A Framework for the Management of Professional Bodies in South Africa

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Abstract: Professional bodies represent practitioners who continually seek guidance on industry related problems and challenges. Each professional body adopts values that are aligned to their own field of expertise. The operations of professional bodies are generally similar in many aspects and demands proficiency in order to maintain credibility and relevance. Research has revealed that professional bodies are lacking in effectiveness and need to improve, so that, maximum benefit can be relished by their affiliates. This research attempts to develop a framework that can be utilised as a guide by professional bodies, so that, they can achieve excellence. The aim of the study was to develop a framework that can be used for the management of professional bodies by exploring the views and opinions of a total of 92 participants from the management of professional bodies locally. The data was collected from interviews and a questionnaire which was analysed statistically primarily using factor analysis to determine the significant factors that contributed to the developed framework for professional bodies. The beneficiaries of this study are primarily professional bodies. The framework will also be useful to management in industry, since, it addresses partnership and collaboration efforts between industry, professional bodies and training authorities.

Key words: Credibility, excellence, guide, practitioner, proficiency, management framework, professional body

INTRODUCTION

Professional bodies are affiliation organisations that act in the interest of a specific profession by stimulating and supporting professionals (HEBRG., 2011). Support includes the promotion of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) by recommending courses that cover a broad core curriculum. Professional bodies may be linked to government or independent of government. Some professional bodies are involved in professional certification and in those instances membership is synonymous with certification. Furthermore, professional bodies regulate entry to a specific profession, ensuring strict entry standards.

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) provides a framework within which the South African educational system operates. The NQF is a comprehensive system approved by the minister of higher education and training for the classification, registration, publication and articulation of quality assured national qualifications. As part of the NQF edifice, the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) was established to oversee the design, execution, assessment and certification of occupational qualifications South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA., 2012). Occupational qualification represents the realisation of a planned combination of learning outcomes which are intended to provide eligible learners with the applied proficiency to practice an occupation, to perform occupationally related skills sets and to provide a foundation for further learning (QCTO., 2008). Occupational credentials established under the auspices of the QCTO encompass three components: knowledge and theory factor, practical skills and work experience.

The term profession is frequently used synonymously with the term occupation. In pursuance of the need for professional membership, a member of a profession requires a formal commitment, both to acquiring the relevant knowledge and skills and to the profession's ethos and modus operandi. Therefore, members of professional bodies can generally claim to be members of a profession.

The QCTO sanctions learnership programs in close consultation with industry and professional bodies. Recently the South African government has recognised the importance of professional bodies and has augmented the NQF to accommodate professional bodies. Participating professional bodies play a critical role in quality assurance and standards improvement in the NQF environment (SAQA., 2012). There is a growing need for a representative professional body for each type of occupation.
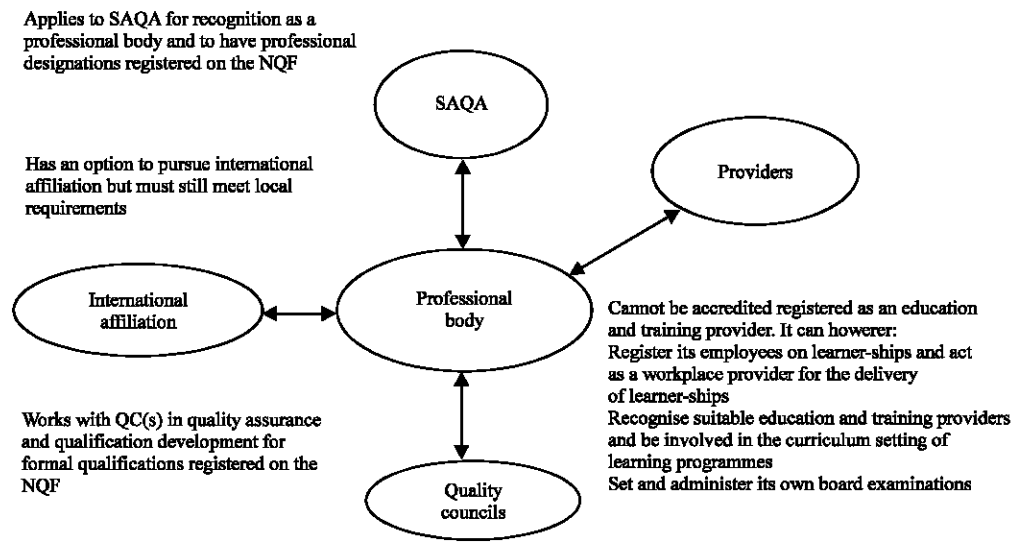

