Interior design education: quo vadis?

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Over the past ten years higher education has witnessed proposals for drastic change both nationally and internationally. On the international front, the Bologna Declaration was signed on 19 June 1999. This Declaration launched the Bologna Process, involving 46 European countries, which agreed to undertake a series of reforms with the intention of creating an integrated European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010 (Australia 2006). Two of the objectives of the Bologna Process are to establish a common degree structure across Europe and to ensure that the EHEA is open and attractive to the rest of the world (Europe Unit [sa]).

In South Africa (SA), the time period from 1994 to 2007 gave rise to a number of education acts, policies and discussion documents which aim to reform and transform a diverse and fragmented pre-1994 higher education environment. In 1997, the publication of the Higher Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (SA 1997: Foreword), communicated the vision for higher education as follows '… to establish a single, national co-ordinated system, which would meet the learning needs of our citizens and the reconstruction and development of our society and economy'. Ten years later, on 5 October 2007, the Higher Education Qualification Framework (HEQF) was finally approved and it addressed the need for a single qualification framework as identified in the Higher Education White Paper (SA 2007).

At the University of Johannesburg, the Department of Interior Design is positioned in a newly restructured educational landscape as well as in a merged institution. The institutional merger that took place in 2005 (SA 2002) as well as the reformation of the national qualification framework necessitate that the Department of Interior Design reconsider the current programme structure. The Department is currently at a cross road. The approved HEQF (SA 2007) indicates that technikon programmes such as the Bachelors of Technology (BTech) will be phased out by the Department of Education (DoE) over an undisclosed period of time. Traditionally the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture (FADA) in which the Department is located, has presented vocationally orientated technikon type programmes. However, due to market forces, stakeholder expectations and amalgamation into a comprehensive institution, proposals to re-curriculate to a more academically focused programmes have been considered by the departments within the Faculty. The Department therefore has to carefully consider the offering of programmes that would provide

students with qualifications that will meet international best practice, national regulation requirements as well as meet employers' and students' expectations.

This article aims to detail international and national higher education re-structuring and re-curriculation initiatives that have taken place over the past ten years, in order to enable educators to reflect on the broader perspective, and understand the curriculation dilemma that former technikon-type Interior Design programmes face. The Department of Interior Design at the University of Johannesburg is used within this article as an example of a former technikon-type programme.

International programme structures and requirements

The Bologna Process and the European qualification structure

The Bologna Process relies on the consent of countries across Europe that are participating in the process. This is conducted outside the formal decisions-making frameworks of the European Union (Europe Unit [sa]). The main drive or common goal of the Bologna Process (The Bologna Declaration: an explanation 2000 [sa]) is identified as the improvement of the quality of higher education which will in turn 'enhance employability and mobility of citizens and increase international competitiveness of European higher education'.

At an international level the Bologna Process shares a similar goal with the SA national higher education transformation goal as presented in the Higher Education White Paper (SA 1997), which is to establish one system or a single qualification structure. The drive to create one qualification structure across national boundaries in Europe and the United Kingdom is summarised under the following key areas (Europe Unit [sa]; The Bologna Declaration 1999; Australia 2006):

- To develop a system of easily readable and comparable degrees
- To adopt a system that is essentially based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate

- To establish a system of credits, which will assist in promoting student mobility
- To remove obstacles for effective mobility of students, teachers, researchers and academics
- To promote European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to creating comparable criteria and methodologies
- To promote the European dimension in higher education.

The degree structure that the Bologna Declaration has called for the European higher education sector to adopt was originally based on two main cycles (The Bologna Declaration 1999). In 1999, it was proposed that the first cycle should last a minimum of three years and end in a bachelor-level degree, and the second cycle should lead to a masters and/or doctoral degree. In order to address the Bologna goal that aims to enhance employability of citizens, the Bologna Declaration identifies that the first degree should be relevant to the European labour market as an appropriate level of qualification (The Bologna Declaration 1999). In 2003 at the Berlin ministerial meeting, the focus was extended beyond these two cycles and doctoral qualifications are now considered as the third cycle (Australia 2006). It is argued that the three-cycle system would promote closer links between the EHEA and the European Research Area (ERA) (Europe Unit [sa]).

In order to assist in the readability and comparability of degrees, a system of credits, referred to as the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), was introduced and a Diploma Supplement was implemented by all countries (Europe Unit [sa]). The credit system assists in the mobility of students and teachers across Europe and credits could also be acquired in non-higher education contexts to promote life-long learning and recognition by receiving universities (The Bologna Declaration 1999).

