iQ academy

Nadeosa Quality Criteria

Title

Scaffolding: iQ Academy supports students in crossing the bridge to higher education and distance learning

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Background

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Higher Certificate Programmes

NQF exit level 5 – 120 credits

The minimum admission requirement into a Higher Certificate Programme is a National Senior Certificate (NSC) with a minimum of 30% in the language of learning, of the higher education institution, as certified by the Council for General and Further Education and Training (Umalusi).

According to the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (2013), the purpose of a Higher Certificate programme is to provide South Africans with an **alternative pathway into higher education qualifications**.

The focus of the programme allows students to obtain **introductory knowledge, cognitive and conceptual tools and practical techniques** necessary to contribute positively to the **workplace**. A higher certificate is said to be **primarily vocational**, or industry orientated (Council on Higher Education, 2013)

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Student Profile

- **Age:** between 25 to 45 years old (Working Adults)

  Bok (2021) characterises adult learners as independent individuals with career and family responsibilities.

- **Race:** More than 90% of students are Black African

- **Gender:** Fairly even split between males and females.

- **Language:** Although English is the language of instruction, for most students English is not their first language. Education is said to be mediated through language (Weideman & van Dyk, 2016). Not having language skills can therefore become an academic challenge that students need to overcome to cope in a higher education environment (Weideman & van Dyk, 2016).

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Challenges Student Experience

- Balance between education, work, family and social life (management challenges) (Kara, Erdogdu, Koko, & Cagiltay, 2019). Of which work commitments is the biggest challenge followed by work transition, family commitments and social life (Bok, 2021).

- Students learning in a distance mode of delivery where the student and lecturer are separated from each other in terms of space and time (Niwaz, Ahmed, & Kamran, 2019).

- Learning challenges consist of commitment to learning, lack of interest in content, ability to understand course materials, low self confidence and social integration (Kara, Erdogdu, Koko, & Cagiltay, 2019).

- Technical challenges consist of lack of time management, lecturer access, communication with lecturers regarding course material, assessments and assessment feedback (Kara, Erdogdu, Koko, & Cagiltay, 2019).

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Scaffolding

Nadeosa Quality Criterion – Reflection

Criterion 2.4: Mechanisms are in place for promoting access to students from marginalised groups, inter alia, through the provision of academic development programmes.

Criterion: 3.17: Where entry requirements are flexible, care is taken to provide sufficient academic support to students who may be under-prepared. This may be by the provision of access or bridging courses, additional units within existing courses, or increased face to face or virtual support.

Criterion 5.8.1: There are clearly defined and aligned aims and learning outcomes.

Criterion 5.8.7: The content of the course is accurate, current, is problematized and reflects the diversity of the South African society and gender sensitivity.

Criterion 7.4: The development of competence in the use of digital technologies is built into the high-level learning outcomes of the programme.

Scaffolding

In education, **scaffolding refers to** the process in which a novice is given the tools to solve a problem, complete a task or achieve a goal that would be beyond his/her unassisted efforts (Doo, Bonk, & Heo, 2020).

The **purpose of scaffolding** is to create content, learning activities and various types of assessments that enable students to eventually be able to perform learning activities independently, therefore assisting students to become independent learners. Independent learners are students who can take ownership of their learning and can learn for themselves (Mckendry & Boyd, 2012). Being an independent learner is important not only in higher education but also impacts online learning success.

Academic Literacy

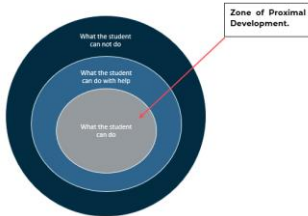## Lev Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development

Figure 1 Lev Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (Shaw, Tham, Hogle, & Koch, 2015)

As is the case with many theories, the theory around scaffolding has also evolved in such a way that support comes from **many sources, lecturers, peers and technology** (Olney, 2014). Scaffolding has evolved from one person providing support, to assistance provided through tools and resources, as well as peers who form part of support, and in most cases, support is permanent and unchanging (Olney, 2014). Technology plays a big role in how scaffolding is applied and managed.

Academic Literacy Module

The **topics** that had to be included in the module:

- preparing students for higher education;
- study practices;
- learning to learn online;
- critical thinking and problem solving;
- academic reading and writing;
- plagiarism and referencing; and
- assessment skills.

The **objective** of these topics was to address:

- the challenges of finding a balance between education, work, family and social life;
- learning and technical challenges;
- how, where and when to communicate with lecturers;
- where to find assessments and assessment feedback;
- what the expectations are around academic reading and writing.

Academic Literacy Units

Unit 1: Preparing for Higher Education Studies

Unit 2: Study Practices

Unit 3: Learning to Learn Online

Unit 4: Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Unit 5: Academic Reading

Unit 6: Academic Writing

Unit 7: Academic Integrity

Unit 8: Assessment Skills

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Teaching in the Academic Literacy Module

- Teaching and Learning Plan
- Weekly Lesson Plan
- Orientation Week
  - Institutional Orientation
  - Programme Orientation
  - Module Orientation
    - Meet Your Classmates
    - Course material (location)
    - Live sessions around the use of LMS
- Classes Start – online

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Teaching Strategy

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Assessment Strategy

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Nadeosa Quality Criterion – Reflection

Criterion 7.1: The provider encourages students to interact with one another through the creation of a "community of learning", particularly during the introductory phase of the course. This can be managed through online contact or by using a learning management system, social media, etc.

Criterion 7.3: Students are carefully orientated to the digital skills they need to fully engage in the learning process.

Criterion 5.8.3: The content and teaching approach support students in achieving the learning outcomes.

Criterion 5.8.6: Teaching and learning content is designed and developed in a coherent way that promotes self-directed learning.

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Nadeosa Quality Criterion – Reflection

Criterion 6.5: There is a range of formative and summative assessment tasks and methods, which ensure that all learning outcomes are validly assessed. Where integrated learning is involved, the equally effective and credible assessment takes place.

Criterion 6.15: Feedback is a critical aspect of formative assessment and is used to inform practice and improve student support.

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Assessment Strategy

- Assessment alignment matrix
- Continuous assessments - In each unit of the module, there are activities that students are expected to complete such as self-evaluation, discussion forums and quizzes.
- Formative assessments - Assignments that are graded and contribute towards the final module mark.
  - Formative assessment preparation sessions
  - Formative assessment feedback (individual and general class)
- Summative assessment - The final assessment, administered upon completion of the module, i.e., all eight units of Academic Literacy.
  - Summative assessment preparation sessions

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Further Research

Many other factors could have impacted on the changes in module throughput results. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct further research that can evaluate if the module has achieved its purpose to equip students with the required academic knowledge and skills to function optimally at the entry-level of the higher education learning context. Future research should therefore focus on identifying if the module has achieved its purpose.

This research project is currently underway. The research methodology will be qualitative with individual student interviews.

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Findings and Further Research

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The End

Findings

Module throughput rate

Business Management
- increased by 3% from June 2020 to June 2021
- increased by 13% from November 2020 to June 2021.
- Increased by 20% from November 2020 to November 2021

Human Resource Management
- increased by 16% from June 2020 to June 2021,
- Increased by 28% from November 2020 to June 2021.
- Increased by 31% from November 2020 to November 2021

Students who completed Academic Literacy in the first semester would only have registered for the Principles of Leadership module in the second semester.