

Mindset change prerequisite for academic excellence: A case of four Zimbabwean and South African universities

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Abstract

This article submits that the calibre, attitude and mindset of lecturers/teachers in institutions of Higher Education need drastic improvement and change if academic excellence is to be attainable and sustained in the 21st century. This article builds on the observations by Makondo (2010, 263–276) that most university teaching staff members are consciously or otherwise, playing significant roles in their students' academic underperformance due to their failure to effectively deliver their lectures and examine their learner's performance. This discussion notes that diverse factors account for student underperformance and proceeds by submitting that the calibre, attitude and mindset of lecturers is one such core factor which calls for urgent exploration. Cases in point are the failure of the majority of university graduates to produce convincing passing results from matric and university students, an unacceptable trend as the governments, parents/guardians and donors alike are heavily investing in education. Also, the prevalent trend that undergraduate and postgraduate students require second or third chances to complete their studies says a lot about the challenges rampant in the Higher Education system. Insights for this participatory expository research came from questionnaires, secondary literature and the researcher's experiences as an educator in high schools and universities in Zimbabwe and South Africa. Among others, to circumvent the seeming challenges, this study submits that Academic Development Centres (ADC) or Centres for Academic Excellence (CAC) or Centres for Higher Education (CHE) henceforth called Centres or their equivalent departments have strategic supportive roles to ensure that lecturers are fully empowered to execute their core teaching and research activities. This calls for departments, faculties and individual lecturers' to take initiatives as well as imbibe the new ethos meant to promote the lecturers' service delivery. Among other pragmatic ways forward, lecturers need to be lifelong researchers as can be testified by their research publication output and NRF rating so that they would be abreast with knowledge changes in their diverse areas of specialties. These moves, among others, would help retain motivated lecturers and resultantly universities would benefit through improved student retention, throughput rates, research and publication output.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years a number of substantial changes in the Higher Education sector have significantly transformed the conditions under which the academic profession

operates (Teichler 2007). Growing competition, increasing dependence on private funding, increasing pressure to demonstrate practical relevance and to publish preferably in peer-reviewed accredited journals, have caused academics to change their work manners and contribute more to the well-being of their institutions and the larger communities (Lindholm 2004; Makondo 2010; Roebken 2011). This participatory expository research argues that the calibre, attitude and mindset of lecturers in institutions of Higher Education need drastic improvement for academic excellence to be attainable and sustained. General reference is made to the North West University, Mafikeng Campus (NWU MC), Midlands State University (MSU), University of Zimbabwe (UZ) (Zimbabwe) and University of South Africa (UNISA) where the researcher has worked in similar capacities and had carried out a similar study. Among other reasons, the researcher's core business is handling related issues in the Centres hence the selection of the topic. The centrality of Centres and its equivalent offices is highlighted hence lecturers are urged to maximise on what the Centre offers so that their service delivery would be enhanced. This article proceeds by discussing the background, definition of academic excellence, rationale for this study, methodological considerations followed by the discussion segment before concluding remarks.

BACKGROUND

Ferguson (1991) argues that the large disparities in achievement between black and white students were almost entirely accounted for by differences in the qualifications of their teachers. With reference to the United States of America, White, Makkonen and Stewart (2009) and Luster (2010) note that today, a subject matter teacher licensing assessment early in a teacher's career, is required in six states as a way to meet Federal mandates requiring states to train highly qualified teachers under No Child Left Behind. Darling-Hammond (1997, 1) reports of America's pledge to 'provide [by 2006] every student with what should be his or her educational birthright: access to competent, caring and qualified teaching'. Honawar (2008) supports the contention that a highly qualified teacher possesses the ability to raise student achievement. On comparative terms, possession of a teaching qualification is not a prerequisite qualification for universities under review, a development this discussion submits is the major cause of poor service delivery especially where lecturers are employed as permanent staff members before they prove their worthiness through their research output record.

Furthermore, by way of giving a snap historical background, Zimbabwe attained her independence in 1980 while South Africa became a democratic state in 1994. In Zimbabwe, university education was the preserve of British colonial masters while in SA in 1992 there was a call for massification of education hence in 1993 institutions such as the erstwhile University of the North were heavily oversubscribed. Since independence and the attainment of democracy, the respective countries have further opened the Higher Education sector so that the previously disadvantaged black

majority and people of colour could enjoy the liberating role of education. Within this context, Zimbabwe now has eleven universities against South Africa with twenty three public Higher Education institutions which fall into eleven universities, six comprehensive universities and six universities of technology.

