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A Critical Review of the Law in Education Course: A Social Change Perspective Post-Covid-19 Era

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Abstract. Accredited programmes must be evaluated for relevance after a specified period. This study was motivated by the dearth of academic studies that focus particularly on the ways in which lecturers should review programmes/courses. The purpose of this study was to critique the Law in Education course in the Bachelor of Education Honours of the Education Management programme and establish its impact on social change. The study was informed by two models: Bernstein's systematically aligned curriculum and Lockett's model of epistemically diverse curriculum in higher education institutions. Thus, the study followed an epistemological approach that emphasises the importance of personal perspective and interpretation. The study population comprised of university students who had undertaken the programme in the past two years (2022, 2023), the Institutional Programme Qualification Authority (IPQA) official (Head of Quality Assurance-HQA), and lecturers of the Educational Management course in a South African university. Convenience sampling was employed to draw a relevant sample of 13 participants. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis, before being analysed thematically. The results identified certain deficiencies and hindrances that impact the teaching, learning and assessment, as well as the programme's attributes of social change that are systemic, institutional, and contextual. The study highlights the status quo of an institution. An institutionally aligned programme review model is proposed to assist with future programme reviews.

Keywords: Law in Education; deficiencies; hindrances; epistemological approach; programme outline review

1. Introduction

The aim of this study is to critique the Law in Education course in the Bachelor of Education Honours of the Education Management programme and establish its impact on social change. There remains a dearth of academic studies that focus

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particularly on the ways in which lecturers should review the programmes/courses they have developed. Whilst lecturers are expected to initiate the review process, departmental heads should manage the process as curriculum managers. This involves ensuring that lecturers develop a portfolio of evidence that contains the following: relevant curriculum policies (institutional policies), study guides, assessment plans and marking guidelines, a list of prescribed books and articles, the reflective journal of the cohort's performance, and moderation reports from both internal and external moderators. All of these documents assist lecturers in planning the reviews of their programmes/courses after five years of implementation. Thus, the review of curriculum documentation constitutes a higher education quality assurance initiative.

In higher education, a programme/course review is performed in order to report on the quality and efficacy of a particular academic programme/course, including its curriculum, teaching strategies, student learning outcomes, and overall impact. The objective of the review is to pinpoint areas that require improvement in order to make the necessary changes that will improve student success and programme relevance (CHE, 2015).

In this paper, the focus is placed on the review of curriculum documentation of the Law in Education course in the Bachelor of Education Honours of the Educational Management programme. The purpose of this course is for students to analyse and comprehend the contents and objectives of legislation relating to education (Oosthuizen, 2009).

As a postgraduate teacher education programme, the Law in Education course resonates with the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ, 2015) policy. The MRTEQ (2015) stipulates the following five knowledge mixes for teacher education programmes: disciplinary learning; pedagogical learning; practical learning; fundamental learning; and situational learning (MRTEQ, 2015). Lockett (2001) refers to these knowledge mixes as propositional, practical, experiential, and epistemic. By meeting the MRTEQ requirements, the programmes are accredited. However, the approved programmes should be reviewed after five years (CHE, 2015) in order to adapt the curriculum to new demands. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) requires that, as they develop new programmes and review their approved programmes, institutions of higher learning should include content in entrepreneurship, biodiversity, the fourth industrial revolution (4IR), curriculum decolonisation, and engaged scholarship across the fields. In this way, the review will serve to systematically diversify the curriculum (Bernstein, 1975; CHE, 2015; Lockett, 2001). The next section presents prior related studies on aspects of course review.

2. Literature Review

The aim of this study is to critique the Law in Education course in the Bachelor of Education Honours of the Education Management programme and establish its impact on social change. This section outlines the purpose of a programme review, the processes and aspects considered in reviewing a programme/course, factors

that contribute to making teaching a Law in Education course interesting, and the challenges that students experience while taking a Law in Education course.

2.1 The Purpose of a Programme Review

Programme review or evaluation involves collecting and processing information to assess the performance or results achieved (Hutahaeen et al., 2024). The purpose of such a review is to allow faculties and departments to focus on the quality of student learning in that programme. According to McGowan (2019), course reviews allow academics to gather rich information, make data-driven decisions and provide feedback to stakeholders on a course's effectiveness and sustainability. It also serves as a form of accountability, especially when linked to assessment designed to ensure quality (Senter et al., 2021). Furthermore, it provides the data needed for strategic planning (Hayward, 2017), as it evaluates the appropriateness of the programme in meeting students' needs and enhances the likelihood of their success by improving teaching and learning (CHE, 2015). In short, CHE (2015) indicates that courses are reviewed to identify the needs, priorities and direction of the course. According to Hutahaeen et al. (2024), an accountable and credible higher education curriculum must demonstrate results regarding quality standards established by government, industry, and society and must be able to undergo a continuous evaluation and accreditation process, both internally and externally, to ensure its continuing quality, relevance, and impact. This course review is based on similar criteria.

Findings from the study of Zhao et al. (2017) indicate that students attach more importance to the following five aspects: 1) The curriculum objectives should be employment-oriented and aimed towards long-term development; 2) The curriculum content should be up-to-date, with the appropriate breadth and depth; 3) The instructor's teaching approaches should be flexible, varied and emphasising teacher-student interaction; 4) Learning evaluation should be conducted fairly and reasonably in various ways; 5) The curriculum should promote students' mastery of knowledge and capacities effectively. As scholars (Gamage et al., 2020; Senter et al., 2021) have indicated, course reviews are intended to align education with societal needs. This study provides evidence for rethinking and improving the graduate curriculum evaluation system.

2.2 Processes and Aspects to be Considered in a Review

Reviewing education programmes is crucial to maintaining and improving programme quality (Ngoatle et al., 2022). The review ensures that all the necessary stages and criteria have been followed. A course review involves evaluating its status, effectiveness, progress, planning resource allocation and all important decision-making relating to the programme at various levels. Furthermore, it includes setting goals and making plans to achieve the set goals using the available resources. Collectively, these activities should result in programme improvement and expansion as well as potentially leading to the provision of additional resources (CHE, 2015).

Coppard et al. (2015) proposed a five-phase programme review process to include planning and preparation, self-study and report, programme review, summary and recommendation and action. They contend that these phases should be

directed by a programme review team consisting of faculty members, students, external reviewers and other contributors to the course. Additionally, the evaluation process should also consider the strengths and weaknesses of the programme, in order to promote a focus on necessary changes (<https://is.gd/fuiH86>).

A course review should consider the mission and strategic priorities within the discipline, institution and national standing. It should ensure that assessment plans or other materials are in place, indicating that curriculum quality has been systematically examined through instruction and support services to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Furthermore, it should summarise direct assessment data and describe any curriculum actions taken in response to the data regarding teaching methods and content (<https://is.gd/fuiH86>).

2.3 Making the Teaching of the Law in Education Course Interesting

The Law in Education course is a postgraduate teacher education programme that resonates with the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications in South Africa. In order to benefit students, teaching methodologies need to be engaging. Therefore, instructors are encouraged to use varied teaching methodologies, reducing time spent on traditional lecturing, to ensure optimal student attention is maintained (Yik et al., 2022). Abbas et al. (2021) discussed training teachers to use media and attractive visual aids to sustain students' interest in lessons. In line with the work of Abbas et al. (2021), De Medio et al. (2020) introduced Moodle REC. This online plug-in of the Moodle Learning Management System simplifies the selection of appropriate visuals for teachers, depending on the topic under discussion.

In a qualitative study, Walder (2017) examined professors' perceptions of the impact of innovative teaching. The findings revealed that pedagogical innovations support students' learning and remote access to courses and positively impact student behaviours and attitudes. Moreover, such innovations reinvent teaching practices and improve professionalisation and graduation rates. However, unless lecturers engage with these innovations to maximise their potential, such positive outcomes cannot be achieved. Teaching methodologies and student learning (evaluated through student graduation rate) are often included as components in programme reviews.

Furthermore, Data and Badu (2024) investigated the use of the flip classroom instructional approach and found that students' interest and engagement increased in courses using in-person lectures and the flip classroom instructional approach. Lecture attendance does not decrease in these courses because students consider both media to be beneficial. Similarly, Meehan and McCallig (2019) reported that first-year Mathematics students at Dublin University preferred watching video-recorded lectures to attending in person. Students' reasoning was that they preferred to use the time they had saved by not physically attending the lectures to master the course material.

