostly ‘evangelical’ in nature—the literature is characterized by ardent or crusading enthusiasm about the practice. However, hard-core marketing literature, highlighting the benefits that profit-making enterprises would derive from hosting students for their work-integrated learning, is not readily available. Rickhard (2002) indicates a number of potential benefits, such as students assisting or shadowing staff and sharing the workload by having work delegated to them. The work-integrated learning of students may result in research and/or innovation and can contribute to the skills development and knowledge production of the country. Burton (2004) indicated some additional advantages: by aligning the work-integrated learning goals of students and the goals of the host organization, real-time critical review of organizational processes and benefits are feasible; furthermore, hosting students may result in growth of the host organization’s employees. Coll (2005) highlights the potential of teamwork development and enculturation of initiates into the scientific community or occupational field of which the host organization is a part. Boud and Costley (2007) focus on the students, for example stating that they are outsiders in respect of the host organization and that their learning is mostly geared towards the outcomes and assessment evidence requirements. Coll *et al.* (2009), however, list several reasons that organizations themselves have cited for hosting students for work-integrated learning, namely

- enhancing company image;
- recruitment and an opportunity to assess persons without any obligations;
- savings of both time and money;
- employee productivity;
- improved retention rate;
- career advancement of own staff by being inspired to study;
- affirmative action (employment equity) purposes; and
- students bring new ideas into the organization.

Fadzil [sa]; Gibson, Brodie, Sharpe and Wong [sa] and the University of Johannesburg’s Department of Marketing Management [sa] corroborate the reasons given above and add the following: the opportunity to facilitate human resource expansion; the possibility of completing a specific task or project for which there would otherwise not have been resources; allows for staffing flexibility; the opportunity to foster partnerships with an academic institution for mutual benefits; contribution to economic growth; and a cost-effective way to train and identify future employees. Wikipedia (2009) highlights benefits associated with corporate social investment, such as aiding recruitment and retention; building a culture within the organization of “doing the right thing” and a reputation of integrity; branding of recruitment attractiveness; and ethical reasons. The literature review above, supplemented by submissions from participants, a brainstorming session via video conferencing and editing of the draft by the sales trainer of the sixth logic of the week-long seminar resulted in the standardized benefits message contained in Figure 2.

DISCUSSION

This article focuses on the evaluation of the week-long seminar. A publishing opportunity only came about when the semantic indicators, and particularly the metaphors, of the constructivist-evaluation data of the seminar were reviewed for the first time. The Starr-Glass (2005) inspired evaluation instrument and the subsequent data gathered served as further inspiration. Numerous attempts were made to address the operational inefficiencies of the distance learning, geographically decentralized learner/student support model in respect of work-integrated learning. The resources listed on the right-hand side of table 1 are indicative of the systems and procedures put in place by the central coordinating unit. On the one hand, is it heartening that a number of participants experienced the seminar as an eye-opener; on the other hand, it is discouraging that some staff were oblivious of the resources available to them. The facilitator approached the seminar with trepidation—there had been much conflict in the past about lack of implementation and inadequate human resources to render support to students. Much consideration, careful documenting and substantial preparation preceded the seminar. A comprehensive manual was compiled to provide participants with an all-inclusive hard-copy manual of resources available to them. As we have seen above, the metaphors of a first-time mom going into labor or sitting alone in the cold are indicative of the anxiety with which some participants approached the seminar.

In retrospect, the rational approach—eight sequential logics—of the seminar program, aimed at working from the imperatives to the operational, was probably a mistake. It evoked defensive remarks, counter-remarks and even resulted in full-blown confrontation. However, perhaps this was necessary for participants to voice their opinions and deal with their frustrations (compare the TRC metaphor). It is evident from figure 1 that the generic job descriptions and multitasking expectations are hindering factors with regard to rendering work-integrated learning services to students. It is suspected that the scope of the overall function pertaining to work-integrated learning (Table 1) has been underestimated. Metaphors such as looking down on the valley after climbing a mountain, flying an aeroplane, the crack of dawn shedding light to reveal many things, and a lamp lighting the WIL road are most encouraging. The semantic meaning-groups “comprehensive-informative”, “practical-procedural”, “precise”, “equipped”, “development” and, especially, “moved to action” are most heartening. The semantic meaning-group “emotional” is indicative of the contrasting emotions some of the participants experienced. The benefits message, aimed at organizations profiting from hosting students for work-integrated learning, is considered a substantial accomplishment. However, there is a long way to go with regard to prospecting and marketing in order to secure sufficient opportunities for students with host organizations. Collaboration of the regional marketing and communication staff is most important, considering the pressure learner support staff members are under. The integrated reality of the operational student support at geographically decentralized offices needs attention. The central coordinating sections, in contrast, are clearly demarcated—each expecting its “pound of flesh” from the staff on the ground. Therefore there is a need for integrated guidelines, resources and procedures to enable regional office staff to more readily multitask and/or switch over from one role to another.