CONTEXTUALING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Excellence, according to Prabhu (1999) connotes the quality of being very good, distinguished and outstanding. In addition, according to the Benedictine College (2010) academic excellence means sustaining an environment in which student learning is fostered inside and out of the classroom through a pervasive atmosphere of high expectations leading to student mastery of a significant body of general and specialized knowledge; the ability to find, analyze and effectively use relevant information; and the development and employment of fundamental academic skills (i.e. critical thinking problem-solving) in all areas of college life, so that the joy of learning permeates every aspect of campus culture. Daggett (2005) adds that quality education and a truer indication of academic excellence is that students are equipped to enter the global economy with the ability to apply what they learned to a variety of ever-changing situations that they couldn't foresee before graduating. To attain this, according to Iftikhar (2008), the greatest need therefore is the development of pedagogy, curricula and teachers. The attainment of this mindset shift ensures that Higher Education, as spelt out in the North-West University Teaching and Learning Framework (2009) 'develop, educate and empower through quality teaching and learning, well-rounded graduates able to think laterally and critically in their service to the country and its people'. Attitude changes then require lecturers to recognize and make drastic efforts to ensure that their graduates exude the preferred abilities and skills to their personal, communal, national and global betterment.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Discussed here are some reasons that gave rise to this study. Insights from the researcher's personal teaching, lecturing, administrative and examining experiences gathered from six high schools and five institutions of Higher Education in Zimbabwe and South Africa showed him that all is not well especially in the Higher Education sector. Secondly, the lack of or mundane execution of peer and student-lecturer assessment experiences at some of the four universities (Makondo and Mokoena 2011) exposed the researcher to the characteristic failures of many lecturers to deliver meaningful lectures and to effectively administer assessment instruments among others. Also, the general complains by the governments, parents and corporate world that university graduates are generally underperformers who lack skills to fully integrate with the workforce (Makondo 2010) gave rise to this study. Similarly, the realization that the majority of lecturers in universities seem not to find time to attend capacity building workshops sponsored by the university and

held by Centres necessitated this investigation. Lastly, the need to highlight possible pragmatic way forward options to circumvent the present predicament as expounded by this article necessitated this study.

METHODOLOGY

A mixed approach method was used to gather data for this article. Questionnaires were sent to purposively selected faculties at the four universities at the beginning of the two 2010 semesters coupled with responses to workshop questionnaires provided data for this participatory exploratory research. In addition, insights from secondary sources and personal observations since 1996 as a teacher and lecturer was the underlying approach used to gather data.

DISCUSSION

The discussion section expounds on the status quo and the envisaged way forward. This discussion proceeds by examining the different tenets characteristic to mindset change and prerequisite for the attainment of academic excellence in Higher Education.

Change of delivery method

It emerges that as many lecturers in the four universities are not trained educators, there is need to find ways to ensure that they have requisite teaching skills and methods. Teaching is a profession that requires one to master diverse teaching methods for the attainment of effective teaching and learning (Makondo 2011). The teaching methods prerequisite for the 21st century need be changed in line with the new realities facing university and business world. Daggett (2005) aptly expounds on the goal of education in the 21st century as follows:

The student's ability to apply high-rigor knowledge in a relevant, real-world setting needs to be the true finish line; instead, it has become an afterthought. A rigorous and relevant education is a product of effective learning, which takes place when standards, curriculum, instruction, assessment interrelate and reinforce each other. Globalization and rapid technological advancements are having dramatic effects on the ways we communicate and conduct business as well as in our personal lives. Education should increase students' understanding of the world around them. Studies have shown that students understand and retain knowledge best when they have applied it in a practical, relevant setting. A teacher who relies on lecturing does not provide students with optimal learning opportunities. Instead, students go to school to watch the teacher work.

Furthermore, as the Council of State School Office in Luster (2010, 4) puts it 'the new imperative is that students need 21st century skills because the world has changed'. The new skills include moving from lecture to engagement, scaffolding cognitive learning, building meta-cognitive skills including a focus on high quality

intellectual skills, using effective formative assessment, nurturing reflective practice, technology literacy, helping students to appreciate different perspectives across different cultures. Put in other words, lecturers should know their learners so that there would be no ‘mismatch between the learning patterns of some students and the particular range of methods that a teacher is using’ (Sternberg 2002). In addition, Fedynich and Bain (2011) note that advising and mentoring are key components of a successful college or university experience and the two terms are often used interchangeably. For today’s educational institutions, student success has been measured by a number of variables: retention, graduation rate and course completion among others. Within this context, lecturers should imbibe pragmatic teaching methods that ensure that their students will be fully empowered to be independent lifelong learners able to transfer theoretically taught and learnt concepts into the real world. Therefore, the importance of a fitting example from added lecturers cannot be overemphasized.