Bhogare and Sign (2025) investigated the implementation of several in-class techniques (short lectures, small group activities, simulation games and role-playing activities) designed to arouse student learning interest. As a result, they reported that when only the traditional teaching method is used, students' interest and engagement diminish. Similar findings were previously reported by Abbas et al. (2021). In addition to the efforts needed by lecturers to sustain students' interest in their lessons, lecturers also face further challenges.

2.4 Challenges Lecturers Encounter in Teaching a Law in Education Course.

Although the focus of this study is on the Law in Education course, this section discusses the general challenges experienced by lecturers. In contrast to informal instruction or unplanned hidden curricula, formal teaching needs to be planned, including the stated objectives and learning outcomes to be attained (Booyse & Du Plessis, 2014). Structured instructions are sometimes quite challenging. A qualitative study by Orosz et al. (2021) with Ecuadorian English teachers revealed that challenges in teaching may arise because of wrongly adopted teaching strategies and minimal teacher proficiency in the subject discipline (Tewari & Ilesanmi, 2020). The challenge of teacher proficiency has also been reported by Yu et al. (2022) in their study of teaching digital entrepreneurship courses in Taiwanese universities.

Mamites et al. (2022) examined the factors influencing teaching quality in higher education institutions in the Philippines. In conclusion, they noted that the individual characteristics and psychological characteristics of faculty members as well as the institutional culture are the key factors, while institutional resources and student composition are minor factors. Sibanda (2022) of South Africa also mentioned that a negative professional identity might be considered a psychological impediment in teaching, advising that this can be addressed through improved professional virtue, a factor worthy of institutional attention. In common with lecturers, students also encounter challenges in learning, some of which are discussed below.

2.5 Challenges Students Experience in Learning Law in Education Course

Although this study focuses on the Law in Education course, this section covers students' learning challenges in general. Dautov (2020) opines that procrastination and laziness pose serious challenges to student learning and achievement. As he explains, these are caused by a lack of interest and capacity deficiency. Such students, he avers, are vulnerable to stress, anxiety, and eating and sleeping disorders. Dautov's findings correlate with those of Kittur (2020) regarding the link between capacity deficiency, poor prior experience, and weak class standing.

Theobald (2021) affirms that self-regulated learning programmes enhance learning strategies, motivation and performance. Non-self-regulatory programmes will negatively affect students' learning strategies, demotivate students and eventually result in poor academic performance. However, Tus's (2020) study on Filipino students revealed that students' self-concept, self-esteem and self-efficacy do not significantly affect academic achievement.

Another study by Ozem and Altun (2014) on Turkish computer education students found that learning challenges emanated from a lack of knowledge, skills and understanding of course semantics. A similar view was expressed by Vurayai (2020), who noted that unfamiliar context and language affect student success. Faced with such barriers, Vurayai (2020) opined that students are likely to memorise information without understanding the concept. Consequently, their knowledge is not operationalised and cannot be applied in practice or linked to prior knowledge. In addition to programme-specific challenges, Mukwevho's (2018) qualitative study in a South African university reported that a serious lack of efficient time management causes students to constantly react to situations (rather than being proactive), often subjecting themselves to stress, resulting in poor performance.

In addition, institutional challenges also affect students' academic prowess (Colicol et al., 2022). Mambwe and Tembo's (2021) study of three Zambian universities found that no peer moderation was performed by faculty on online tests and examinations. In conclusion, the authors cautioned that the mere presence of quality assurance processes does not guarantee desirable outcomes. As a result of their Vietnamese study, Hien et al. (2023) also recommended that higher education institutions must actively improve their capacity in curriculum development, quality assurance and communication, as when these are not firmly grounded, student performance is negatively impacted. In South Africa, Netanda (2018) studied student dropouts in an open and distance learning institution. The findings indicated that instructional programmes, trimester length, and lack of subject librarian support negatively affect students academically. Next, the theoretical models for the study are discussed.

3. Theoretical Models for the Study

Education and curriculum cannot be separated. It is widely accepted that a curriculum works best when it serves all of its stakeholders. For this reason, curriculum developers must consider the "when, what, who, why, where and how" of the curriculum during the development process (Joseph, 2021). However, the dynamic nature of the modern world necessitates making changes to these "wh" questions if education is to continue facilitating the achievements of life goals (Joseph, 2021). Such changes take effect as the result of a review of the whole or parts of what is already in place. Thus, course evaluation is important for institutional quality assurance (Laundon et al., 2023).

Joseph (2021) describes evaluation as a systematic investigation of the value of a programme. In critiquing the Law in Education course, this study uses Bernstein's systematically aligned curriculum and Luckett's model of the epistemically diverse curriculum in higher education institutions (hereafter referred to as Luckett's model) as the conceptual framework. A brief explanation of both models is presented below.

In her model, Luckett (2001) proposes four levels or quadrants of knowledge and skills, which are propositional knowledge, practical knowledge, experiential knowledge and epistemic knowledge. According to Luckett, a good curriculum

should be packaged to guide students' cognitive development progressively. The four quadrants are briefly explained below.

Quadrant 1 represents the traditional method of lecturing and listening. In this approach, students gain propositional knowledge through the cognitive activities of listening, reading and note-making (Luckett, 2001). Students develop foundational competence that meets the requirements for assessment. In quadrant 2, students acquire practical knowledge by engaging in activities guided by lecturers. This builds on the propositional knowledge to develop practical competence at this meta-cognitive level (Luckett, 2001). Quadrant 3 relates to the experiential knowledge gained by engaging in real-world contexts. Students personally engage in meta-cognitive and reflexive thinking, gaining personal competence from learning about themselves and their thinking processes (Luckett, 2001). By thinking reflexively, based on the foundations of knowledge they have acquired from quadrants 1 and 2, students gain experiential knowledge and personal competence. Students' critical thinking enables them to make certain choices over others (Luckett, 2001). Quadrant 4 promotes students' epistemic cognition, which is the ability for critical evaluative thinking. At this stage, students are expected to engage in epistemic, contextual and systematic thinking as evidence of high levels of reflexive competence (Luckett, 2001).

According to Bernstein (1975), a systematically aligned curriculum comes across in his classification and framing of educational knowledge. These are realised through three curriculum message systems: valid knowledge (equivalent to Luckett's propositional knowledge); pedagogy (valid transmission of knowledge, equivalent to Luckett's practical and experiential knowledge); and evaluation (students' valid realisation of knowledge, equating to Luckett's epistemic knowledge). Both of these models suggest that the programme should bring about social change, and that students should become reflexive in their learning rather than merely acquiring knowledge. In other words, students must develop the ability to examine themselves, how they feel, their motives, and how their programme influences their actions. The purpose of this study is to review the Law in Education course to evaluate its continued relevance to the degree in Educational Management. In contrast to previous studies, this study focuses on the content of the particular course in addition to institutional practice on the entire degree programme.

The sole research question for this study was "What is the social change achieved from the teaching and learning of the Law in Education course in the post-Covid-19 era?"

4. Methodology

The aim of this study is to critique the Law in Education course in the Bachelor of Education Honours of the Education Management programme and establish its impact on social change. The criteria for evaluation are that the course meets the standards set out by the authorities, that the course is consistent with its objectives, that the course is comprehensive, covering all of the necessary content, that the course is relevant to the needs of students and the community, and that it

continues to build on previous knowledge. The study employed the interpretivist epistemological approach, which emphasises the importance of personal perspective and interpretation of social change brought about by reviewing the Law in Education course. In line with the interpretive approach, a qualitative design was chosen. This design allowed the researchers to obtain multiple interpretations of participants' experiences (Mohajan, 2018) of the Law in Education course. The population of the study was the Bachelor of Education Honours (B. ED Hons in Educational Management) Programme students who undertook the programme in 2022 and 2023 (to maximise the variations in students' experiences), as well as the IPQA who is the Head of Quality Assurance (HQA), and lecturers of the Educational Management programme.

In this study, document analysis and interviews (individual and focus group) were used to obtain data. The thirteen participants comprised ten students (from the 2022-2023 cohort), two lecturers from the Educational Management programme (one serving as the internal examination moderator) and one member of IPQA personnel. Participants were purposively and conveniently selected because of their knowledge of the particular course and their easy accessibility. Each of these three categories of participants was asked a different set of open-ended questions. Information obtained from the literature review guided the preparation of the interview guides (see appendices).

