



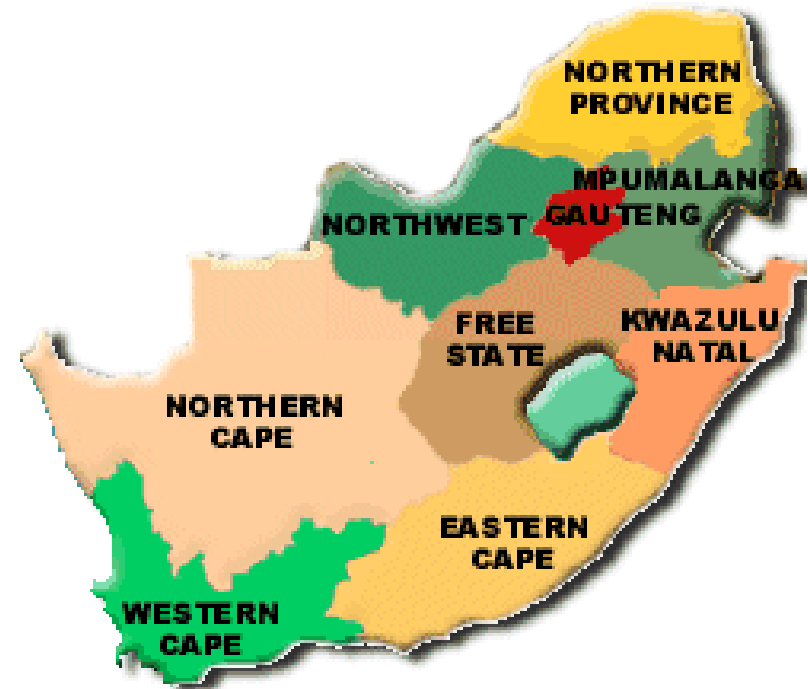
Getting Beyond the Starting Blocks:
Quality Assurance Issues at Academic Libraries

Counting what matters To measure what counts

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Roadmap:

- Introduction to QA
- QA in South African academic libraries
- QA is no longer optional
- Advantages of QA
- Different perspectives on Quality
- An integrating approach
- Measuring what counts



Introduction

- Libraries count many things:
 - Mostly inputs (money; stock)
 - And outputs (circulation)
 - Implication: more is better
 - Or; size is what counts!
- Service much more difficult to measure than size
- Need for comparable statistics
- We used to have SAPSE
- Now HEMIS? or CHELSA?

Quality Assurance is no longer optional

- HEQC evaluations
- “Goodness” of library services?
- “Fitness for purpose”?
- Good means different things to different people
- Libraries have many purposes, some even in conflict with one another

Advantages of counting & measuring- to demonstrate:

- Integration with institutional goals & objectives
- Extent to which goals & objectives are achieved
- That the library is indeed run efficiently & effectively
- Comparability both across time and between institutions
- Impact of library services on learning, teaching and research

To identify and account for:

- Financial priorities
- Maintenance of specific services
- Areas in need of development or improvement.

Therefore:

Quality in academic libraries is a multi-dimensional construct

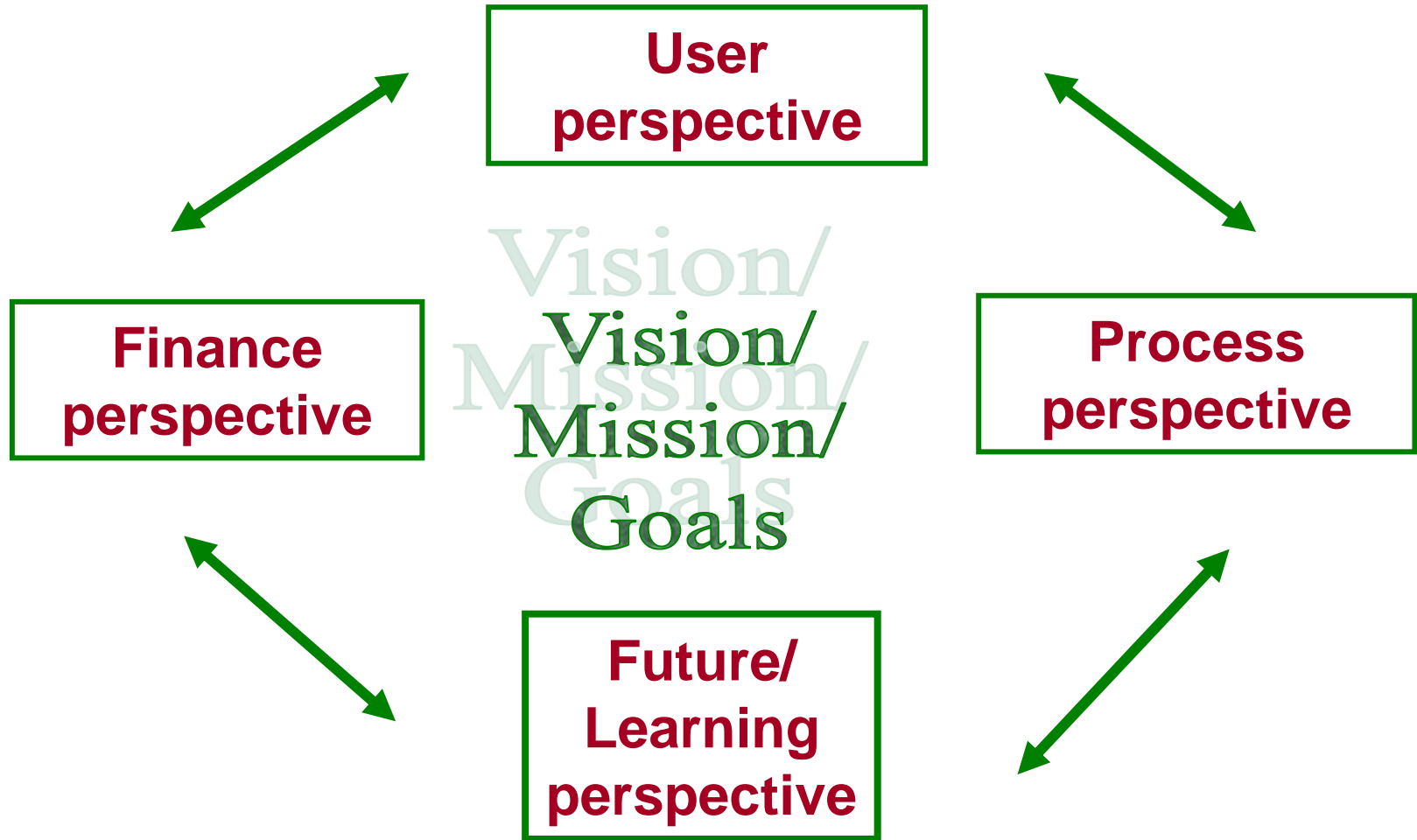
Different perspectives on Quality:

- The consumers of library services:
 - Diverse in nature: from first year to advanced research
- Library staff:
 - Different competencies: wide range of services
- Institutional funding authorities:
 - Objectives addressed & value for money?
- Overall strategic perspective:
 - Ensure fitness for purpose into the future

An integrating approach

- Balanced Scorecard:
- Attempts to integrate large amounts of data
- Origin: commercial management tool
- Defines organization's long-term strategy
- Specific, measurable goals
- From different perspectives

The Balanced Scorecard



The different perspectives

- **User perspective:** Is the library meeting the needs/expectations of its users?
- **Finance perspective:** Does the library function cost-effectively? (HEQC: “value for money?”)
- **Internal process perspective:** Do internal processes deliver collections and services efficiently and effectively?
- **Future, learning or growth perspective:** Will the library remain fit for purpose into the future?

Vision at the centre

- E.g. - UCT: “World Class African University”
- What does this mean?
- World class?
 - Are we as good as we claim?
 - Benchmark internationally
- African?
 - How African are we really, and how can we demonstrate this?
 - How can this be counted/measured?

Appropriate indicators; select from:

- Surveys
 - E.g. Users; Availability
- Financial expenditure
 - Totals or per unit
- Time expended
 - E.g. on acquisitions, cataloguing, ILL
- Counts and tallies of processes and services

May be expressed as ratios

User perspective

- User satisfaction
 - General user surveys?
 - LibQual+
- “Provision of adequate support for teaching and learning” (HEQC)
 - Information literacy activities?
- Extent of use, examples:
 - Market penetration
 - Increase in use of electronic resources?
 - Hits on library web page?