Active involvement

Lecturing occupies a central active role in the university teaching, learning, research and community engagement activities. It is within this context that the NWU Teaching and Learning Framework (2009) stipulate that:

Academic staff [should] be actively involved in undergraduate and post-graduate education, as well as in research and community engagement applicable to the field of study, and to keep abreast of the most recent teaching and learning strategies and technologies.

The majority of the four universities advocates for a 40 per cent teaching, 40 per cent research and 20 per cent community engagement model. Among others, this model encourages lecturers to be balanced in their service delivery. Within this framework, the Centre is mandated with the responsibilities of providing support to lecturers so that their teaching, research and community engagements can be enhanced. Among other things Centres does, it schedules and publicizes workshops as shown in the memorandum.

MEMORANDUM

Date: 05 November 2010

FINAL PROGRAMME JANUARY-JULY 2011

ACADEMIC STAFF CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOPS FOR 2011 FIRST SEMESTER

	Workshop	Description	Date	Venue
1	Study guide writing	Study guide writing workshop for HSS ONLY	14.01.2011	Senate suite
2	2 nd Phase inductions for new lecturers	All lecturers not inducted at the Mafikeng Campus are welcome	19.01.2011–20.01.2011	Senate suite
3	ITEA workshop	All registered 2011 participants to attend and ITEA Committee members are invited	21.01.2011	Senate suite
4	Design assessment	All lecturers are invited	24-28.01.2011	Buffalo Park
5	Curriculum review	All lecturers invited	31.01.2011	Senate suite
6	University assessment	All lecturers as examiners need to attend	01.02.2011	Senate suite
7	Study guide writing	All lecturers are invited	02.02.2011	Senate suite
8	Research supervision	All lecturers as research supervisors need attend	03.02.2011	Senate suite
9	Handling large classes	All lecturers need to attend	04.02.2011	Senate suite
10	Research and publication	All lecturers interested in presenting and publishing are welcome	28.03.2011–29.03.2011	Senate suite
11	Facilitator	All lecturers are invited	30.03.2011–01.04.2011	Senate suite
12	2 nd Semester study guides	All 2011 Second semester study guides are due	30.03.2011	
13	Assessor	All lecturers are invited	04-06.07.2011	Buffalo Park
14	Moderator	All lecturers are invited	7,8&11.07.2011	Buffalo Park

To ensure that the entire academic community gets the information so that they can capitalize on the provisions of the capacity building workshops this communication is addressed and communicated to all deans, directors, academics, Campus Rector and Vice Rector among others. In addition, this memorandum is posted on the University website, sent to individual lecturers' e-mails, publicized in Centre Update as well as on posters that are strategically posted around the university in-front of

respective faculty offices. In return of these marketing efforts, the Centre gets mixed responses from the academic community members.

Mixed approaches and responses

Findings show that lecturers at the four universities predominantly ignore or reject the communication sent by Centres as also testified by earlier studies by Mokoena and Makondo (2010b) and Makondo (2010). This is exhibited by the lecturer's non-attendance or poor attendance at the capacity building workshops as shown by one example of attendance profile for six workshops held in 2010 as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: 2010 workshop attendance

ADC 2010 Workshop	First semester	Second semester	Total	%
Assessor	22	20	42	16
Moderator	18	21	39	14
Institutional Teaching Excellence Award	31	8 completed process		3
Research and publication	27	24	51	20
Alternative university teaching methods		53		20
Facilitator		22		8

From a total of 262 lecturers, 16 per cent and 14 per cent attended the SAQA accredited assessor and moderator workshops respectively. These two workshops, among others, equip lecturers with assessment techniques so that they can properly examine their learners. The centrality of the workshops also emanates from the realization that there can be no effective teaching and learning without meaningful assessment. Also, mindset and attitude change is necessary for lecturers to appreciate that tests need to motivate students, be based on course objectives and should not involve surprise or novelty, have thematic relevance, that is, they need to aim at checking what students have learned and whether they can apply it to real-life tasks. This is so as Trugman (2007) notes that tests that are more demanding or challenging than anything practiced in class will have negative effects on student motivation. Similarly, human beings are naturally curious and self-directed, that is, they want to learn, make choices and achieve (Truby 2010). Choices should be offered in a manner and context that meets students' needs and that are offered in a non-controlling accepting atmosphere. As such, the various choice options need be considered within the framework spelt out by Simmons and Page (2010).