Four data sets were collected for the study. With participants' informed consent, data were collected through two 90-minute focus group interviews (FGIs) conducted with students (five per group) online through TEAMS. The FGIs were conducted online because of the challenges in gathering the participants together physically. Two 60-minute individual interviews were also conducted with two lecturers online through TEAMS. Furthermore, a 60-minute face-to-face interview was conducted with the IPQA member and document analysis was performed. Research shows that virtual FGIs are beneficial because participants can participate from diverse locations (Mathews et al., 2018; Wirtz et al., 2019). Marques et al. (2021) indicate that such participants are relaxed and more likely to be involved in the discussion. However, Marques et al. (2021) also caution that the technological requirements for online meetings may discourage some participants from joining. Guided by a semi-structured open-ended interview schedule, the FGIs were digitally recorded using the TEAMS meeting recording option. FGIs enable participants to explore and clarify their views better than individual interviews as they interact and share the experiences and beliefs, including those of which they had previously been unaware (Petersén & Carlsson, 2021). Document analysis comprised of documents relating to the pass rate of the course in 2022 and 2023 from the HEMIS section, the review template from IPQA, moderation reports, assessment documents, marksheets, study guides, prescribed book/s and articles, and presentation materials (from students and lecturers) (Institutional CHETL).

Data analysis started during data collection as both audio and text versions of the recordings were performed simultaneously online. Then, the researchers listened to the audio while reading from the interview transcripts several times, thereby increasing familiarity with the data. Thereafter, all other stages of the data analysis

were conducted manually. Data were coded and recoded and deductive codes were generated from the initial coding. In order to ensure nothing was left out, a second coding round was performed, in which the researchers grouped the codes into categories and linked these categories to aspects of the literature reviewed, deriving the themes and subthemes. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, we accurately presented the findings of the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018) and analysed participants' responses, using verbatim quotations. Finally, a checking strategy was employed to validate the findings (Candela, 2019). These findings were then sent to participants, all of whom expressed their satisfaction.

5. Findings of the Study

The findings of this study on a critical review of the Law in Education course for the B.ED Hons programme regarding its impact on social change revealed seven major themes. These include the purpose of the Law in Education course in the B. ED Hons, the purpose of reviewing approved programmes, the processes involved in a programme review, the present state of the course, the institution's procedures relating to the course, students' competency from the module and stakeholders' expectations.

5.1 The Purpose of the Law in Education Course in the B. ED Hons Programme

According to some students in this study, acquiring knowledge of legislation (Oosthuizen, 2009) is the primary purpose for studying the Law in Education course in the B. ED Hons programme. Both cohorts of 2022 and 2023 students agreed that the Law in Education course equips them with knowledge of legislation. For example:

"For me, it's about discipline ..., and especially the part of the corporal punishment. I've learned a lot about that course. But according to the law, uh, it's not allowed, even though the parents can say you should punish the child if the child is not behaving [is not allowed]" (S5: 2023).

"I think it's to help, uh, while managing the school because there are a lot of things..."

I didn't know that you cannot expel a learner at school. You cannot suspend them without the SGB. And I had no... no information" (S7: 2022).

S5 (2023) and S7 (2022) reflected on the social change that resulted from learning the course. S5 learned certain aspects of the law and acknowledged that he would not contravene it (abstaining from administering corporal punishment) while S7 learned that a principal has no authority to expel a learner. These students also believed that every educator (teacher) should adhere to policy dictates as the law must be respected. The notion of knowledge acquisition is also echoed by the IPQA official, HQA, in alluding to programmes/courses being informed by the rationale and context, when he stated that:

"... when you started this process of developing programmes, you were taking into consideration the context within which your students are going to be taught and learn and you had your rationale [for] why you were introducing those programmes and the programmes that are linked within the programmes" (HQA).

Some students went further by indicating that the acquired knowledge must be implemented when dealing with circumstances that may arise while performing their duties. The excerpts below illustrated this:

"I would say it's about the policy and implementing it in order for them to run smoothly, the system of education, of course" (S2: 2023).

I will say that it's an everyday life in a school which help us to do the right thing while dealing with educator. If you are a manager and if you [are] an educator dealing with learners, it's hard, yeah" (S7: 2022).

According to these participants, the knowledge they have acquired from the course empowers them to relate effectively to other school stakeholders as a community. Legislative expectations govern their interactions, as the following quote demonstrates:

"... and it was more involving, you know. We usually resolve matters without applying any law. So, with law in education, it opens up our eyes to an extent that we know that the way we act should be governed by a certain principle, either prescribed or our very own personal principles" (S8: 2022).

Thus, in utilising the knowledge acquired, these participants affirmed the social change that had taken place within them as they no longer act at their own discretion (which may be faulty because of ignorance and punishable by law). Now governed by legislative principles, their interactions are more likely to be objective and justifiable.

5.2 Purpose of the Review of Approved Programmes after Five Years

After five years, a review of the approved programmes is conducted (CHE, 2015) to pinpoint areas of the curriculum that require improvement and make the required changes to improve student success and programme relevance (CHE, 2015).

Indeed, the findings of this study also highlight the rationale for programme reviews. The HQA indicates that programmes are reviewed to enhance relevance, ensure they stay current, infuse students' and lecturers' inputs and outputs, and enhance the academic structure.

5.2.1 Enhancement of the relevance of the programme.

Programmes are informed by their rationale, the context within which students will be taught, relevance to the demands of time, and to the demands of society. The HQA responded as follows:

"...Obviously at that time five years ago, for instance, you looked at... Educational Management. There are different programmes underneath, so in terms of that, they were relevant then. But time changes, not so... when time changes...it means that something that was more relevant last five years ago ... something that you thought, wow, this is good. But today when you wake up, you notice, this thing is outdated. And so, one thing that is critical is that these approved programmes that were very much relevant by then, are no longer relevant."

In addition to maintaining relevancy, the HQA responded to questions relating to whether the institution has specified tools for conducting programme reviews and whether the programmes are benchmarked. In his responses, he explains that programmes must also be reviewed for qualifications to be locally relevant and globally competitive. The HQA stated:

"...We've got the tools, which is a template that we've worked on and we really want you to give us a report of somebody whom you consulted, benchmarking exercise that you have done, so that we can see indeed that you are not just reviewing for the sake of reviewing; you've also consulted your peers outside to say 'look into my program; do you think it's similar to yours? What do you think is lacking? What do you think we can improve upon?' And so on and so forth. We also want a report from an external peer to indicate that you have benchmarked this [reviewed] program."

5.2.2 Programmes need to stay current

Programme review takes place after the relevant cohort has exited the system. If it is a three-year qualification, the cohort is given two more years to finally exit the system. The same applies to a four-year qualification; two extra years are given to allow the cohort to exit the system. Thereafter, a programme/course is due for review to ensure it remains current. The HQA further explained:

"If it's a three-year qualification, say for instance, we can give a student who's doing a three-year qualification [an] extra two years for them to finalise. If it's an Honours, we'll give them another year to try again. If it's a four-year qualification, [we] will give them [an] extra two years to finalise. So, we mostly then say after five years, taking into consideration that the students that are in the pipeline, those who didn't pass in record time are out. What happens now when I say they are out of the system? Now you come back as academics and say oh, our curriculum was very much irrelevant/relevant. Then in five years [you reflect], but this programme seems like students have been failing it/them like nobody's business, it seems this programme, it's really having a problem."

5.2.3 Students' and lecturers' inputs and outputs

Programme review considers students' and lecturers' inputs and outputs to strengthen its content, instructional practices, and assessment. However, this does not signify a change to the programme, as the same participant explains below:

"... we had some challenges of COVID-19. On reflection, you can ask: What could we infuse here in this programme so that it can speak to the current context of this qualification or programme?"

The Office of Management Information System provides data on how students perform for three years in succession. This can warrant adding a new programme/content to achieve the purpose of the qualification, as the HQA explains below.

"Say, for instance, the programme that you are teaching... it's five years now, we go back and say: did we do justice these five years we've got the programme [running]? Our Office, Office of Management Information System [assists]. Again, you can go to them and say: please can you give us statistics of where we have been in terms of the past performance in this programme/programme? And then you want to maybe infuse a new programme in this qualification."