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Applies to SAQA for recognition as a
professional body and to have professional
designations registered on the NQF

Has an option to pursue international
affiliation but must still meet local
requirements

SAQA

Providers

International
affiliation

Professional
body

Cannot be accredited registered as an education
and training provider. It can howerer:
Register its employees on learner-ships and act
as a workplace provider for the delivery
of learner-ships
Recognise suitable education and training providers
and be involved in the curriculum setting of
learning programmes
Set and administer its own board examinations

Works with QC(s) in quality assurance
and qualification development for
formal qualifications registered on the
NQF

Quality
councils

Fig. 1: Professional body relationship matrix with educational stakeholders: (SAQA., 2017)

Figure 1 shows the relationship between a professional body and the stakeholders within the South African education landscape. SAQA recognised professional bodies are encouraged to pursue international affiliations. This allows South African professional bodies to draw on the expertise of professional bodies internationally and to advance in line with international standards and benchmarks. Members can then be marketable internationally in their specific area of skill (Anonymous, 2009).

It is important that, in interactions between professional bodies and other bodies, the professional body adopts a central role, to encourage educational bodies to interact with them, thereby ensuring that the correct development is provided to members.

SAQA which has the mandate to register unit standards for different programs and qualifications has the responsibility to accredit professional bodies. SAQA asserts that the acknowledgement of professional bodies aims to contribute to the solidification of social awareness and accountability within professions and to promote pride in relation with all professions (SAQA., 2012).

Background to the study: Professional bodies play a role in improving the performance of their members in the related professions. As such, it is important for professional bodies to improve their own performance) in order to ensure the development of their members to serve their related industry requirements (SAQA., 2017). In South Africa, this is supported and promoted by the NQF Act 67 of 2008 which provides for the accreditation of professional bodies in order to meet the needs of industry. Subsequently the QCTO has indicated that there

needs to be a professional body for every occupation. This means several new professional bodies need to be formed which will require appropriate and efficient management.

While there are many management frameworks and theories, there are no dedicated frameworks for professional bodies. The research intends to contribute to: facilitating management, assisting professional bodies to acquire SAQA accreditation, redefining professional bodies and introducing the concept of virtual professional bodies.

Lenton (2010) indicates that professional bodies face challenges in remaining relevant. His research has led to an investigation into the positioning of professional bodies, their profiles, brand strength and membership value proposition. He further describes professional bodies as ancient with an old-fashioned image. Member's poise, trust and loyalty in their professional bodies are therefore diminishing. These concerns lead to answers being sought as to how professional bodies can promote their relevance and credibility.

Past studies of professional bodies have traditionally been motivated by an interest in clarifying the prevailing position of a few occupational groups, notably accounting and medicine in the social system (Lenton, 2010). Presently all professional organisations have a vital role to play in shaping the economy. Professional bodies play a major role in refining productivity in their respective industries, thereby benefitting the ailing economy (Green, 2015). The support provided by professional bodies can also prove to be a catalyst for problem solving in industry, thereby contributing to stabilising the economy (Green, 2015).