In addition, the Institutional teaching excellence award (ITEA) is the university's attempt to encourage exemplary scholarship by awarding the top and most improved lecturers. This award encourages participants to excel on their teaching endeavours, moves that improves on student success and graduation rates. Yet, to show that many lecturers at the concerned university are not yet well motivated to participate, only 3 per cent of the entire lecturing staff went through the ITEA from an initial 12 per cent that had shown Interest. ITEA encourages reflective thinking, the need for

lecturers to develop their own teaching philosophy which provides information on their teaching conduct and how it impacts the students. The perennial excuses given by some lecturers that they are not trained educators cannot be substantiated as the years they have remained in the lecturing fraternity demonstrate that they are in the profession to stay. The teaching philosophy as spelt in the NWU Teaching and Learning Framework (2009) should include information on:

- personal innovation in the development of a well designed learning environment and how such innovative ideas have contributed to student learning.
- choice of teaching methods that suit the outcomes, subject matter, the learners' needs and learning styles, consistency between outcomes, teaching strategies and forms of assessment.
- enthusiasm for a subject and its impact on learners.
- the use of learning activities and how the success of these are measured.
- how learners are encouraged to study and to develop critical thinking strategies.
- feedback to learners to enhance their learning.
- teaching and learning approach and the outcomes as well as reasons for failure and success and what changes are made to enhance learning.
- professional development and leadership.
- effective participation in curriculum design and development.

The ability of lecturers to write such a comprehensive teaching philosophy shows that they are fully entrenched into the profession. In addition, academic development centres should help in these efforts so that these in-service efforts will materialize and be beneficial.

Two of the four universities are offering awards to their best performing lecturers as a way of fostering mindset change and nurture a hardworking culture. Prabhu (1999) reckons that competition promotes academic excellence. Lecturers should be encouraged or volunteered to participate in the teaching excellence award so that their performance can be improved. The inertia demonstrated by many lecturers towards these awards defeat all efforts toward the attainment of academic excellence in higher education. The culture that subject experts serve on the assessment panel, so that the uniqueness of each subject may be preserved must be nurtured within all university structures for quality teaching and learning to be achieved and safeguarded. Also, student-lecturer evaluations must be appreciated as many university students are mature to appropriately evaluate the performance of their lecturers. Among others, peer and student-lecturer evaluations within the teaching excellence award context ensure that, academic programs are relevant, varied, challenging and the syllabi are not stagnant. Also, good teaching and good research go hand in hand.

To enhance the facilitation roles of lecturers a SAQA accredited facilitator workshop was held and attended by 8 per cent of the lecturing staff. This low

attendance is worrying against the background that the majority of lecturers are not trained to teach hence such a workshop would significantly equip them on the requisite teaching skills. Similarly, 20 per cent of the lecturers attended the alternative university teaching methods workshop. This workshop held for two days was well attended when one compares it with other workshops. The robust nature of the discussions highlighted the need lecturers have of how to handle their lectures. Also, five of the nine presentations made during this workshop have since been improved upon, reviewed and have been published. Drawing from the bulk of the participants' comments, it emerges that the majority of the lecturers admit that they were empowered by the capacity building workshops as most of them either have never taught, are not trained educators or have rejoined the teaching profession after being in the industry for many years.

Closely related is the research and publication workshops that afforded novice and seasoned researchers the opportunity to share notes and experiences on research issues. Twenty per cent of the entire concerned universities academics participated in the two research workshops in 2010 with a total of 24 papers being presented. In addition, four articles have been published in peer reviewed journals. Furthermore, according to Gross et al. (2008), in the academic labour market typical meritocratic criteria are publication records, acquired funds or good teaching abilities. Considering that the competition for tenure-track positions in academia has put increasing pressure on scholars to publish new work frequently ('publish or perish') (DeRond/Miller 2005; Makondo 2010a), it can be assumed that over the course of time the publishing-related activities before appointment have changed considerably and gained even more importance. Engagement in research activities, attending enhancement capacity building workshops will equip lecturers with knowledge of the five key ingredients impacting student motivation namely 'student, teacher, content, method/process and environment' (Williams and Williams 2011). The lecturer's ability to touch and press the right button usually translates into student motivation demonstrated by them paying attention, working on tasks immediately, asking questions and volunteering answers and appearing to be happy and eager (Palmer 2007). As such, Senge et al. (1994, 489) suggest that teachers should be 'producers of environments that allow students to learn as much as possible' or that schools should become learning habitats wherein relationships are fostered between people, students develop their own individual instruction plan and a variety of investigating system options replace the passive receipt of. To achieve the aforesaid, lecturers should note that their role has shifted from pre-programmed knowledge dispensers to instead managers of student learning and the learning environment (Makondo 2011). Therefore, the centrality of Centres' in empowering lecturers to exercise professional judgment in the classroom to attain clearly expressed goals cannot be overemphasized.