Financial perspective

- Institutional support for library service
- Budgetary issues
 - E.g. Library budget as % of institutional budget
- Unit costs & ratios; e.g.
 - Monographs per student
 - Loans per student
 - Students per seat
 - Information expenditure per student

Internal processes perspective

- Turnaround time
 - How long does it take? (ILL; cataloguing...)
- Processing speed
 - How do we compare?
- Internal staff surveys
 - Internal communication?
 - Performance of internal service units?

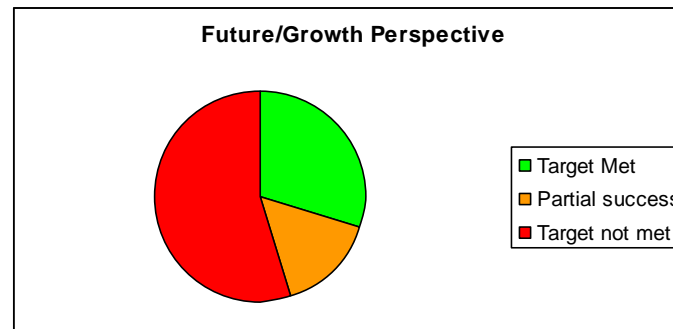
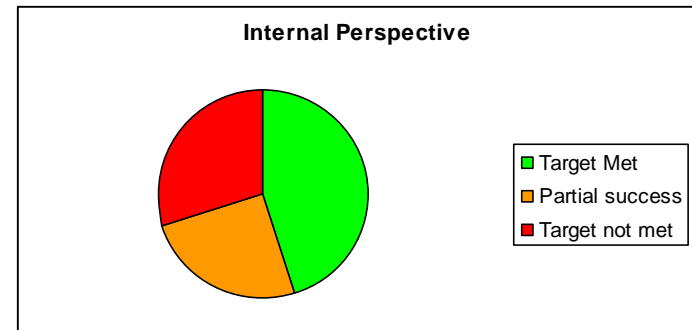
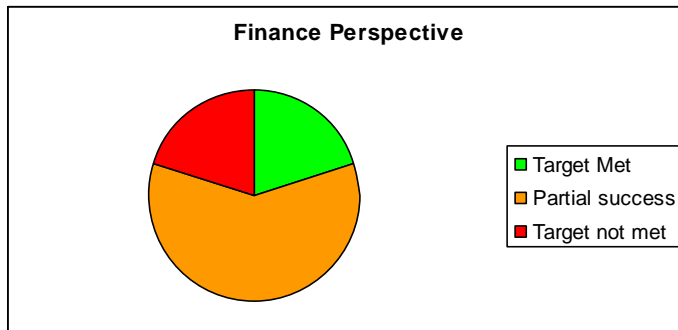
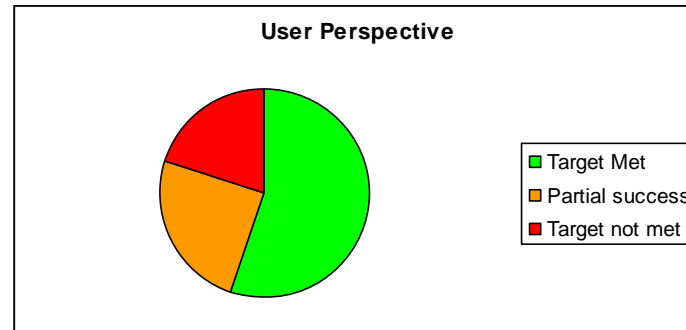
Learning/Growth perspective

- Recruitment & development of staff
 - Staff participation in further education; conferences; in-service training; workshops
- Evidence of alignment with institutional vision
- Investment in the physical plant
 - Replacement rate for library computers?
 - % of library computers out of action

Countable data

- Measure quantitatively
- Set high but achievable targets
- Consider gradation in targeting:
 - Complete success
 - Partial success
- Aggregate regularly to provide feedback
- Address problems that are revealed

Targets at a glance



Conclusion:

- Look for the reasons:
- What are we doing?
- Why are we doing this?
- Where are we going wrong?
- What matters?



To show that we are doing those things that really count.

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And to know the place for the first time.

(T.S. Eliot. Little Gidding)