

INVESTIGATING THE IMPLEMENTATION AND ADMINISTERING OF ASSESSMENT POLICY AT TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TVET) COLLEGE IN THE FREE STATE

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Abstract

Assessment policy serve as a guiding mechanism for determining how various assessment tasks should be administered and carried out. As a result, its implementation is critical. This study aims to investigate the implementation and administering of an assessment policy at one of the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges in the Free State. The study's objective is to identify and justify the need for TVET colleges to implement an assessment policy. The study used a mixed-method approach that included both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to collect data. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire were used to collect data from participants. Two assistant campus managers (academic) were interviewed, and six male and female National Certificate (Vocational) (NC(V)) lecturers of varying ages and years of experience in their careers completed a questionnaire. According to the research findings, all participants agree on the importance of implementing the assessment policy. The findings also revealed that there are concerns about whether the assessment policy is being properly implemented. The research suggests that a monitoring tool should be developed and implemented to ensure that the assessment policy is always followed at all levels. Furthermore, the paper recommends among others that the college should have workshops regularly to train lecturers and other stakeholders on the assessment policy so that it can be effectively implemented.

Keywords: *Implementation of assessment policy, administering of assessment policy, TVET.*

1. Introduction

The implementation of assessment policies should become a topic of interest in the TVET sector. This interest must capture the attention of all stakeholders in the sector to elicit a variety of factors that may be impeding policy implementation. In support of the above statement, Grindle (2017: 3) confirms that factors such as the availability of sufficient resources, the commitment of lower-level officials, and the political leverage of policy opponents can and do frequently intervene between policy implementation. As a result, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the implementation and administering of assessment policy at a TVET College in the Free State.

2. The conceptualization of the study

2.1. Implementation of assessment policy

“Why do we do all this assessment and what does it accomplish?” ... and procedures for assessing students are critical to public accountability (Astin and Antonio, 2012). The researcher believes that just because the assessment policy is in place does not imply that it is fully implemented.

2.2. Administering of assessment policy

Students, of course, come in for a heavy dose of assessment, first from admissions offices, later from the lecturers who teach their classes, and increasingly from administrators complying with state accountability requirements (Clark, 2011; Astin and Antonio, 2012). The preceding statement confirms the importance of the assessment protocol to ensure uniformity, compliance, and the implementation of assessment policy.

2.3. Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

In this study, TVET refers to an education system that is outcome-oriented and is a continuous process of adapting workers' training toward acquiring the necessary skills. TVET is designed to provide an education system that aims to impart knowledge and skills for increased efficiency in the workplace, sustainable livelihoods, personal empowerment, and socio-economic development, thereby facilitating proper adjustment in knowledge economies and rapidly changing work environments (Okorafor and Nnajiifo, 2017: 613; Buthelezi, 2018: 365).

3. The aim of the study

The aim of the study is to investigate the implementation and administering of an assessment policy at one of the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges in the Free State.

4. The objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to identify and justify the need for TVET colleges to implement an assessment policy.

5. Proposition

The most important aspect of the curriculum is assessment, and the implementation and administering of its policy are critical to promoting effective teaching and learning.

6. Methodology

6.1. Participants

Participants included assistant campus managers (academic) (ACM) and senior lecturers. The total number of participants was 8, with 4 (50%) females and 4 (50%) males from various ethnic groups.

6.2. Procedure

First, the researcher obtained permission to collect data. Second, the questionnaires were given to 6 senior lecturers to complete and were scheduled to be collected the following day. After receiving the completed questionnaires, quantitative data was generated. Finally, the face-to-face interviews with 2 assistant campus managers were held on the same day but at different times. The interview was scheduled to last between 30 and 45 minutes. The voice recorder was used to collect data from the interviews to produce qualitative data via transcription. The generated data, both qualitative and quantitative, were analyzed and presented.