External perspective to the Bologna Process

In 2005, at a European University Association (EUA) conference in Glasgow, Goolam Mohamedbhai, President of International Association of Universities (IAU), presented the following observations and question: 'I fear

that the Bologna reforms could lead to an isolation of Higher Education Institutions in some parts of the world. With globalisation what is needed is greater international collaboration among universities in different parts of the world, not just among those in one region only. It is international collaboration among universities that can truly bring about inter-cultural dialogue and world understanding and peace. […] The question then is: should the Bologna reforms be extended to other parts of the world?' (Mohamedbhai 2005 in Zgaga 2006:17).

The answer to this question is yes, if one takes into account the considerable attention that has been devoted to the Bologna Process by countries in Asia, Latin America, Africa and Australia. Since 2005, observer status to the Bologna Process ministerial meetings from the rest of the world has increased (Australia, 2006). Countries such as China intend to strengthen educational links with European countries and as a result, alignment and compatibility to the system will be required (Australia 2006).

In 2005 an African Union meeting held in Johannesburg, focusing on revitalising higher education in Africa, observed that: 'There are clear signs that the Bologna process, as an example of good practice in the field of policy development, is now entering Africa'. (Zgaga 2006: 49). At this meeting it was proposed that Africa should also look at the bigger picture and consider the benefits from initiatives outside Africa as opposed to the dealing with institutions, organisations and countries in isolation.

The Department of Education, Science and Training in Australia has published a report titled: *The Bologna Process and Australia: Next steps* (Australia, 2006:3). In this report it is stated that '[t]he [Bologna] Process seems likely to have a profound effect on the development of higher education globally'. In 2006, some 32 000 European students enrolled in Australia and in order to capitalise on the growth in international students, the Australian educational system will have to be compatible to the Bologna system (Australia, 2006:7). The report considers it a risk for Australia to remain a 'Bologna Outsider' because the tendency for relationships to increase between aligned systems will be at the expense of those with less compatible systems (Australia 2006:9).

The impact of the Bologna Process is therefore seriously considered by countries throughout the world. It is evident that the system does not only promote the potential of mobility and progression of an internationally accepted higher education system, but also could foster collaboration among universities across the world.

The European Council of Interior Architects

The Bologna Declaration originates from the recognition that the European higher education system faces common internal and external challenges (The Bologna Declaration: an explanation 2000). However, the monitoring and implementation of relevant market related qualifications does not only reside with higher education, but with a variety of stakeholders such as non-governmental organisations and professional bodies. The Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks report (2005:24) identifies that: 'Employers have complained that the current education systems of many European countries provide students with insufficient preparation for the labour market, and this concern was one of the driving forces behind the Bologna Process'.

The European Council of Interior Architects was established in 1992 by European members of the International Federation of Interior Designers/Architects (IFI), and their goals were to set standards for education, training and qualification of Interior Architects as well as foster professional conduct and competence on a European level (ECIA [sa]). The Council soon realised the enormity of the task due to the diversity of European culture and the fact that the European Union embraced the free market principle. Gradually over time, the 14 national organisations that formed part of the ECIA identified commonalities which enabled the introduction of self-regulation of the profession (ECIA [sa]).

In September 2004, the ECIA adopted a uniform admittance policy for the title Associate Interior Architect, which ensured that the correct level of educational and professional training would be associated with the title. The common admission criteria were based on the standards that were set in the *European Charter of Interior*

Architecture Education signed in 2000 by all national members. However, due to the introduction of the Bologna Declaration and the harmonisation of the European educational system, Interior Architecture education was reconsidered and revised. The charter was revised and the *European Charter of Interior Architecture Training 2007* was approved in September 2007 (ECIA [sa]). The ECIA has reached agreement across Europe that the minimum educational standard for an Interior Architect is five years of educational training, in accordance with the teaching curriculum in the charter, and one year of professional practice, or four years of professional education and two years of professional practice (ECIA [sa]).

National state regulation: new educational landscape and qualification framework

Transformation of the higher education system

In South Africa the pre-1994 educational system is described as a divided, fragmented structure which separated the type of programme offerings into separate groups. Coetzee (2004:50) describes the apartheid policymaking as follows: 'The apartheid vision of "separate but equal education" brought about an extremely fragmented system with management typically top-down and policymaking that was criticised as an exclusive, non-transparent and bureaucratic process'. This fragmented structure is described by Cloete (2002) as a system that lacked coordination, a common vision and uniformity in norms, standards and the distribution of resources.

