The Complexities of Designing a Learning Programme in Higher Education with the End-User in Mind

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Abstract : The quality of every learning programme in Higher Education (HE) is dependent on the planning, design, and development of the curriculum decisions. These curriculum development decisions are highly influenced by the knowledge of the end-user, who are not always just the students. When curriculum experts plan, design and develop learning programmes, they always have the end-users in mind throughout the process. Without proper knowledge of the end-user(s), the design and development of a learning programme might be flawed. Curriculum experts often struggle to determine who the real end-user is. As such, it is even more challenging to establish what needs to be known about the end user that should inform the plan, design, and development of a learning programme. This research sought suggest approaches to guide curriculum experts to identify the end-user(s), taking into consideration the pressure and influence other agencies and structures or stakeholders (industry, students, government, universities context, lecturers, international communities, professional regulatory bodies) have on the design of a learning programme and the graduates of the programmes. Considering the influence of these stakeholders, which is also very important, the task of deciding who the real end-user of the learning programme becomes very challenging. This study makes use of criteria 1 and 18 of the Council on Higher Education criteria for programme accreditation to guide the process of identifying the end-users when developing a learning programme. Criterion 1 suggests that designers must ensure that the programme is consonant with the institution's mission, forms part of institutional planning and resource allocation, meets national requirements and the needs of students and other stakeholders, and is intellectually credible. According to criterion 18, in designing a learning programme, steps must be taken to enhance the employability of students and alleviate shortages of expertise in relevant fields. In conclusion, there is hardly ever one group of end-users to be considered for developing a learning programme, and the notion that students are the end-users is not true, especially when the graduates are unable to use the qualification for employment.

Keywords : council on higher education, curriculum design and development, higher education, learning programme