Declining economic climate: According to the South African Institute of Professional Accountants Annual Report (SAIPA., 2012), the dire economic climate in many countries and the European debt crisis have placed strain on South Africa's economy. Employment creation was hampered and many businesses found themselves in trouble. According to SAIPA, their members, who are mostly accountants by profession, provide valuable advice to ailing businesses. SAIPA stresses that this kind of support to industry by their members is of the utmost importance and could play a vital role in assisting the ailing economy. This situation stresses the need for professional bodies to ensure that CPD is ongoing and relevant and able to upskill and adequately empower their members to play an important role in advising industry during times of economic strife. The SAIPA (2012) report indicates that "it is imperative that professional accountants are continuously kept up to date through CPD that allow them to gain new knowledge and skills to support their SME clients optimally". The SAIPA professional body reiterates the need to focus on CPD, admitting that it might be lacking in this area of upskilling its members.

Declining revenue: Professional bodies are experiencing declining revenues. This impacts on their ability to offer possible financial benefits to their members. Furthermore, are obligated to curb their operational expenses, thereby resulting in deteriorating service levels offered to their members. The South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions Annual Report (SACNASP., 2016) shows an 11% decrease in revenues for its 2015/2016 financial year end as compared to the previous year. It states that membership fees make up 63% of its total annual revenue and collecting these fees from its professional members posed a challenge.

The Engineering Council of South Africa's Annual Report (ECSA., 2016) shows that revenue collection decreased substantially. The bulk of their revenue is raised from membership fees. They attribute poor revenue collection partly to economic factors impacting on the registered member's ability to make payment.

The Independent Regulatory Board for Auditors Annual Report (IRBA., 2016) presents a revenue decline for the organisation. The professional body, being a statutory body, receives an annual government grant, which declined by 13% to R29,999,000 from 2015-2016. This decline has resulted in a deficit in the income of R3,169,000 for the year 2016.

Lenton (2010) indicates that as professional association's costs increase faster than revenues, they tend to react by increasing membership fees. He reiterates that many professional bodies suffer from weak marketing decisions, partly because they take for granted that they have a market that cannot be lost to competition. He states that a large increase in membership fees results in a loss of members. Professional bodies must give added attention to sustainability strategies, so that, member loyalty is not weakened due to unsustainable fee structures.

Problem statement: The South African NQF system incorporates the NQF levels from 1-10. Matriculation at school is classified as NQF 4. A person that has completed school will normally continue with tertiary education from NQF level 5 to possibly NQF level 8 (honours level). Once the person enters industry, a professional body is the ideal means of further skills development. A professional body administers skills development by CPD, noting that professional bodies are now considered part of the strategic learning and skilling infrastructure of South Africa. This relates well to the lifelong concept that is motivated by both personal and professional development.

It has therefore, become necessary for professional bodies to be effective and efficient and to ensure high value management, so that, suitable support is provided to professionals. Presently there is no framework that can drive the processes adopted by professional bodies. Hence, the problem statement can be stated as: There is no framework to effectively manage the operations of professional bodies in South Africa.

Objective of the research: The objective of the research was to develop a framework that can be used for the effective management of South African professional bodies.

Since, inadequate research has been undertaken on this subject, the research was envisaged to significantly develop further theory in terms of effective practice approaches in a professional body setting, contribute to the body of knowledge and provide a springboard to further study on this and related topics.

Literature review: According to Walters and Isaacs (2009), SETAs are mandated to provide for the skills requirements of established businesses and government departments. They implement programmes that are intended to develop the skills required by established employers. The SETAs, therefore are a critical enabler in supporting professional bodies. Not all professional bodies have an established relationship with a SETA. Consequently, there are practitioners affiliated to some professional bodies that are not benefiting from the SETA initiatives. This gap requires attention and can be corrected effectively through the NQF system. It is therefore, imperative that all professional bodies be affiliated to the SAQA.

SAQA's professional body mandate: According to the South Africa Government in Online 2014 in terms of Section 13(1) of the NQF Act (No. 67 of 2008), SAQA is required to advance and implement policy and criteria for recognising a professional body and registering a professional description for the purposes of this Act, after consultation with statutory and non-statutory bodies of professional members in occupational fields and with the quality councils and recognise a professional association and record its professional description if the conditions have been met.