Bunting (2002) states that in the 1980s the Apartheid government further fragmented the racially divided higher education system into rigid groups in terms of the functions they were, and were not permitted to perform. This rigid division and distinction resulted in the introduction of the terms *universities* and *technikons* in higher education. Bunting (2002:37) explains the motivation for the separations as follows: 'The National Party government believed that it had been able to identify the essence of each of the two types of institutions into

which it divided the South African higher education system; the essence of a university was science and the essence of a technikon was technology'. The rigid division between universities and technikons further resulted in establishing specific policies relating to the function of each type of institution.

The New Academic Policy for Programme and Qualifications in the Higher Education discussion document (Council on Higher Education 2002) indicates that the inherited systems only provided a skeletal qualification structure. This structure did not give ample provision for or attention to articulation possibilities across the different types of higher education structures. The discussion document states that the academic policies that govern programmes and qualifications have never adequately reflected the actual distribution of programmes at institutions. The publication of the Education White Paper (SA 1997), communicated the vision for the transformation of the South African higher education system to be the establishment of a single, national co-ordinated system. The Education White Paper (SA 1997:1.13) identified the transformation requirements for the higher education system and its institutions as follows:

- Increased and broadened participation
- Responsiveness to societal interests and needs
- Cooperation and partnerships in governance.

The Education White Paper (SA 1997) was followed by two important state regulation documents that were announced after 2001 which impacted on the programme offering discussed in this paper. They are firstly, the Transformation and Restructuring policy (SA 2002) which indicated the restructuring of the higher education landscape in South Africa. This resulted in the compulsory mergers and the formation of a new institutional-type; the comprehensive institution. Secondly, the promulgation of a new Higher Education Qualification Framework, that indicated a shift away from the technikon-type programmes which are the Bachelor of Technology (BTech), Magister of Technology (MTech) and Doctorate of Technology (DTech).

Institutional mergers and the establishment of comprehensive institutions

The University of Johannesburg (UJ) is a comprehensive institution and is the result of a merger between the former Technikon Witwatersrand and the Rand Afrikaans University (SA 2002). The transformation and restructuring of the higher education landscape resulted in the establishment of four comprehensive institutions in SA. It was proposed (SA 2002:4.2.3) that this new institutional-type would provide 'an innovative institutional and organisational framework for addressing the underlying factors that give rise to the tendency for academic drift within technikons, as well as the issue of the portability of programmes and qualifications between universities and technikons'.

The concept document presented by Gibbon (2004) argues that no clear identity could be found for the comprehensive institutions and that the term comprehensive could describe many higher education institutions in SA. Gibbon (2004:42), however states, that '… they [comprehensives] will be the only universities in the country that bring diverse kinds of learning programmes, from vocational to professional and general formative, under one roof'. The curriculum offered by comprehensive institutions has the opportunity to combine the technikon-type and university-type qualification and to create new programme structures with improved teaching and learning strategies. The importance and challenges of revisiting the curriculum in a newly merged institution is emphasised by Blunt (2005:1-21) who suggests that '… the merger between different sorts, one technical and the other academic, presents an opportunity for overhauling outmoded curricula'.

Introduction of a single national co-ordinated system

In July 2004, the Ministry of Education presented the first draft HEQF and it was finally approved in October 2007 (SA 2007). The implementation date is 1 January 2009. The HEQF aims to establish a single qualification framework for higher education and, as a result, indicates a shift away from technikon-type degrees, since these programmes are not included as qualification-types within the framework. Within the technikon-type programme offering, the BTech is a one year programme that follows a three year National Diploma. Successful completion of this qualification provides direct articulation into an MTech.

The HEQF (SA 2007) presents a clear distinction between the degree stream and the diploma stream within the framework. The framework describes the Bachelor degree as a minimum three-year full-time degree which should provide a well-rounded, broad education that is presented within an academic context. The HEQF (SA 2007) identifies that a diploma provides a primarily vocational or industry orientated education. A student may accumulate credits after successful completion of a diploma, which may be presented for admission into a cognate Bachelor degree. Students that enter the diploma stream will have to reroute to a degree stream in order to attain access to a Masters programme. The Department of Education has further indicated that technikon programmes that are currently offered would be phased out. The time frame is undisclosed at the time of writing.