Interested in ...

improving human resource efficiencies?

Unisa students need work exposure as part of their distance studies. Their availability is flexible and can be tailored to suit your business needs, as they are not restricted by semesters or class attendance.

They can be used to

- relieve permanent staff of routine tasks
- alleviate workloads over peak periods
- shadow permanent staff and/or share workloads

They may also enable the completion of a project or research which may otherwise not have been possible.

Should you offer students employment upon graduation, they already know your organization and can immediately contribute to it.

cost-effectiveness?

The stipends paid to students are more than covered by their contributions to productivity.

a no-obligation recruitment opportunity?

After observing the students' performance and monitoring their conduct over time, you may choose to offer employment to a student you already know matches your recruitment criteria and fits into your organization. You will also have the opportunity to train, mould and groom individuals to fit the needs of your organization (enculturation of initiates). This may contribute to improved retention and will reduce recruitment costs.

knowledge and insights transfer?

Students may contribute their acquired knowledge to resolve problems encountered and offer theoretical insights and fresh perspectives and ideas on challenges experienced. The interaction of students with permanent staff may also bring about an awareness of new developments, boost creativity and innovation and inspire staff development.

a constructive corporate social investment (CSI) opportunity?

Unisa students reflect the demographics of our population and can therefore improve your employment equity profile. Serving as a host organization for Unisa students to gain work experience will further enhance your organizational image and reputation, as well as contribute to building a culture of "doing the right thing". Employing students from Unisa gives you the opportunity to

- contribute to meeting the skills development needs of the country
- select, train and develop students from disadvantaged backgrounds
- contribute to economic growth

students where you need them?

Unisa students are situated throughout South Africa and even globally, so organizations with multiple branches or offices will be able to source local students.

students that are used to working autonomously?

The nature of distance education means that these students have learnt to pace themselves, a skill that will contribute to achieving organizational objectives. Unisa students also learn independently and should therefore be able to work independently.

an opportunity to expand your organization's network?

We would like you to establish and build a relationship with the regional and academic staff of Unisa and play a role in influencing the curriculum of Unisa's qualifications.

FIGURE 2

The standardized benefits message aimed at would-be host organizations

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ABOUT THE JOURNAL

The Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative education (APJCE) arose from a desire to produce an international forum for discussion of cooperative education issues for practitioners in the Asia-Pacific region and is intended to provide a mechanism for the dissemination of research, best practice and innovation in work-integrated learning. The journal maintains close links to the biennial Asia-Pacific regional conferences conducted by the World Association for Cooperative Education. In recognition of international trends in information technology, APJCE is produced solely in electronic form. Published papers are available as PDF files from the website, and manuscript submission, reviewing and publication is electronically based.

Cooperative education in the journal is taken to be work-based learning in which the time spent in the workplace forms an integrated part of an academic program of study. Essentially, cooperative education is a partnership between education and work, in which enhancement of student learning is a key outcome. More specifically, cooperative education can be described as a strategy of applied learning which is a structured program, developed and supervised either by an educational institution in collaboration with an employer or industry grouping, or by an employer or industry grouping in collaboration with an educational institution. An essential feature is that relevant, productive work is conducted as an integral part of a student's regular program, and the final assessment contains a work-based component. Cooperative education programs are commonly highly structured and possess formal (academic and employer) supervision and assessment. The work is productive, in that the student undertakes meaningful work that has economic value or definable benefit to the employer. The work should have clear linkages with, or add to, the knowledge and skill base of the academic program.

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The editorial board welcomes contributions from authors with an interest in cooperative education. Manuscripts should comprise reports of relevant research, or essays that discuss innovative programs, reviews of literature, or other matters of interest to researchers or practitioners. Manuscripts should be written in a formal, scholarly manner and avoid the use of sexist or other terminology that reinforces stereotypes. The excessive use of abbreviations and acronyms should be avoided. All manuscripts are reviewed by two members of the editorial board. APJCE is produced in web-only form and published articles are available as PDF files accessible from the website <http://www.apjce.org>.

Research reports should contain; an introduction that describes relevant literature and sets the context of the inquiry, a description and justification for the methodology employed, a description of the research findings-tabulated as appropriate, a discussion of the importance of the findings including their significance for practitioners, and a conclusion preferably incorporating suggestions for further research. Essays should contain a clear statement of the topic or issue under discussion, reference to, and discussion of, relevant literature, and a discussion of the importance of the topic for other researchers and practitioners. The final manuscript for both research reports and essay articles should include an abstract (word limit 300 words), and a list of keywords, one of which should be the national context for the study.

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