5.2.4 Programme review enhances the academic structure

The institution's academic structure is the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS). All approved programmes incorporate the HEMIS structure of the institution. Changes to the structure are not made annually; rather, they are made when the cohort exits the system or when CHE calls for a review of a programme, as in the case of MRTEQ complaint programmes, which became effective in 2020 and 2022, respectively. The HQA had this to say:

"So that process also should come to the academic structure and then you cannot change academic structure yearly, year in, year out; no, that is not allowed. It confuses the system, and it confuses the issue of reporting to higher education management information system HEMIS to the Department of Higher Education and Training. So, we are not allowed to chop and change as and when we want, but at least after a call is out. That is, after five years in a nutshell... And just to give an example, if... just imagine if all the programs that we have now, they have – some have been developed in 1983 when the university started – imagine if we didn't... we are not changing anything. Do you think it will be speaking [referring to current needs]... the very, very, very old context...?"

It is evident that programme reviews consider all stakeholders who have an interest in the programme. In addition, institutional administrators ensure that programme reviews are conducted as expected, within the stipulated time frames and involving everyone concerned. Through its Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning (CHETL), the institution collects students' evaluations on the teaching and learning, assessment, and resources of the course at the end of the semester/year. Furthermore, lecturers can access the official pass rates of the course through the HEMIS structure.

5.3 The Processes of a Programme Review

A programme/course review goes through a particular process. It starts in the department, where the necessity for reviewing the programme/course is declared. The IPQA can also inform the faculty of the programmes that need reviewing in order to remain up-to-date with the content development of the programme/s. This entails strengthening assessment by employing Bloom's Taxonomy to align the course with the qualification's National Qualifications Framework level descriptors. As the HQA stated:

"Oh, our sister department is the Centre for Higher Education, Teaching and Learning in terms of curriculum review. So, what we do together with them (and they are good in terms of Bloom's taxonomy), how you need to set up your question papers and so on and so forth. They understand the issue of level descriptors and so on and so forth. So, we work hand in glove when we deal with the issue of reviews; the processes start within you as a department. If you as a department say this is what you want to do, [we] want to review our programme, it's five years old now... You will know what is supposed to be brought in because you are the field experts in terms of your curriculum."

According to the HQA, IPQA and CHETL facilitate the review of programmes. In the case of more than 50% of the course requiring changes, the process of reapplying for accreditation from CHE resumes. Relevant to this study, the process of review starts in the department where the programme is offered, before

moving to the faculty board, IPQA, Senex, and finally to the Senate. The HQA explained the process in this manner:

"So, start within the department working and in line with us as IPQA and CHETL, and then we will advise you. And then after that, the process goes now to the faculty board to say, 'Faculty board, these are the changes that were infused in this qualification', and then we request approval and then if the faculty board has approved, it comes back to us as IPQA formally, so... so that we can write a letter to Senex. And then after Senex, make recommendation to... recommend to Senate because Senex is the executive of Senate and then they'll make a recommendation."

5.3.1 Senate recommends changes to be affected in the academic structure

Changes arising from reviews are recommended by the Senate. All changes (not the whole programme) are effected in the academic structure. This is alluded to by the HQA, as follows:

"...Then the changes now are going to be sent back to the HEMIS officials, who are going to make these changes in the academic structure...If you only open change without informing access IPQA, then it means we're not going to make a recommendation to the Senate to see next and therefore you might also do these changes on the side and then, if they are not infused in the academic structure, this is a situation wherein you'll see your students not being admitted in some of the programmes in the ITS because these programmes are supposed to be linked to the students that are coming in the system..."

Thus, the explanations above indicate that programme reviews undergo well-planned and regulated stages to ensure rigour and substance.

5.4 Present State of the Law in Education Course in the B. ED Programme

This theme presented the current state of the Law in Education course in the B. ED programme through the lens of students. It emerged in three sub-themes, namely: method of course delivery (students and faculty); aspects of the course that were most difficult, not understood, or unclear; and aspects of the course that were relevant but missing.

5.4.1 Method of course delivery

The method by which the lessons were delivered was of the utmost important to both students and faculty members. Both must be comfortable with the delivery method in order for optimal teaching and learning to take place. In this regard, participants made the following comments:

"... It was online, and we learned a lot. You know when you learn something from online, you even gain the skills of knowing how to, you know, Teams. It seems as if it's a simple thing, but not as we think it is; sending the assignment online, writing the test online. It was a good experience that we have experienced in this programme. So, we have learned a lot. You can see, even now, we are bold ...and can explain what we have learned from the programme, even if we didn't meet in person, but through online, we have gained a lot" (S10: 2023).

"[The] programme was taught online and the way you delivered your presentation; everything was as well. We were able to interact with you. The discussions that we did, everything was 100%. We didn't know how to do that, but now we are able to do presentation and see. Yeah, it was very much effective (S6: 2022)."

Additionally, a faculty member (lecturer) gave the following remarks:

"Physical teaching is less. I will have one class or two; the rest will be online ... spending time on setting assessment tasks... I don't struggle with that...because I've been using Moodle before ... What I taught last year on an aspect ...may not be repeated as is, but you will find that I've added some more flesh on a topic... I improve it year in and year out. That is where maybe I will spend some more time" (L2).

Both cohorts of students indicated that they preferred the online method of lesson delivery, which was imposed by the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic. The students expressed the social change they experienced, including boldness or gaining confidence (S10: 2023), in addition to acquiring new skills in information technology (IT) (S6: 2022), which supports the online method of lesson delivery. Findings also revealed that lecturers engage in diverse instructional methodologies to ensure that learning takes place. The quotations above suggested that lecturers are up to date on blended learning, a practice widely imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the global South, where lesson delivery was predominantly in-person. Thus, faculty members also experienced social change as they were able to improve their IT skills.

5.4.2 Unclear or difficult aspects of the course

Evaluation of the programme was also provided by the students in terms of their perceptions of the difficulty level. Neither cohort found any aspects of the module difficult to understand. Some 2022 students had this to say:

"... so we gained more knowledge while we were doing this programme. So, in a way, it was not difficult for us; it was explained in a way that it was easier for us to understand what law in education is all about" (S9:2022).

"I wouldn't say the programme was ... difficult. I would rather say it was more challenging, you know, going out there looking into which law to apply when you're given a situation. For an example, there was this case that we made presentations about, the pit toilet (S2:2022)."

It is possible that these students might not have reflected on difficult aspects. Participants reported that there were challenging aspects, rather than aspects that were unclear or difficult to understand. However, a 2023 student noted that they sometimes found themselves at a crossroads between parents on the one hand and legislative dictates on the other. The student explained:

OK, the part [unclear] was discipline. Uh, well, where we talk about disciplinary procedures, about corporal punishment and when parents would still emphasise on saying that teachers should do that [exercise corporal punishment] because of their own reasons. So, I would love the

programme to also emphasise alternatives [to corporal punishment]. Uh, ways of disciplining, like disciplining learners (S3: 2023)."

Rather than simply accepting legislative dictates, social change is evident in the student's questioning of the status quo in terms of the legislative principles that prohibit corporal punishment but remain silent on potential alternative measures for disciplining learners.

5.4.3 Important aspects missing from the course

Various opinions were shared by the participants regarding content that was lacking in the Law in Education course. Some students felt that nothing was missing, while others disagreed, as follows:

"So, I think, the misconduct, we did focus mostly on learners and not on educators. I think that is the gap (S2: 2023)."

Another student commented that the missing content emphasises the need for continuous professional development, by attending workshops. In addition, she remarked that there should be more emphasis on the South African Council for Educators (SACE) Act, 61 of 2000. This Act regulates the conduct of teachers and their professional development.

"SACE... It has to be included more because there's this thing called safe point. We get points by going to workshops. So, there's a point where they're saying you must register for each Continuous Professional Development ID, if I am not mistaken. A lot of educators are not familiar with that. And they say it means ... that this educator is active in the teaching industry. So, I feel like a lot of educators, they don't know anything about that (S6:2022)."

5.5 Institution's Procedures Relating to Course Review

Comments on this theme mainly arose among students, who discussed the periods of the day when lessons were scheduled, procedures relating to the programme and the ways in which assessments were conducted.

5.5.1 Scheduled lesson time

Two separate views were given on this theme. One related to the perfect time for tutorials. Classes were in the afternoon. Students who enrol for the Educational Management programme are practising teachers, so afternoon classes align well with their schedule as they take place after school. Another viewpoint related to the insufficient amount of time dedicated to classes. The participant felt that three hours were needed instead of two. This view emphasises the need for more discussions since the course's content touches on everyday life experiences. All of the students concurred that the tutorials should be extended by one hour to ensure content coverage since the classes start very late.