Impact of the HEQF on the former technikon-type programmes

The majority of Interior Design programmes offered in South Africa from the 1970s to 1990s were developed and offered by technikons and focused on vocational training and industry requirements. These programmes therefore appear to be more closely aligned to the diploma as described in the HEQF. Since 1995, theory subjects such as Business Studies and Design Theory have been included in the national Interior Design curriculum which increased discipline-related principles and theory content. This inclusion was a result of the introduction of the BTech programmes, a process overseen by the Council of Technikon Principals (CTP). The offering of degree programmes was introduced in January 1995 (Committee of Technikon Principals [sa]).

The Committee of Technikon Principals (Committee of Technikon Principals [sa]), presented the motivation for offering technikon degrees as follow:

- Give appropriate recognition to the tertiary nature of technikon education
- Correct the misperception that the career-focused diploma courses of technikons are less acceptable than career-focused degree courses at traditional universities
- Satisfy professional bodies which demand a degree for registration purposes
- Clarify the range of technikon qualifications
- Address the need for equivalence between technikon and traditional university qualifications with a view to enhancing student mobility and achieving a more appropriate focus on career education and technology.'

It is evident that academic drift has taken place since 1995 within the offering of these technikon programmes, which resulted in a situation where an overlap of degree and diploma qualifications was introduced in the programme offering. A number of possible reasons for the recurriculation process that took place in the country during the 1990s are provided by Cloete and Fehnel (2002:264). Firstly, they suggest that market pressure to attract students and the notion of what the educational customers and the employers wanted, particularly within the context of globalisation, forced institutions to rethink programme offering. Secondly, the interpretation or misinterpretation of the new state policies could have contributed to the academic drift that took place across the binary divide. The National Plan for Higher Education (SA 2001: 4.3.2) states that 'the programme distinction between technikons and universities has been eroded in line with the White Paper's suggestion of a "loosening of boundaries" between the different institutional types'.

Cloete and Fehnel (2002:397) identify that the result was the emergence of programme drift, where universities started to offer vocationally orientated programmes and technikons started to offer bachelor degrees (BTechs) and postgraduate degrees such as the Masters in Business Administration in order to attract students. The result was programme differentiation in curricula and a wider variety of programme options for educational customers. In response to the academic drift, the National Plan

for Higher Education (SA 2001) declared that for the five years that followed 2001, the boundaries would not be loosened and that this would be maintained by the Ministry of Education.

South African Institute of the Interior Design Professions

Breytenbach (2007) indicates that in South Africa the Interior Design industry is a highly competitive industry that has developed rapidly over the past 15 years. In an external analysis of the Gauteng regional education environment, Breytenbach (2007) observes that an influx of private providers in the higher education sector increased the number of institutions offering qualifications in Interior Design since 1994.

The South African Institute of the Interior Design Professions (IID) was established in 2006. Over the past two years various discussions have taken place to identify appropriate professional levels of recognition that could be associated with the educational training currently conducted for Interior Designers/Architects. The IID Education Sub-committee suggested (Haywood 2008/01/29) that IFI's International Curriculum should be used as a point of reference to align the Interior Design curriculum in South Africa. Currently, four educational institutions have Educational Membership with IFI, of which the Department of Interior Design at UJ is one. International educational memberships assist in attaining international recognition and ensuring that minimum educational requirements are met in the offering of programmes.

The South African Interior Design industry is therefore at a phase of identifying its professional status. IID (Haywood 2007/11/02) has commenced an initiative to attain feedback from industry in relation to its expectations of graduates, curricula content and industry requirements. This feedback is essential, since research results obtained for the World Design Report (Van Heerden 2008/06/14), have indicated that only 52% of the South African respondents in industry consider design students to receive correct training and practical experience which will equip them for the job market at public higher education institutions.

Students' expectations at the Department of Interior Design

Students' expectations and perceptions

The outcomes of a qualitative questionnaire which investigated perceived differences between a diploma and degree programme, completed by students (n=100) from all three years of study in the Department of Interior Design at UJ, resulted in the formulation of Tables 1 to 3.

Table 1 Students' preference for a degree or diploma

Year of study	Prefer a degree	Prefer a diploma	Not sure
First year	34	4	3
Second year	35	2	2
Third year	17	1	2
Total	86	7	7
Percentage	86%	7%	7%

Table 1 indicates that 86% of the students would prefer to study towards a degree. Motivations for their decisions are reflected in Table 2. It should be noted that these students are currently enrolled in National Diploma programmes, and that their perceptions should be viewed from their current vantage points.