Along with the degrees granted, Wright-Harp and Cole (2008, 14) found that there was an increase in 'making professional presentations, exposure through attendance at professional conferences, success in securing a postdoctoral position, increased productivity, employability, and finally, career-path success'. Related

to the preceding is the need to nurture the culture of promoting frequent visits of scholars and researchers from elsewhere (Prabhu 1999). Interacting with these visiting scholars, listening to their seminar presentations and learning about their work, first hand, is an attractive feature of the academic life in institutions that thrives on quality. Similarly, faculty members from these institutions are invited to other institutions. The resultant experiences are beneficial as colleagues come to compare their service delivery against fellow experts in the discipline. The culture that lecturers desist from this noble practice might denote their unpreparedness to learn and remain relevant in their supposed areas of expertise. Within institutions, lecturers should encourage the culture of seminar or workshop presentations within and across departments. Therefore, one of the most important moves a campus can make is to create occasions for educators to talk, to find colleagues, to be part of a community of practice. The prevalent trend that academics remain in ivory towers has no space in the 21st century where one need not spend his/her time reinventing a wheel. Interactions that are promoted through these collaborative efforts, among others, ensure that academics learn from each other how to prepare conference presentations and manuscript preparations for publication. Through such inter-faculty workshop presentation, the Centre at the concerned university has published two research based books (Mokoena and Makondo 2010a; Makondo and Mokoena 2011b). Among others, these interactions demystify research activities and encourage academics to participate.

Furthermore, upon investigating on the possible causes for why few lecturers attend Centres held capacity building workshops, it emerges that some lecturers do not yet fully recognize the pivotal roles Centres and its personnel can play in the enhancement of their teaching and student learning at the NWU. Also, the majority of these lecturers learnt or worked in many places where an equivalent department like Centres was non-existent. Additionally, resistance seems prevalent amongst many lecturers who regard themselves as the sole ‘academics’, a fallacy used usually by ‘incompetent’ lecturers afraid of public scrutiny. Some mention heavy teaching load, big classes and clash of priorities. Also, the supposed lack of a leverage tool for administration or Centres personnel to see to it that the ‘permanently’ employed lecturers in a ‘democratic’ society are made to attend such workshops without their rights being violated are some causes for non attendance. On the other hand, Centres’ should be staffed with personnel that is properly qualified and experienced for them to be able to professionally perform their advisory roles. Yet, in Zimbabwean universities and at UNISA it seems mandatory that academics should attend duly called workshops despite the fact that the majority of the teaching staff has senior degrees. Therefore, for proactive mindset change is required so that the culture of sharing and learning from each other should be sustained. The seeming preference of remaining in comfort zones that have seen lecturers teaching for more than five years without attending a single conference or publishing even a conference proceeding has no space in the 21st century.

E-learning

With reference to one of the four universities, Pooe, Makondo and Mokoena (2010, 92–93) underscored the importance of E-learning by noting that the unparalleled knowledge boom that has defined the present century makes it mandatory that lecturers and students alike must acquaint themselves with technological innovations that have overhauled the teaching and learning domain. As it is now, the use of E-learning and many technologically oriented methods remain a challenge given that such a culture is relatively new. The introduction of Information Technology Communication (ICT) in teaching and learning has resulted in a need for lecturers to undergo training in technology. The lecturers are seen as a central factor in the success and failure of the use of ICT in education. To this end, progress in the training of lecturers in efundi as well as the use of multimedia in teaching and its challenges as most lecturers often complain about not having time at their disposal to leave classes and their heavy marking to attend training in efundi. Therefore, mindset changes, attitude and calibre of lecturers whom the researcher regards as techno-phobic (people afraid of technology) and computer-phobic (people afraid of computers) should change. Lecturers who use computers as decorative souvenirs for their offices should improve themselves to suit the 21st century teaching and learning landscape. It therefore emerges that lecturers who wish to make an impact on this generation must be willing to retool their own perspectives and approaches. Lecturers from the four universities should draw a leaf from the observation by Jonas-Dwyer and Pospisil (2004, 194) who concluded that:

A dilemma for educators who are themselves Baby Boomers or Generation-X and institutions today is being able to predict and identify the changes that will be required to cater to a new technologically savvy generation of students, whilst still fulfilling the educational expectations of the students with more traditional requirements. It cannot be underestimated that faculty are the key to student success.

