

Mancosa leading the quality agenda in tertiary education

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Tertiary education providers throughout the world are faced with the challenge of assessing the quality of the education solutions that they provide in a post-Covid environment.



As the pace of technological and societal change continues to accelerate globally, higher education is precariously positioned to either become obsolete or proactively embrace this change and play a crucial role in managing these challenges and others that lie ahead.

The process of establishing quality assurance mechanisms in higher education requires extensive consultation and consensus building amongst key stakeholders. Mancosa, in proud partnership with Honoris United Universities, the first pan-African network of private higher education institutions, remains committed to engaging these stakeholders as the host and promoter of its second Quality Conference.

The conference will be held on 27 and 28 February at the Mancosa Durban Campus and was developed to create a platform for critical conversations relating to quality and quality management in higher education.

An important platform

Mancosa is driven by innovative solutions that seek to transform the landscape of education in the South African context. This issue will be dissected at the upcoming conference.

The conference aims to provide a space to reflect on the changing landscape outlined above in relation to institutional practices and methodologies that are deployed for the management of quality, especially within the digital online higher education context.

Current strategies being utilised for the management of quality in an online environment will be presented and discussed, with the aim of looking forward to how these methodologies can be enhanced or adapted for the development of robust

systems and tools for quality management.

As a reflection of transformative and innovative impact of the African education landscape, Honoris United Universities was selected as the winner of the New Champions Award 2022 for Adaptive Capacity at the World Economic Forum in 2022.

The award highlights the dedication of the vision and mission to continue to transform communities through the power of accessible, quality education.

Enhancing the student experience

The fact that students are becoming more discerning and have more options available to them means that tertiary education providers need to pay closer attention to the quality of not only their programmes, but also the overall student experience.

What this means is that education providers have a moral obligation to their students to provide education that adheres to the best possible quality standards.

Akin Lot, the academic manager: undergraduate programmes at Mancosa will be delivering a presentation on the methodology for managing program quality. Lot points out that a lot of time and effort goes into enhancing the quality of Mancosa's programmes.

"Mancosa firmly believes that education does not take place in a vacuum. This means that we acknowledge the complexity underlying student enrolments and thus focus on value as our first departure point when enhancing the quality of our programmes. Thus, we focus on the directives and outcomes uncovered by engaging with both Government and industry while ensuring that our courses reflect the changing skill set for future employees," says Lot.

"Given that students are becoming more discerning, institutions also need to engage with academics about whether the curriculum is meeting employability outcomes," adds Lot.

From composition to delivery

One of the areas where quality is non-negotiable is in the delivery of the programme's content. This will determine whether the student enrolls with or continues at any given tertiary institution.

Rebecca Naidoo, the academic programme manager at Mancosa, points out that this changed significantly during the Pandemic. "We must appreciate that the world shifted from contact-based to distance learning quickly during the Pandemic. Many institutions attempted to advance to a remote learning model by moving contact-based course content to online platforms such as Moodle, but did not fully make use of the online tools available due to the lack of knowledge and training. For Mancosa, this transition was seamless, as the content was digitised pre-pandemic," says Naidoo.

She adds that these developments add to the list of solutions and methodologies that can be adopted to ensure advanced quality and preparedness for various challenges.

As the leading distance learning provider in South Africa, Mancosa embraced these tools long before the Pandemic, applying them throughout various student journeys, assessments and webinars.

The changing demands of employers

"The only way we can measure whether the quality is embedded in the delivery of the course is to measure the success of our students," says Naidoo, "and this goes beyond attaining a qualification. Do our students have the tools to succeed in the workplace?"

Naidoo will be delivering a presentation titled: The future of student employability rests in the quality of online academic delivery at higher education institutions in South Africa. The presentation was co-authored by Dr Aradhana Mansingh, an

Academic at Mancosa.

Value is key

Given the changing demands of a post-Covid world, the Mancosa Quality Conference will provide attendees with a roadmap to assess the quality of the offering that they provide.

"The purpose of the Mancosa Quality Conference is to facilitate a robust discussion on the elements that enhance and perpetuate the quality of any tertiary institution," says Lot.

Other topics up for discussion include:

- student engagement in internal quality assurance and enhancement in private higher education institutional structures;
- quality assurance and enhancement as a culture; and
- educational leadership.

To find out more about the conference, please contact Mancosa on (031) 300 7200 or visit www.mancosa.co.za to find out more.

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