The findings presented in Tables 2 and 3 were constructed through compiling a checklist of the observations presented by students in the questionnaire. Similar observations were grouped together and the number of occurrences was counted. The data in Table 2 revealed that the majority of the observations made by students indicated an opinion that it would be easier to get a job with better opportunities with a degree qualification. It is evident that a degree is considered superior to a diploma due to perceptions of status and prestige.

Table 2 Students' perceptions and expectation of a degree

	Student comments	Counting
1	It is easier to get a job with a degree and you have better job opportunities	26
2	A degree is superior to a diploma, status of a degree, looks better on a CV, more prestige, more attractive, more sophisticated	25
3	A degree is a higher level of learning and higher achievement, better qualified	21
4	Degree is internationally recognised or better recognised	13
5	You get paid more with a degree	10
6	Wish to go overseas or immigrate, a degree provides this opportunity	10
7	Is more recognised by industry, industry prefers degrees	10
8	A degree has more credibility and value	6
9	You are more respected with a degree, better achievement	6
10	Provides further study opportunities into postgraduate studies	5
11	Degree is more academic and theory based	5
12	You would have a better understanding of the discipline and the industry	5
13	Attain higher positions and promotions in industry, gives a competitive advantage	5
14	A degree is more professional	4
15	It is my goal to have a degree, go as far as possible	4

Table 3 presents the observations that reflect the perceptions relating to a diploma. It should be noted that fewer students provided comments relating to the diploma. The observations indicate a sharp contrast to the information relating to a degree. It is further of great concern to note that a number of the perceptions presented in both Tables 2 and 3 are far removed from factual truths and a number of observation are untested within industry. The sources of constructed perceptions were not investigated within the questionnaire.

Table 3 Students' perceptions and expectation of a diploma

	Student comments	Counting
1	Diploma is more practical based	4
2	A diploma is not internationally recognised	3
3	A diploma is easier than a degree	1
4	A diploma only provides basic skill to enter a career	1
5	A diploma is for somebody who does not have the capacity to do a degree	1
6	More jobs for diploma people	1
7	Diplomas are common and attained at smaller colleges and Internet sites	1
8	Focus on technical components	1

The data presented in Tables 1 to 3 therefore indicates that the students, although they are enrolled for diploma studies, would prefer to study towards a degree. Currently it is possible for the National Diploma students to complete their National Diploma and enrol for the one year BTech programme. The HEQF (SA 2007) does not recognise this articulation route and, in future, students will have to accumulate credits within their diploma programme in order to attain entrance to a Bachelor degree.

Impact of regional programme offering on student perception

Until 2003 only one Bachelor degree in Interior Design was offered in South Africa. This programme was offered at the University of Pretoria. However, from 2003 private providers embarked on a process to convert diplomas into degree offerings (Breytenbach 2007). The name change and conversions caused confusion within the market as prospective students immediately showed a preference for a degree rather than a diploma programme. The feedback provided by students confirms this preference since the degree is considered to be superior, with more status and better job opportunities.

Mehl (2004:22) states that '[t]he way in which society recognises, rewards and measures learning achievement is through qualifications. It is society that provides the ultimate validation of qualifications and accords respect to the bearer. Society awards status and also opportunity

and privilege.' The name of a programme is therefore critical in the offering of the programme within a highly competitive and specialised higher education environment. Breytenbach (2007) indicates that competitive advantages can be gained through offering preferred qualification types and articulation opportunities.

Programme offering challenges as perceived by academics in the Faculty

Presentation of the challenges

In a study preformed by Breytenbach (2007), challenges that relate to programme conversion from a diploma to a degree offering were identified. In the study Breytenbach (2007) conducted interviews with FADA academic staff members (n=18). The study (Breytenbach 2007) produced qualitative descriptive data which documented the challenges as perceived by academic staff members. The research subjects identified a wide variety of challenges and expectations that have to be addressed by the Faculty in order to re-curriculate.

One subject summarised the challenges as follows (Breytenbach 2007:100):

> The challenges start to kick in at various levels. It poses a challenge to staff qualifications; there is no doubt about that. It poses a challenge to the curriculum, the academic architecture and content of the curriculum. It poses challenges to the student profile. It poses a challenge to the support structures in the Faculty. It poses a challenge in the way that we envision ourselves and how we are going to portray ourselves outside and inside the institution. It is a whole reconfiguration of the faculty.

Another subject (Breytenbach 2007:97) indicated that '[w]e are expected to change dramatically in our whole approach towards education'.