NQF recognition benefits for professional bodies: A presentation by SAQA (2013) illustrates that recognised professional bodies of SAQA derive identified benefits. Professional bodies enjoy a quality assurance role and a qualification development role in collaboration with the quality councils. Other non-tangible benefits are listed below:

The participate in building the national education and training system. By being affiliated they promote the objectives of the NQF. Professional bodies must provide effective career advisory services. Their records must be up to date and must facilitate admission to and analysis of statistics related to professions. They must inspire international dominant practice and promote morale practices by professions. Professional bodies must have a good corporate standing and enhance understanding of and trust in professions. An added responsibility is to promote social responsibility and liability in professions. Above all professional bodies are mandated to uphold the protection of the public (SAQA., 2013).

The stated benefits render professional bodie's involvement in the NQF beneficial as this will provide a solid marketing opportunity to attract aspiring practitioners and professional's memberships. A continuous path of progression for members is easily administered due to the support from the SAQA. Ultimately industry will benefit from the advancement of practitioners who will then be disciplined individuals that are empowered by professional bodies. Unethical behaviour by members will allow the relevant professional body to intervene and facilitate the disciplinary process thereby easing the burden on the member's employer.

The virtual organisation concept: Non-profit organisations do not always have financial stability. This results in it being dependent on industry and other means for financial support. Most professional bodies display these characteristics and some operate as virtual organisations. Recently technological advancements, especially the internet have resulted in traditional organisations being replaced with virtual organisations.

Virtual organisation definition: A virtual organisation is an establishment which is devolved and autonomous of any spatial linkages. This means that the organisation's members are located apart geographically and work using computers or other means for communication. Okkonen goes on to say that the distinction of a virtual organisation is its interdependence, as members (persons or organisations) of a system must collaborate in order to achieve synergy benefits.

Burma describes a virtual organisation's structure like an ameba form. It is formless and changeable like the nucleoplasm when seen under the microscope. They can easily adapt to the environment. The organisation therefore do not require a formal structure as the focus is on providing a service to its customers irrespective of organisation's location or form.

Financial challenges: With a low financial cash flow in most professional bodies they are challenged to maintain liquidity. At some times the organisation will lobby for the services of volunteers to continue with the administrative and leadership obligations. Financial constraints could result in the organisation eventually opting to operate as a virtual organisation.

Professional bodies rely primarily on sponsorships, donations and membership subscriptions for revenue generation. It can be argued that because sponsors and donors are an integral part of the financial support of the professional body, the relationship is a special one. The challenge of balancing the attention afforded to members and stakeholders sometimes becomes pertinent.

Advantages of a virtual organisation: The advantages of operating as a virtual organisation is described as follows:

- The availability of a pool of capabilities and knowledge due to the broad use of volunteers who are passionate about contributing to society
- Flexibility, enthusiasm and enriched responsiveness, unlimited time and limited geographical obstacles
- Reduced investment expenses no government taxes payable due to the non-ownership of land and buildings
- Productivity an anticipated increase in productivity due to the flexibility of working unsupervised mostly in the comfort of one's home
- Employee's research time are flexible
- Reduction in stress levels, working flexibly leads to value-added family life for members
- Reduction in costs on fuel and other transportation costs by working from home
- Reduced pollution due to fewer motor vehicle use

Table 1: Comparison between virtual and regular organisations

Virtual organisation	Regular organisation
Member's work premises are flexible as the organisation does not have offices or premises. Employees operate mostly from home or a remote location	Employees are required to operate from a specific location most of the time The organisation has offices which customers can access
Employees are scattered	Employees normally work from a central location unless work requirements dictate otherwise
Just in Time (JIT) processes are effective	Just in Time (JIT) might be a target but not always applied, application based on operational requirements
Virtual is preferred due to a cost saving need	Prefers to endure high costs because it is affordable with the product and services that are offered
Flexibility, adaptability provides agility and speed. Organisation is generally smaller resulting in quicker response	Organsation is big which may result in longer response time