"Well, the lessons were scheduled at the right time because it was also convenient for those people who are also working. So by three o'clock, obviously they'll have logged off at work, so they were able to join the classes... The discussions helped us to think critically, out[side] of the box. I also agree with, if they add another hour, it will be very helpful because there are a lot of things that happen in schools, and you may find that,

other principals, they're not fully aware of what to do (social change). So, if I come to the class, I might be able to get some solutions from the class during discussions" (S9: 2022).

"That to me, I think it's one thing, we registered very late and so much time [was lost] before we could get used to the programmes and teaching and stuff. There are a lot of things that are happening, so if maybe you can have two hours of that lecture period and add an hour to deal with cases that happen at the school premises, then that would be perfect" (S8: 2022).

Thus, the results indicate that there are systemic challenges with possible negative effects on student achievement. Institutional issues seem to exist regarding planning and time management relating to student admission and registration for this course. Students found the limited time to complete registration and engage with lessons before preparing for the mid-year examinations to be a challenge. This might also explain why students requested an additional hour to make up for the time lost. Therefore, these findings from the students' responses are of vital importance as they demonstrate the social change in students' reflectivity.

5.5.2 Preferences regarding the institution's procedures relating to the course

Students complained about being enrolled very late in the semester. As a result, they claimed that they could have performed better in the course, had they been enrolled earlier. Lack of feedback from a test was raised as an issue and blamed on late registration.

"We felt like we were very late and that used to... We registered late... We were registered late and there was no time" (S2: 2023).

"Oh, what I like about the procedure relating to the programme is that it opened our eyes and what I dislike is the fact that, oh, we [were] registered late. In my case, I registered the same day I got an assignment so I couldn't even understand what was going on because I registered late; and another thing, when they accept you on postgraduate level they don't send you anything, then you hear from someone who would have seen your name on a list and you would [be] like ... which list on that time? Maybe you don't have money for it, it's really complicated. I think if they [university] could send [an] email [to notify] the student to register as early as possible and so that we could prepare ourselves" (S7: 2022).

"I love the group work; it really helped us a lot in terms of interacting with others. And then when it comes to tests and exams, yeah...it helps" (S8: 2022).

"I feel like when it comes to feedback, if only we were given more time, just like what we have said previously, it was not enough on this programme. So, if we had enough time, maybe you were going to give us feedback on the test and discuss it and know exactly what was expected on the particular question" (S6: 2022).

Furthermore, students also mentioned a systemic issue of poor communication. The students suggested that if the institution could improve its communication with students, it would mitigate the time lost. Such a finding implies poor work ethics by some employees of the institution, resulting in systemic hindrances to student achievement. Additionally, it implies that students may be hampered by work overload as they will have a very limited amount of time in which to accomplish the expected targets.

5.5.3 Procedures relating to the implementation of assessments

Participants commented that tests should not involve work that exceeds the time limit. Indeed, they had been unable to finish a test that had included a lot of content but had a short time limit for completing the test. Explanations from the students are provided below:

"I wanted to also comment on the test. And what I've realised is that when we get the test, I think there was lots of information [content] that we must study; the test is too long, but when we look at the time frame for the test, you find that we don't manage to finish the test in time" (S1: 2023).

"Uh, as for the test, in a statement that was OK, but for presentation I would have liked it to be more of role playing, where the members of the group – some could act as the stakeholders, some as teachers and some as learners. And then we have a conversation about the case that we are studying for the presentation" (S3: 2023).

"On [the] test also, I think we should also get the memo so that it will help us to revise for [the] exam because we prepare using our own, then we get marks, maybe lower marks, but we don't have any information that will help us to prepare for [the] exam" (S4: 2023).

"...And then when it comes to the assignments, I think all went well. We managed to do the assignment and I think even the way you make it. It was OK. You know when you give us the assignment, you even showed us what is expected, so when we submitted, we get the feedback; we know where we went wrong. I think it was [the] presentation where you also gave us the rubric; it helped us a lot because we were able to know that when we present, this is what you are expecting" (S10: 2022).

"Uh, I think you should be the one who just runs presentations, even creation of groups. Choose people for these groups because I was alone in the group. I did my honours after some time; uh, I didn't know anyone. There are people who know each other. When you check [to find a group], the groups were already full (S5: 2023)."

Less synchronisation was apparent in students' views on the volume of work, available time, content of assessment and content covered. The participants suggested that more opportunities should be given to participate in presentations. By implication, the lecturer should engage in less student-centred pedagogy during lessons. The time constraint also arose from the document analysis, as the

dates for the completion of tasks (assignments, presentations, tests) were very close, giving students an inadequate amount of time for personal research to add to the information conveyed by the lecturer.

5.5.4 Students' competency from the course (social change)

In this theme, the participants were asked to indicate the most significant thing they had learned from the programme. Participants cited policies that help school managers to govern.

"I've learned that in school, as managers, that we have to formulate the [school] policies, the policies that people should follow in the school premises. And then yeah, I also learned about SASA... that whenever we have to admit learners, we have to follow the procedure. In most schools, we have more challenges when it comes to governance.

Dealing with the SGB, uh, how do we run these finances of this school? It helped me a lot because I've learned about it. And then another thing that I learned – I think it's very important – it's to know when to launch the grievances. And the workplace discipline; I think it helped me a lot. So that's what I've learned from this programme" (S1: 2023).

*"I learnt more about policies; they really helped me because the school that I'm working at, they didn't know anything about policies".
"They just named File, but know nothing about it or how important it is for a policy to be used. Since I came there [school], I brought some change to that school. For example, we used to have, like, events ... in those committees, there were no policies; they were just acting out of whatever they want."*

"So I told them about policies and then the importance of the [school] policies.

[Colleagues] are buying that move. If there's a policy for that, and then we all sign [up] for that, it means, going forward, we won't have problems we will have to discuss, something like that (S6: 2022)."

Participants indicated they have become more knowledgeable about existing policies that guide school governance. This acquired competency enables them to follow the correct procedures and apply policy requirements when needed.

5.5 Stakeholders' Expectations Concerning Programme Evaluation

In this section, the expectations of students, lecturers and the HQA are discussed.

5.5.1 Students' expectations

Students raised the issue of active participation during presentations. Following presentations, they proposed that learning could be enhanced by allowing the rest of the students to ask questions in order to gain clarity from the presenting team, rather than the lecturer. From the students' perspectives, the study guide was good, but students were concerned about having sufficient time to discuss the study guide activities. Students explained as follows:

"And what I would like us to improve in our programme... uh...is to allow all students to present, ask questions to get clarity instead of you alone to ask questions from the team that presented ... But then if we can

involve other students to be part of the presentation, they ask questions... get clarity [themselves]. It also shows that even those who are presenting, they understand what they are doing. So, I think that's the part where we can improve" (S10: 2022).

"... I love the way the study guide is, but I would also encourage that we add more of the activities and as we add them, we find a day where we discuss those activities. So, what if we improve our programme by saying that there's a day or a class where we arrange to discuss those activities? Like, for every chapter, after each chapter, the activity that you attached ..." (S3: 2023).

It seems that the students are questioning the lecturer's approach in terms of maximising activities for student engagement. This may also imply that the late start students experienced impacted lecturers as well, causing them to resort to more traditional methodology to ensure content coverage.

5.5.2 Lecturers' expectations

Similarly, the lecturers also expressed their expectations regarding the strategies they engaged in to harness students' interest in the course. Participants articulated their expectations thus:

"...most of the aspects when I was just teaching, I used to give them a lot of examples I have spent a little bit of my time, because ... It was practically, I used to do it practically in such a way we used to divide...and say what kind of negotiation can do? What are the negotiation process?... And I realised that they understand the guidelines of effective communication in a very short space of time... The basics of successful leadership...setting directions, developing people and redesigning the school... because most of them are teachers. Then there's staff development, which are areas of shared leadership..." (L1).

"What I introduce was when...we had the presentations, which I found to be more interesting, where students were presenting in groups and then with those interactions, which I like the most, where all the groups were participating... Group presentations and student presentations are so interesting. And they loved that. Students loved that" (L2).

From these findings, it is evident that the lecturers are conscious that optimal student learning emanates from interest and motivation. This may suggest that students are empowered to own their own learning process through active participation in role play and presentations.