The following challenges were identified by the study:

- The shift in focus from a technikon to a comprehensive institution

- Engagement in research and increased research outputs
- Upgrading of staff qualifications
- The perceived removal of vocational programmes in the future
- Focus on academic programmes and activities
- Staff will have to become academics in the true sense of the word.

Breytenbach (2007) identified that many respondents raised concerns about the transformation from a technikon to that of a university context, and from a previous technikon offering to a university offering. This shift is identified as follows by a subject (Breytenbach 2007:101):

> The challenges are enormous. The notion of the framework's academic potential is very different to what everybody was used to in the old technikon situation. How possible is it for people to suddenly go into a new head set, in terms of understanding what academics are all about as laid down by the expectations of a university which is a highly academic institution which we are now part of?

Another subject (Breytenbach 2007:101) indicated that '[w]e were technicians and then we were technologists at a stage, now we become academics'.

Conclusions

This article detailed international and national higher education transformation, restructuring and re-curriculation processes and the impact of these changes on the future development of Interior Design education in South Africa. Internationally, the Bologna Declaration aims to address the challenges of the twenty-first century, through developing and implementing degree structures that will equip their citizens with necessary competencies to take part in a knowledge economy (The Bologna Declaration: an explanation 2000 [sa]). These challenges are equally important to the South African economy and industry. Alignment to the Bologna Process could assist in ensuring international acceptance and recognition of our qualifications, which is essential in training knowledge workers for the global knowledge economy. The Higher Education White Paper (SA 2007) states that it is

the role of higher education to provide education and training to develop the skills and innovations that are necessary for national economical development and successful participation in the world economy. Interior Design education should therefore think globally and act locally in the planning and development of national and institutional specific curriculum requirements.

The national qualification changes expose the dilemma that prior technikon-type programmes face in identifying and rethinking an appropriate direction for future programme offering. The shift away from technikon-type offerings in the HEQF (SA 2007) requires prior technikon Interior Design programmes to offer programmes that clearly distinguish between a degree and diploma curriculum structure. Prior to the reconstruction of the educational landscape, technikon programmes adhered to the offering of similar programme structures across the country. Although this system prevented the development of individually tailored programmes within each institution, it did encourage interaction and collaboration among technikon programmes and easy transfer of students between similar technikon programmes. Over the past five years this interaction has disappeared which has resulted in isolated responses to the national programme dilemma. At this critical point of the national restructuring of Interior Design programmes, it is recommended that both private and public institutions work closely together in identifying a national qualification framework for Interior Design programmes.

An Interior Design Discussion Group which operates within the Design Education Forum of South Africa (DEFSA) provides a platform for educators across institutions to engage in meaningful discussions regarding the programme offering at DEFSA conferences. However, it is suggested that the drafting of a national qualification framework for Interior Design should be negotiated between industry and education by the professional association, IID. The framework should articulate with the qualification matrix and Work Framework as presented by the South African Council of the Architectural Profession (SACAP) to ensure that overlaps between these professions are addressed. It is vital to include industry expectations in the design and development of Interior Design qualifications. It is therefore important that the professional association, IID, continue their investigations

into industry expectations, since this information is of value in providing guidance on the relevance to industry of programme content and qualification structures.

Student expectations play an important role in identifying the type of programmes offered by institutions. It is, however, not possible for all educational institutions in South Africa to respond only to student expectations, and convert diploma to degree programmes. Diploma programmes play an important role in our economy as well as in providing a wider spectrum of applicants the opportunity to enter Interior Design education and the profession. Again, it is recommended that the drafting of a national qualification framework for Interior Design qualifications address the misperceptions that exist currently. The qualification framework should include registration categories that are required for membership with the IID. This could also assist in distinguishing between interior decorators, interior designers and interior architects.

Lastly, the challenges identified by lecturers in converting from a diploma to a degree are all relevant and should be dealt with appropriately to ensure the successful implementation and offering of a curriculum. However, the qualification challenges remain irrelevant to the type of programme that is offered. National and institutional requirements expect all lecturers in higher education to obtain a qualification at the minimum of a Masters level. The paradigm shift from a diploma to a degree context is considered as the greatest challenge, because restructuring would require academics that are skilled and trained in technikon programmes to become acquainted with university or degree programme requirements. A conversion in programme offering does not only impact on the programme content but requires the introduction of a new student profile, new marketing drive and building a new departmental profile and reputation. These challenges should not be considered lightly, and successful implementation of a conversion would require adequate strategic planning on the part of programme leaders and institutions.

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