Hoefling in 2001

Table 2: A comparison between mechanistic and organic structures

Mechanistic structure	Organic structure
Stable environment: The organisation structure works best when the environment is relatively stable	**Dynamic and uncertain environment:** This organisation structure works best when the environment is relatively dynamic and uncertain
Low differentiation of tasks: Tasks will not be differentiated much because each subtask is relatively stable and easy to control	**High differentiation of tasks:** Tasks are changing, therefore, may require differentiation, so, specialists are required where each one is responsible for a few tasks and can respond quickly
Low integration of departments and functional areas: Due to the stability of tasks, there will be low integration between departments and functional areas because tasks stay relatively stable and because functional areas are not heavily dependent on each other	**High integration:** In complex environments, rapid communication and information sharing is necessary. The departments and different functional areas need to be tightly integrated
Centralised decision making: When the environment is stable, there is no need for complex decision making that involves people at lower levels. Therefore, decision making is centralised at the top of the organisation	**Centralised decision making:** When the environment is dynamic and uncertain there is a need for complex decision making that involves people at lower levels. Therefore, decision making power should be distributed to lower ranks
Standardisation and formalisation: When tasks are stable, tasks should be standardised, so that, operations can run smoothly without breakdowns	**Little standardisation and formalisation:** When tasks change rapidly, it is unfeasible to institute standardised formalised procedures. Instead tasks should be manually adjusted, so that, each subtask is balanced with other subtasks

Burns and Stalker in 1961

People that are fascinated by technology will enjoy working for a virtual organisation. The drive by telecoms in South Africa to intensify Fibre to the Home (FTTH) initiatives provide impetus to the virtual organisation philosophy. This advanced high speed network connectivity is bound to intensify interest in working from home. This is good news for professional bodies as their communication astuteness should not be compromised when adopting the virtual concept.

Comparison between virtual and regular organisations: The similarities and differences between a virtual organisation and a regular organisation is summarised (Table 1). Occupations are moving towards being people oriented rather than residence oriented. Therefore, the elementary tasks undertaken by a company places emphasis on the worker that undertakes the activity. For a Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) like a professional body, operating as a virtual organisation it is a reality. Especially, those that are not SAQA recognised and are voluntary in nature, these bodies have leadership and personnel that have other careers and therefore are not permanent workers of the professional body. In most cases, they volunteer their services to the professional body.

Summary of virtual and regular organisations: For most professional bodies operating as a virtual organisation is not a new concept but a way of survival. There will be a time in the lifecycle of a professional body when a decision can be taken to choose between being a virtual organisation and a regular organisation.

Functions and management of professional body: The careful management of a professional body provides many challenges. Theory indicates that that there are fundamental functions that the management of an organisation must promote. Distinguishing between 2 management functions principles, Burns and Stalker's interpretations have been sanctioned by looking at the mechanistic and organic structures (Table 2).

Professional body management need to be vigilant in that they need to understand if their tasks are dynamic or stable and then can decide on which management structure to adopt. An organic organisational structure provides for decision making at lower levels which sometimes may be viewed as morale boosting to employees. Employees are provided with the opportunity to work closely in teams rather than abide by a bureaucratic structure. As employees are provided with the flexibility, adaptability and job redefinition, innovation can be easily promoted and linked to performance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodology encompassed both the qualitative and quantitative approaches. The sample entailed the population of professional bodies in South Africa. All professional bodies were targeted hence no sampling was undertaken.

Research approach: The qualitative approach entailed interviews with three professional bodies, viewed as the pilot phase. The sessions were aimed at testing the questionnaire later used as the instrument by ensuring that they had adequately covered the most pertinent areas to be researched.

The quantitative approach was adopted for the analysis of the data using statistical methods to ensure reliability of data and finally using factor analysis to determine the most significant factors that informed the framework for professional bodies.

Research design: Punch (2001) indicates that the perceived role of research design is to form a link between the research questions and the data. Design resides amid the two, denoting how the research questions will be connected to the data, the tools and procedures to use in responding to them. Research design must follow from the questions and fit them to the data. The design is the basic plan for empirical research and includes main ideas such as strategy, sample, tools and procedures to be utilised in collecting and evaluating empirical data (Punch, 2001).