In addition to sustaining students' interest in the programmes, the lecturers are keen to focus on producing graduates for social change, who will interrogate, analyse situations, and apply their acquired skills, as some students alluded to above. The following excerpts explain this further:

"You will want your students to not only regurgitate or to reproduce what you have taught them, but to put that in practice and be able to apply and be able to be critical... the transfer of skills. So if I give them a critical question, say a passage to read, because in EDR, that is what I do ...they

must be able to pick, and be able to answer questions based on that extract” (L2).

“What I needed them [my students] to be is to promote their critical thinking... is to make sure that they can differentiate this management, uh, managerial leadership models...I realised that I must emphasise and also spend more time repeating, giving them questions...poking their... provoking type of questions and poking type of questions” (L1).

“I was preparing them to be presenters, so that when one day when they will go for a conference, they will be able to present their work; they will be able to present their, their research and interact with the audience... building that confidence that you can stand your ground and defend your work” (L2).

These excerpts from the lecturers’ interviews indicate that graduates from higher education institutions are encouraged to develop analytical minds that can justify their decisions in any situation (level 8 descriptors of the NQF). Such findings reflect those from the document analysis, in which evidence of assessment procedures was found.

5.5.3 HQA’s expectations

The HQA’s expectations are directed towards the quality of lecturers on the one hand and fulfilling the requirements of the DHET and CHE on the other hand.

- **Lecturers are expected to keep a portfolio of evidence**

The researchers found that evidence of performance in the Law in Education course from the lecturer’s file and HEMIS office was satisfactory. In 2022, 36 students were registered for this course; 30 passed, at a success rate of 83%. In 2023, 18 students were registered for the course; 15 passed, at a success rate of 83%. Students attested to this success rate, stating that they had benefited from learning the coursework. Furthermore, they can apply the knowledge in their work. The lecturer’s portfolio of evidence contained the study guide, assessment plan, teaching and learning activities, previous question papers, marking guidelines, moderation reports, slide presentations produced by both the lecturer and students, mark sheets, nominations of the examiner (one examiner for three years), evaluation reports by students (conducted by CHETL), and a reflective journal. The reflective journal contained the concerns of the students regarding content, assessment, and proposals for improvement.

- ***Lecturers to have command of what they teach***

Lecturers need to be very confident in their teaching; this should be informed by research. According to the HQA, in order to have full command of their teaching, lecturers need to be able to respond to the following questions:

*“How can you improve in terms of your teaching?
What is it that is there in the country that you think needs to be part of the review?”*

In addition to this, the HQA advised that students should participate in the review before the changes are submitted to IPQA. He added that the departments and lecturers must know what is taught, to improve the teaching, assessment, teaching philosophy, and the outcome of students, stating as follows:

"Students need to know, and then you infuse that in the curriculum and then when you come to us, you are saying we want to change. You are the [one] in the class; we can't even enter. It is your space, so the expectation is that our departments and lecturers, you need to be very much sure of what you are teaching. If you are very much sure of what you're teaching, it means you'll be very much so because you are also researchers, you're doing research now as we're speaking. So we expect that after you are done [with] the research, you need to then improve on your teaching strategy, on your assessment, on your teaching philosophy, and on the outcome of these students because you are in a field already. So, you expect that your students will be better citizens of the country in terms of your field if, say for example, you are talking about better teachers, then it means these better teachers. I've been told to be a better teacher by you and by something that you've written down in black and white, so we expect you as a lecturer to know what you are teaching."

Furthermore, the HQA expects CHETL to assist lecturers throughout the professional development programme. He believes that lecturers who have been trained in Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education (PG Dip in HE) are better skilled and more likely to meet the expectations of IPQA. In his opinion, this training should be mandatory for lecturers. His explanation is given below:

"You see, that's why I said our sister department CHETL, because currently I don't know if you have a postgraduate diploma in Higher Education [the interviewer agreed]. Good, now that you've done it, the purpose of that qualification was to ensure that you improve on your teaching strategies... So, you see, now what do we do? We recommend that our sister departments, if there is a financial muscle, then they need to ensure that they are having lecturers doing this PGD in HE so that they can improve in their teaching and learning and assessment in the different aspects that have to do with the classroom."

In his interview, the HQA advocated for the continuous improvement of lecturers.

"So, there is continuous improvement. How can we ensure that there's continuous improvement? By sending our lecturers to different platforms that have to do with improving their teaching and knowing better the philosophies that are there, they're using in terms of their students and so on and so forth."

So, my question is directed to you as a department. [Are you aware] You are responsible for your own colleagues and making [such a] recommendation [for PGD in HE]? CHETL [staff] also are responsible for ensuring that all the lecturers within the University of Venda that have capacity in terms of ensuring that the PGD in HE is attended, and colleagues know exactly that this is support to teaching."

With regard to lecturers, the IPQA's expectations focus on their competency and capacity building, which the HQA emphasises must be supported by the institution.

- **IPQA's expectations in relation to the requirements of the DHET and CHE**

This sub-theme encompasses the guidelines for programme reviews in terms of the procedure for reviewing, how much content should be reviewed in one process and the permissible frequency for programme reviews.

- *Fulfilling the requirements of the DHET and CHE*

Through CHE, the DHET stipulates the requirements for programme accreditation and reviews. Institutions/universities develop templates with which to apply for accreditation and programme review. On this topic, the HQA had this to say:

"...we always say to the departments, to the lecturers: you are the masters. You know these programmes better. Remember, when you deal with the introduction of new programmes and we don't really give you much of information in terms of the nitty-gritty of these programmes. We only guide you in terms of the requirements by the Department of Higher Education and the accreditation criteria, the SAQA requirements and so on and so forth. But what you know, you know very well, what kind of a student [you are dealing with]. What kind of an outcome do I want? ...What are the ingredients that you are putting in the pot? What is it that you think will be fine if you can have them in your curriculum? I'm sure you know better."

In relation to the extent of change sought in response to the review programme, the HQA advised that only 50% of the programme or course should be subject to change, explaining:

"And then we say you can change until this part, if you are having 10 programmes, the law allows us to change only five programmes... We cannot have changes for the whole programme because the programme, when it's accredited, it's accredited with its programmes and also with its titles. But if you can just change everything then it means you are cheating the system because now you're offering something that you have not been approved to offer...The departments reside within the faculty and then we expect the lecturers within the faculties [and] the departments to ensure that they understand the programmes that they're teaching because how can you review something that you don't know? ..."

In other words, lecturers must be conversant with the criteria for any programme/course review. Additionally, the HQA explained the role of the IPQA in reviews, as follows:

"Fortunately, enough, our Annual Performance Plan (APP) is very clear on the programmes that were supposed to be reviewed five years ago, and in 2023, we were supposed to have reviewed 50. We reviewed 22; we said

to the departments of the faculties to give us [the reviewed programmes] because you're not starting. We want to start; give us at least 10, give us at least eight. So, for 2024, got around 40 [to be reviewed], so we don't just wait for you to come back to us or to start."

"...we're going to have different workshops... would be calling you to say 'Come, your programme is in the list of those that are supposed to be reviewed in this year' and so on and so forth. And also we're going to have another one which is departmental, which is going to also focus on your resources, your programme, whether you're good, [you have] sufficient staff, whether you have good sufficient offices, whether you have good sufficient budget, then somebody from outside who deals with your programme, from outside is also going to be part and parcel of this process..."

When reviewing programmes, the HQA expects that lecturers will be well-versed in terms of the knowledge (curriculum content) that is to be reviewed. Lecturers must also be well informed of the acceptable proportion (50%) of changes that may be allowed, according to DHET and CHE requirements. Although the HQA expects reviews to be initiated from below (schools, departments, or lecturers), the IQPA as a structure also has provisions for reviews in its annual performance plan. The results of the study findings are discussed in the next section.

6. Discussion

The aim of this study was to critique the Law in Education course in the Bachelor of Education Honours of the Education Management programme and establish its impact on social change. The results of this study were discussed in line with the various themes that developed from the data. Themes included the purpose of the Law in Education course in the B. ED, the purpose of reviewing approved programmes after five years, the processes of a programme review, the present state of the course, the institution's procedures relating to the programme, students' competency having taken the course, students' expectations of the programme and stakeholders' expectations of the programme.

6.1 Purpose of the Law in Education Course in the B. ED Hons

Oosthuizen and Beckmann (1998) concluded their report on "A History of Law in Education in South Africa" by reflecting on the stance of the Education Management Development Report of 1996, which stated that "there is a lack of knowledge of aspects of Law in Education in Government circles." This notion was echoed by Oosthuizen (2009) and the participants of this study, who noted that the knowledge gained empowers students in their relationship with other stakeholders and enables them to contribute to school activities instead of remaining passive participants. This finding aligns with the fourth quadrant of Lockett's (2001) model, in which students engage in critical evaluative thinking in events within their school contexts. Thus, the transition from passive recipients to active participants or contributors to informed decision-making in schools constitutes an aspect of social change.