Academic qualifications

Within this context, qualifications of university lecturers should be questioned and improved (Makondo 2010). On this point, Weinstein (2010) rightfully notes that the lecturer's knowledge of the subject matter and the motivational level of the lecturer are most important to motivate students to do well. Weinstein further submits that college students are motivated by the professor's knowledge of the subject matter, the professor's sense of humour, the motivational level of the professor, high quality of teaching, intellectual challenge, engagement in class and academic help outside of the class. Darling-Hammond (1998) made similar observations by submitting that teachers with greater expertise and experience make more difference towards student educational success. On teacher prerequisite skills, Whistler (1992) reckons that such skills include staying calm, eliminating negative thoughts or feelings, disengaging stress, remembering that students have their own realities and are doing

their best, not taking students' actions personally, remembering that students are just in the process of development and maintaining a sense of humour.

In addition, lecturers need to acquire new qualifications, new qualities and continue to grow and evolve as they are role models for the students (Celikoz 2010). In particular, teachers should have what Shulman (1987, 8) calls the knowledge needed for effectively teaching a specific subject 'pedagogical content knowledge' which 'represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners and presented for instruction'. Among others, this calls for a culture of academic excellence shown by lecturers so that they can manage to deliver quality. In other words, universities should not continue to have unpublished lecturers teaching modules like research and methodology. Similarly, students often report the importance of having an advisor/mentor that is able to not only guide them professionally, but also possess a thorough understanding of the academic program to guide them in the proper direction (Bain and Fedynich 2010). Research studies have discovered higher retention and graduation rates to be one of the positive outcomes of the mentoring process (Wright-Harp and Cole 2008). On the same note, Lovitts and Nelson (2000, 49) rightly add that 'the single most important factor to continue or withdraw is the relationship with a faculty advisor'.

Cardinals

This section highlights the defining roles and performances of lecturers whose actions translate into attainment of academic excellence. On teaching fundamentals, significant mindset change insights are drawn from Farrant (1991), <http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/tlso/teachingawards/>, the NWU Teaching and Learning Framework (2009), Moore (2009) and Mokoena and Makondo (2010) reckon that all teaching staff:

- is to adhere strictly to scheduled contact meetings and to give timeous notification to students of changes/cancellation.
- should plan, prepare and deliver effective classroom presentations. In other words, documentation of practices (portfolios) must be produced and kept by teachers so that whoever wants to check whether quality teaching and learning is going on can see the references.
- to establish and maintain a positive rapport with students.
- be prepared to make significant innovation in teaching practice or support for learning in their subject area, or in cross-disciplinary teaching.
- demonstrate an outstanding ability to communicate effectively with students.
- motivate students to think, learn, apply, evaluate, synthesize and grow beyond regurgitation.
- encourage students to become life-long learners.

- help students see links between course material and their daily lives.
- marking assignments in a timely fashion.
- provides constructive feedback on assignments.
- need for senior knowledgeable subject experts to moderate .
- evaluates objectively and fairly. Among others, lecturers need to develop memorandums and adherence to moderation to ensure their marking is standardized.

This discussion therefore contends that academic excellence is achievable only if lecturers imbibe and exude these qualities.

CONCLUSION

This article highlighted the centrality of university lecturers' calibre, attitude and mindset change for them to ensure that their teaching, research and community service delivery suits the 21st century demands. Due to globalization, Information technology boom and the internationalization of graduates in the labour market, lecturers should ensure that their teaching approaches and strategies produce workforce that meets workplace demands. This is attainable if lecturers continue to upgrade their academic and professional qualifications as teaching is an employment for colleagues prepared to read, reflect, read reflect, read and reflect so that their practice remains above the ordinary deliverance that, among others, has seen students dropping out from university programmes before graduation. Lecturers and the universities they represent who ignore proper teaching and examining principles are doing a great disservice to the nation as they are producing underprepared graduates to run the economies of their countries, an acceptable behaviour to say the least. Also, until university management and lecturers fully recognize the role of Centres' towards the attainment of academic excellence and transformation in Higher Education, this quest will remain a mirage.

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