The design of this research is closely linked to the exploratory category. Robson (2002) explains that exploratory research is a valuable means of finding out "what is happening: to seek new understandings, to ask questions and to consider phenomena in a new light".

Table 3: Summary of the population and sample size

Target population	Responses received	Rejected	Accepted population
119	92	0	92

The exploratory design was therefore pivotal to developing the envisaged theory. Quantitative methods are often used in exploratory research and that was unerringly the case with this research. Saunders *et al.* (2012) indicate that the ways of conducting exploratory research are:

- The search of literature
- The study used journals and books
- Interviewing subject matter expert
- Interviews were conducted with three professional bodies individually

There was an extensive search for pertinent literature using journals, books and other literary works. The results of the literature review and interviews enabled the preparation of a comprehensive questionnaire, ensuring that all the significant themes were covered. This questionnaire was the instrument used that was posted online for the respondents to participate in the study in the most objective manner.

Response rate: Referring to Table 3, the response rate was high with 92 (77%) of the targeted 119 professional bodies participating in the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data gathered through the use of a questionnaire was analysed statistically. Ultimately statistical factor analysis resulted in the development of 11 significant factors that are presented in Table 4. These factors were utilised to develop the framework for professional bodies that can be used to improve the management of professioal bodies.

Development of significant factors and discussion
The developed framework: A framework for the management of professional bodies is presented in Fig. 2: The framework provides empirical evidence of the pertinent areas that require special attention by professional bodies. Through the prolonged use of this framework it is envisaged that professional bodies can improve its operation in each of the areas which will eventually lead to excellence.

Table 4: Empirical significant factors and relevance

| Significant factor	Relevance to the research
Member and industry support	Through the research there was the notion that support from the professional body is lacking and is most needed by members and industry. The support refers to the professional body taking charge of career progression of members and collaborating with industry to solve problems. Professional bodies should coordinate advances in innovation and stimulate the uptake of new practices and technologies. The support should also result in spin offs like industry financial support to professional bodies
Professional development	Professional development emanated from the sub factors of education, workshops and training. Respondents agreed that professional development of members is a core output of professional bodies and requires impetus. Professional bodies are urged to organise more events and workshops that must involve members which will be a contributor to professional development. Industry tours is also considered part of the development roadmap for members
CPD support to members	The research has shown that some professional bodies do not offer CPD. Administering a point's allocation system is common practice amongst most professional bodies which works well as a measurement tool and obligates members to participate in developmental activities. SAQA dictates that all affiliation professional bodies must administer CPD to members
Assurance mechanisms	The research showed that robust quality assurance mechanisms within professional bodies were lacking. Mechanisms like regular auditing of member development, logs and checklists, monitoring systems and communication tools were not invested in by professional bodies
SAQA collaboration	Since, there are several professional bodies that are unrecognised by SAQA, they do not collaborate with SAQA and therefore, certain benefits offered by SAQA are not forthcoming. Benefits like funding, training and development for members are far and between. According to SAQA (2012) professional bodies must engage with the QCTO and other educational bodies to design learner-ships for its members
Member involvement	The research has shown that member involvement in events organising, development of training programmes, etc. are required, so that, member's self-esteem can be uplifted. Members also want to be involved in research projects that may be related to industry problem solving
Standard setting for industry	Professional bodies long to be considered as the custodians of standard setting for industry. Through heightened research and collaboration professional bodies can control standards in specific industries that can help promote uniformity. This will lead to the adoption of best practices that can improve the quality of service and products
Standardisation	Research by PARN argued that when members work towards specific benchmarks employers and the public are assured of good service. Standardisation in a professional body setting is considered beneficial but could also be detrimental sometimes, especially when a sensible solution to a problem could be one that is different to the standard prescribed. This could lead to some members being frustrated with the standard processes that may be not meeting their needs at times. Standardisation can at times stifle innovation. It is therefore recommended that professional bodies consider the implementation of standardised processes with careful consideration and with continuous re-evaluation
Events and activities	There is a strong desire for members to be involved in events and activities. This involvement adds to member development and provides them with the opportunity to get away from their work places and to engage with their professional bodies. It also provides the opportunity for members to network with each other and to discuss industry problems and to seek solutions collectively
Regular communications	Regular communication has many advantages and serves to keep members up to date. It also promotes a good impression of the professional body
Benchmarking	As part of SAQA's mandate, international collaboration with other professional bodies is supported. Benchmarking against international standards can be achieved quite easily if professional bodies seek international affiliation
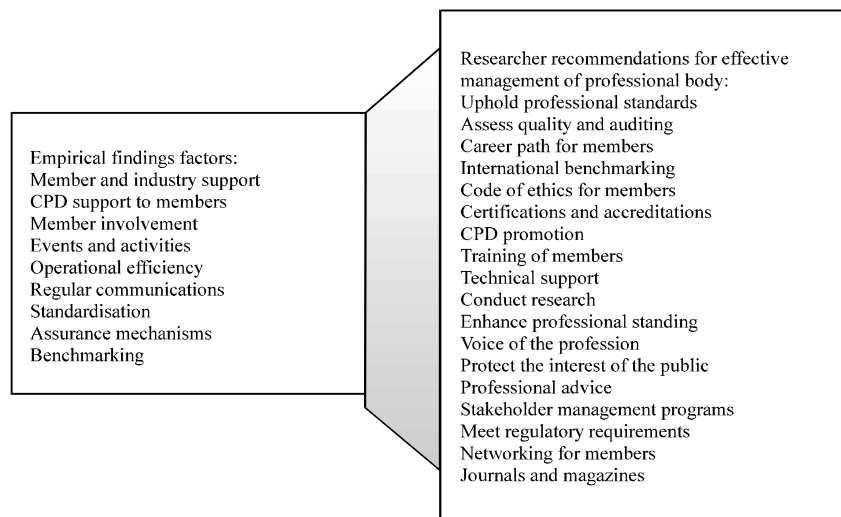
Fig. 2: A framework for the management of professional bodies