6.2 Purpose of Reviewing Approved Programmes after Five Years

McGowan (2019) states that course evaluation/review is intended for academics to gather rich information, make decisions informed by data and provide feedback to stakeholders on the effectiveness and sustainability of a course. The findings of this study reflected those in the literature, as students' responses indicated that course reviews enhance the academic structure of the institution as well as the relevance of the programme, enabling the programme to remain current as students' inputs are infused to strengthen its content and pedagogic practices. Furthermore, the study findings also relate to Bernstein's (1975) notion of a systematically aligned curriculum, as valid curriculum content is selected, relevant pedagogy practised and valid evaluation or student realisation of the knowledge is undertaken. Since the purpose of knowledge acquisition is to develop individuals who are responsive to the needs of mankind, the knowledge that is to be acquired must align both with the individual's needs and those of society at large (Hutahaeen et al., 2024).

6.3 The Processes of a Programme Review

As the findings of the study revealed, there are processes that need to be followed in the course of reviewing a programme. The process flows from the department, to the IPQA, before moving on to the faculty, at which point the lecturers and students have an opportunity to question and evaluate every aspect of the existing course. Next, their inputs are presented to the faculty board and to the IPQA, which – together with CHETL – ensure the rigour to which the content and process are subjected. Sosa et al. (2016) aver that this systematic process ensures all stages are followed. Finally, the programme is presented to Senex and then Senate. In all, this programme review team, as Coppard et al. (2015) refer to it, identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the previous programme, mission and strategic priorities within the discipline, examines the institution and national standing, and ensures that the necessary facilities and resources are available for the reviewed programme. The CHE (2015) cautions that all these aspects of the process should culminate in programme improvement and expansion. In this study, the researchers aspired to accomplish such improvements in addition to simply reviewing a module/course.

6.4 Present State of the Law in Education Course

Concerning the lesson delivery mode, the study's findings indicated that both in-person and online platforms were utilised. Students preferred online lessons while faculty lecturers were comfortable with both methods. This finding relates to that of Walder (2017), who noted that remote access to courses for students positively alters student behaviours and attitudes, reinvents teaching practices for lecturers, and improves professionalisation and graduation rates. Furthermore, the findings also revealed that students gained skills by using IT not only to attend lessons but also to make presentations, write and submit assessments and receive feedback. These findings align with the first three quadrants of Lockett's (2001) model of epistemically diverse curriculum (propositional, practical, and experiential knowledge). The students gained personal competencies and engaged in reflexive thinking, which guided their preference for online lessons over in-person attendance, regardless of the restrictions the COVID-19 pandemic imposed. The findings also reported on students' personality gains, which

incorporated a social change aspect as students were no longer timid, but were sufficiently bold and confident to share their experiences and reflect on events. Another aspect of the findings relating to the present state of the programme was the lack of emphasis on the continuous professional development of in-service teachers. However, this is contained in documents on the South African Council for Educators.

6.5 Institution's Procedures Relating to Programme Reviews

Regarding the ways in which the institution deals with procedures relating to the programme, the findings indicated that the timing of lessons (afternoons) is good. This suitability of lesson timetabling aligns with the existing literature, as Data and Badu (2024) found that students' interest increased in courses using suitable options and approaches. More findings on institutional procedures related to the amount of time allocated per lesson (two hours). Students proposed that three-hour lessons would allow enough time for interaction as well as content coverage. This finding supports that of Bhogare and Sign (2025), who noted that students lose interest in a course when traditional lecturing dominates lessons. Students' active participation and interaction during lessons built on their enthusiasm and reflexive thinking.

Moreover, the findings revealed poor communication and late completion of the administrative procedures for admission and registration, culminating in the late commencement of lectures. This finding is absent from the literature reviewed. In this age of technology, this challenge leaves too many unanswered questions about an institution of higher learning. Such late enrolment places students and lecturers in what is referred to in Bernstein's (1975) theory as a strong frame. In this study, this frame denied students and lecturers the opportunity to determine the timing and pacing of what was taught and learned. Earlier researchers (Mambwe & Tembo, 2021) have also reported on additional institutional factors that negatively impact student progress, such as the absence of peer moderation of tests and examination papers. Similarly, Netanda's (2018) study of students in a South African university reported institutional factors relating to instructional programmes and duration of trimesters, in addition to the absence of subject librarians who could further assist students with specific course materials.

6.6 Students' Competency from the Programme (social change)

Knowledge is not acquired solely for the sake of it, according to this aspect of the study findings. Acquired knowledge should correlate with the overall purpose of the accredited programme (Hutahaeen et al., 2024). In this study, the findings revealed that students apply their acquired knowledge of education legislature to various situations in their places of work, such as formulating school policies and resolving disputes. Social change is therefore evident in an outright manifestation of all quadrants of Lockett's (2001) model of epistemologically diverse curriculum, from listening to lectures, gaining knowledge, confidence, and reflexive competence, to engaging in high levels of epistemic, contextual, and systematic thinking to propose or provide solutions to societal issues.

6.7 Stakeholders' expectations regarding programme reviews

6.7.1 Students' expectations

Another study finding indicated that students expect student-centred pedagogical approaches that enable them to engage actively during lessons. This finding is in line with the existing literature, such as the findings of Zhao et al. (2017). Participants in Zhao et al.'s (2017) study indicated five expectations, including flexible and varied teaching approaches, greater student participation and teacher-student interaction, multiple fair and reasonable strategies to evaluate learning, and a curriculum that effectively promotes students' mastery of knowledge and capacities. These findings emphasise that, irrespective of their individual contexts, students expect every teaching and learning encounter to culminate in knowledge gain—from propositional to epistemic levels (Luckett, 2001) – for personal and societal good.

6.7.2 Lecturers' expectations

In common with the students, lecturers also expect high levels of student participation during lessons. In addition, they expect student outcomes to demonstrate attributes of social change, believing that graduates should be able to actively contribute to finding solutions to societal problems. This finding aligns with Luckett's (2001) model of the epistemologically diverse curriculum in higher education institutions that progressively guides students' cognitive development.

6.7.3 IPQA's expectations

The findings of this study revealed that the IPQA places expectations on lecturers, the institution (PGD in HE) and DHET requirements.

- **IPQA's expectations of lecturers**

Document analysis indicated that the total number of students enrolled on the Law in Education course in 2022 and 2023 was 54. The number of students who participated in the study was 10, more than 10% of the enrolment. All of the documents needed for a review are important, but the reflective journal is crucial because it captures the successes and the limitations of the teaching and learning throughout the course, from both the students' and lecturer's perspectives. Evaluation reports are particularly valuable because, in the online mode, students evaluate the lecturer holistically. The lecturer receives the report after lectures for the semester have ceased, so that students who have raised issues will not be identified.

Additionally, the findings reported that the IPQA expects lecturers to be experts in their fields. Experts base their teaching methodologies and assessment strategies on research findings. Furthermore, the IPQA expects all lecturers to be committed to upskilling through training in PGD in HE, sponsored by the institution. Such expectations of the IPQA reflect the findings from previous studies relating to lecturers' challenges, such as wrongly adopted methodologies (Orosz et al., 2021), minimal teacher proficiency (Tewari & Ilesanmi, 2020; Yu et al., 2022) and minimal institutional support (Mamites et al., 2022; Sibanda, 2022). Thus, academics must continuously keep abreast of any developments in their

fields in order to ensure their teaching remains relevant and produces graduates with the competencies necessary to resolve societal problems.