CONCLUSION

It is discussed with attention to the achievement of the objective.

Achievement of the objective
To develop a framework that can be used for the practice of professional bodies in South Africa: The collated activities for the management of a professional body is ratified which is informed by the empirical findings and related literature. The practice of professional bodies is dependent on effective management.

The factors that were significant towards the management of professional bodies are member and industry support, CPD support to members, member involvement, events and activities, operational efficiency, regular communications, standardisation, assurance mechanisms and benchmarking. Each of these factors are empirically viewed as the main areas of focus for a professional body to practice with proficiency.

One of the myths of good service delivery by professional bodies is that ceremonial activities must be adhered to. The lack of flexibility associated with ceremonial activities, results in compromised performance which is mostly detrimental to the credibility of professional bodies. The other concern is that ceremonial rules are transmitted from multiple parts of the environment which results in rules conflicting with each other at times. These inconsistencies raise the concern of effectiveness when tight coordination and control becomes problematic. The last area of concern is that professional bodies decouple structure from activities. The more highly institutionalised the environment, the more time and effort is directed to managing the organisation's public image and status and less time is devoted to boundary spanning activities. Bureaucratisation of professional bodies is considered a hindrance to the execution of certain tasks and threatens the efficiency of their operations.

The operations of professional bodies should aim to satisfy their members as part of their basic functions. Modern-day members exhibit a demanding mindset which the professional body is belligerent to keep up with. "Member Involvement," emerged from the data as a significant factor. The respondents indicated that members are displaying heightened discontent when there is an absence of professional body support and limited opportunities as evidenced by the data.

In SAQA's policy for the recognition of professional bodies, emphasis is placed on the importance of the professional body applying sound principles in recognising a community of experts. Emphasis is also placed on engaging in learner-ships for members with the QCTO and other educational bodies. SAQA also stresses the protection of community interest in relation to the services rendered. The development of designations is an added responsibility of professional bodies. A code of conduct to manage members is mandatory for all professional bodies. Career related information and advice must be a standard service provided by all professional bodies.

Professional bodies need to take a leading role in improving productivity within their respective industries. Productivity improvements can be heightened if professional bodies increase efficiency in their operations. The impact of their role in increasing the skills level of members and the general capability of the workforce and management by promoting best practices and sharing the latest innovations should not be underestimated. The contribution of professional bodies is also indirect in promoting trust and reducing uncertainty. Furthermore, professional bodies help to co-ordinate advances in innovation and stimulate the uptake of new practices and technologies.

SAQA views professional bodies as a nucleus in the NQF and must pursue international affiliation at all costs for the benefit of its members. It reiterated that its mandate to provide members with a set of professional standards either through local development or custodianship of international standards.

Benefits of the study: Professional bodies can now make use of the developed framework of this research by implementing it in their organisations. This research has identified areas that require changes in the practice of professional bodies in order to promote efficiency. Professional bodies should engage in regular surveys that will identify areas of weakness in their operations. Their engagement in research will be encouraging to members by allowing them the opportunity to contribute to publications that can be made available industry wide. Members should be given the opportunity to be more actively involved in the operations of their professional bodies. The research has identified this area as pertinent to motivating members. Professional bodies should collaborate actively with academia, the SETAs and QCTO so that, the development of their members can be structured in a meaningful way.

Professional bodies should endeavour to improve and sustain their service levels to their members. By improving their service, practitioners will be motivated to sustain high outputs which will result in an improvement in the economy of the country.

This study will be presented at various forums to stimulate awareness of the value and benefits to be derived by professional bodies if the framework is implemented.

LIMITATIONS

Limitations reducing the extent to which the study can go and which may affect the end results are the lack of and by extension the paucity of empirically grounded theory on professional bodies in South Africa and internationally. Analogies on certain aspects could not be made with confidence. However, this study was valuable in addressing the need of a framework for professional bodies. Furthermore, the use of theories related to virtual organisations attested to be useful.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that professional bodies undertake regular surveys in order to identify areas of weaknesses. This will be an instrument to address areas that members view as problematic.

Professional bodies should invest in research, thereby encouraging their members to be key stakeholders and contributors. This will promote new ideas and innovation through publications for the good of industry.

The determination and implementation of international best practices can contribute to new ways of doing things that is accepted by the international community. Professional bodies are encouraged to develop relationships with academia and skills development authorities for the purpose of determining key training and development needs of their members. This can result in the right programs that can empower members.

SUGGESTIONS

It is recommended that a similar study be conducted with internationally affiliated professional bodies as a follow up. A comparison between this study and the international study should then be undertaken to determine if the developed framework can be enhanced.

There are aspects that this study did not cover. The strategy that a professional body adopts is key to providing the professional body with a clear direction that will render the organisation sustainable. A future study should consider the corporate strategy, business strategy and operations strategy and leadership. Developing an appropriate tool or endorsing an existing one, may prove handy in the compilation of and management of the strategy of a professional body.

The investigation of organisational culture in professional bodies may also provide an opportunity for future research. Culture determines the identity of the organisation and usually is strongly influenced by the history of the organisation. It will be interesting to study the impact of deep-rooted practices on the actual practice of professional bodies. Researching post 1994 practices and gaining insights on how the culture has changed may prove to be valuable.

The possibility of using various professional bodies to serve one profession should be researched. The present mode is that one professional body serves a specific profession. Changing this mode may promote competition and can result in improved service being provided to practitioners who can then choose the professional body they want to be affiliated to. An empirical study can expose the gaps and provide clear direction on how multiple professional bodies can exist in the same space, serving a common profession.

The issue of the use of an appropriate funding model by professional bodies should be researched. This can lead to the development of a unique model that can be of vast benefit to all professional bodies locally and internationally.

Undertaking further research into the formation aspects of professional bodies may prove useful for future new professional bodies. This will be beneficial as there is a pressing need to have a professional body for each occupation.

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