- **IPQA's expectations in relation to the requirements of the DHET and CHE**

The findings of this study illustrated that the programme review was in the APP of the IPQA. The IPQA expects programme reviews to be initiated from the lower levels (lecturers, departments, schools), although their office initiates reviews when they are not forthcoming. Furthermore, the IPQA expects reviewers at each level to be knowledgeable about the content and the extent to which the programme content can be revised.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this interpretive qualitative study was to critique the Law in Education course in the Bachelor of Education Honours of the Education Management programme and establish its impact on social change. Programme review is crucial to cater to the changing needs of the students, institution and society. Indeed, the findings indicated that all of the stakeholders concur that programmes are not static, but are subject to change as needed. The two theoretical models that were utilised advocate for a programme that results in social change. The Law in Education course in the Bachelor of Education Management programme aligns with the criteria for its evaluation. The course was found to be of a satisfactory standard: it achieves its objective to provide legislative knowledge on educational aspects; its content is comprehensive; it builds on previous knowledge; and it is relevant to students and the community. Undoubtedly, the programme creates opportunities for reflexivity and impacts the actions, attitudes and motives of students. For instance, students acquire knowledge of legislation on education and become active contributors to informed decision-making in schools. The findings also revealed that study programme or course reviews enhance the academic structure of the institution and the relevance of the programme. Stakeholders' inputs are infused to strengthen its content and pedagogic practices, ensuring that it is employment-oriented and aimed at the long-term development of individuals who are responsive to the needs of mankind. Furthermore, the findings indicated that academic programmes are systematically reviewed, with a maximum of 50% of its content being revised at any time. Systemic and institutional hindrances (especially poor communication) to students' learning were also found. The findings of this study will be disseminated through conference presentations and the publication will be open access.

Implications

As a result of the findings of this study, it is recommended that the institution implements measures to improve communication, ensuring that students receive feedback on their applications in a timely manner. Lecturers should endeavour to improve on their pedagogic strategy in order to allow students more interactive time with their peers, especially during group presentations. Furthermore, we propose an institutionally aligned programme review model (Figure 1) to assist with future reviews. In this proposed model, the institution would set the dates for the accreditation of their programmes and the anticipated dates of programme

reviews; these would take place every five years. The review would be aligned with the purpose of the programme, the content and the availability of resources.

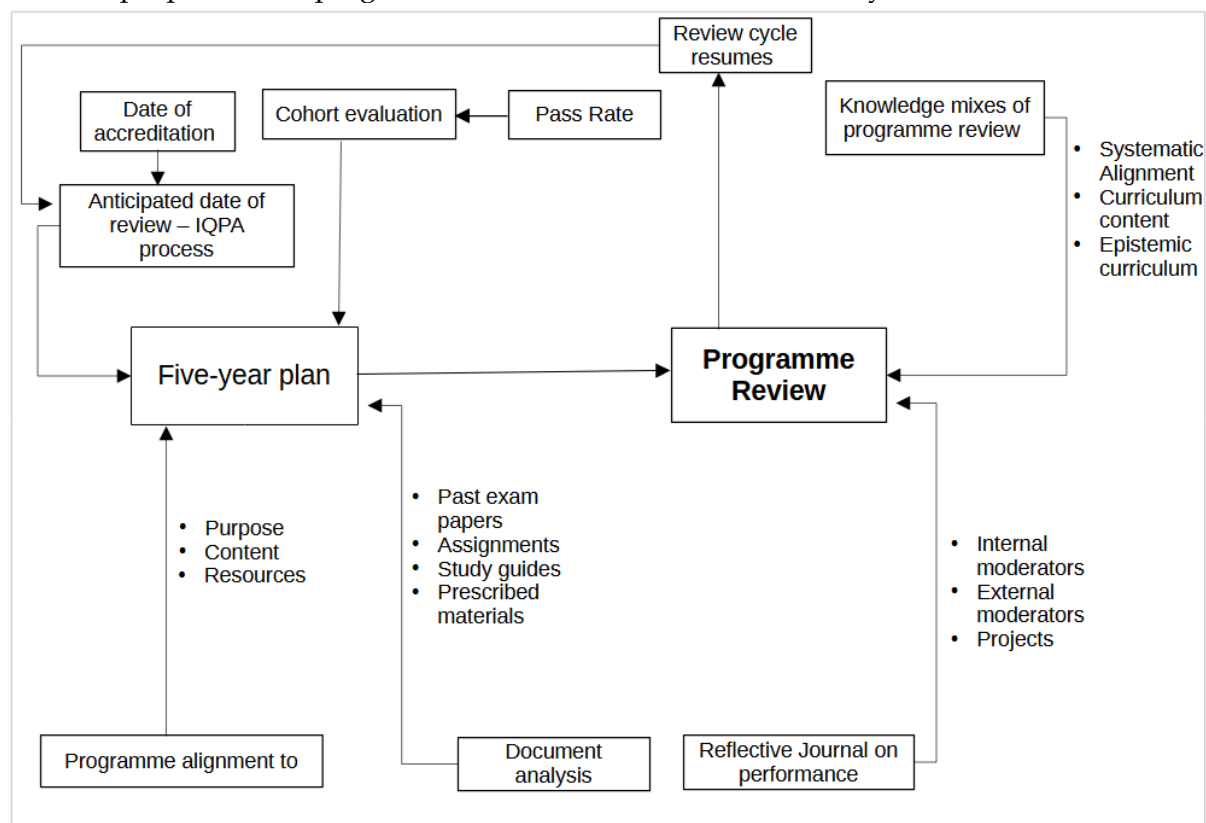


Figure 1. Proposed model of programme review

The available resources must be evaluated to determine their adequacy and suitability for achieving the programme's purpose. Additionally, the review should consider the knowledge mixes— such as propositional, practical, experiential, and epistemic—and the curriculum should be aligned with these knowledge mixes to achieve a balanced curriculum. Faculty members should keep a reflective journal of performance that considers the recommendations of the internal and external moderators of the programme review process and any ongoing projects within the faculty that enhance programme effectiveness. While programme review is iterative and not necessarily linear, involving refinements of the programme through its five-year cycle, major changes should only occur after five years in order to align the programme with societal expectations.

Limitations and further research

Although this study, critiquing the Law in Education course in the Education Management programme and establishing its impact on social change, provided some valuable contributions to the field with regard to the findings detailed above, there are nevertheless certain limitations to this study. It was qualitative in nature and was limited to thirteen participants. Such a small sample size prevents the generalisation of the results. In addition, the data collection tools comprised only of interviews and document analysis. Thus, triangulation of the findings, which would have improved the trustworthiness of the study, could not be performed. Furthermore, the online nature of the interviews prevented the

researchers from determining the authenticity of the participants' responses due to the inability to observe facial expressions or bodily gestures.

Further research could be conducted in the same institution using a mixed-method design involving a much bigger sample size in order to produce findings that could be more reliably generalised.

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9. Conflict of interest

The authors declare that no potential conflicts of interest exist relating to the authorship or publication of this article.

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Appendix 1

Research instruments

1.1 Interview schedule

a). Interview questions for Law in Education course students (2022 and 2023)

1. What do you think is the purpose for which the Law in Education course is included in the B. ED programme with specialisation in Educational Management?
2. What aspect of the course do you find the most difficult? Please explain why.
3. Is there any aspect of the course which you think is not relevant, which one? Please explain why.
4. Is there any aspect which is missing from the course which you consider important to be added? Please explain why.
5. What is the most significant thing you learnt from the course? Please explain why.
6. What do you think is the central point of this course? Please explain why.
7. Comment on the method of the module delivery (in-person, online, etc.).
8. What did you not understand or still find unclear about the course?
9. Comment on the periods of the day that lessons on the course are scheduled.
10. What do you like or dislike about your institution's procedures relating to the course?
11. What change would you like to see effected in the Law in Education course?
12. Comment on the way your assessments are/were conducted (tests, assignments, presentations, exams, etc.)

b). Interview Questions for Lecturers of Educational Management Programmes:

1. Where do you find yourself spending too much time on a task? Can you explain why?
2. Where do you find yourself spending too little time on a task? Can you explain why?
3. At what point in the course do you find yourself explaining issues more often than you should? Can you explain why?
4. Where is your energy placed in the course? Can you explain why?
5. Where should your energy be placed in the course? Can you explain why?
6. How can you make the course more interesting to students?

c). Interview questions for Institutional Programmes Qualifications Authority

1. As one of your responsibilities, why should approved programmes be critically reviewed after 5 years?
2. What are the processes of a programme review?
3. What are your expectations from faculties, departments, and lecturers in terms of their programmes/course reviews?

1.2 Document analysis schedule

Document	Availability	Remarks
1. Teacher's performance and effectiveness reports		
2. Students' workload		
3. Assessment procedures		
4. Internal Moderation Reports.		
5. Module organisation		
6. Module Content		
7. Teaching and learning resources		
8. Student expectations (learning outcomes)		
9. Students' learning reports		
10. Achievement reports		
11. OTHERS, SPECIFY		

(Adapted from McGahan, 2018 & Thomas, 1976).