7. Results presentation, interpretation and discussion

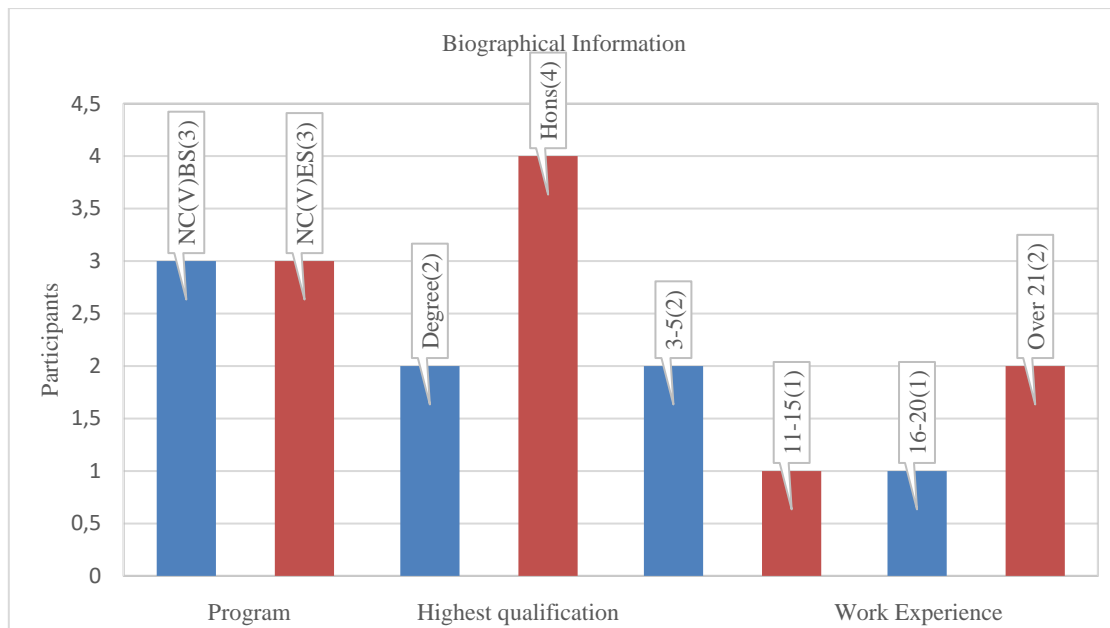
7.1. Biographical detail

Table 1 shows the biographical information of the participants who completed the questionnaire.

Table 1. Frequency Table.

		Frequency	Percentage %	Valid Percentage %	Cumulative Percentage %
Q1. Program					
Valid	NC(V) B. Studies	3	50.0	50.0	50.0
	NC(V) E. Studies	3	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	6	100.0	100.0	
Q2. Highest Qualification					
Valid	Degree	2	33.3	33.3	33.3
	Honors Degree	4	66.7	66.7	100.0
	Total	6	100.0	100.0	
Q3. Work Experience					
Valid	6 - 10	1	16.7	16.7	16.7
	11 - 15	1	16.7	16.7	33.4
	16 - 20	2	33.3	33.3	66.7
	Over 21	2	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	6	100.0	100.0	

Figure 1. Bar chart: Senior lecturer biographical detail.



- Program

According to the program results, both NC(V) business studies and NC(V) engineering studies had an equal number of participants (n=3), accounting for 50% of all participants in both programs.

- Highest qualification

According to the table above, senior lecturers who hold an Honors Degree (n = 4) are in the majority with 66.7% of the participants, followed by Degree (n = 2), with 33,3%.

- Work experience

In terms of work experience, Table 1 shows that senior lecturers with work experience of 3-5 (n=1) and 11-15 (n=1) years account for the same percentage (16,7%). Similarly, the senior lecturers with work experience of 16-20 (n=2) and over 21 (n=2) years, account for the same percentage (33,3%).

7.2. Quantitative data

The questionnaire results are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 2. The implementation and administering of assessment policy.

A	The management and administration of the assessment for the NC(V) programme at TVET College.	Valid			
		SD (1)	D (2)	A (3)	SA (4)
		No. of responses in percentage (%)			
1	I possess the necessary skills to manage and administer the assessment components.	0	0	3 50,0%	3 50,0%
2	A lecturer who is a subject expert moderate and approve my task before I administer it to the students.	2 33,3%	1 16,7%	1 16,7%	2 33,3%
3	I check, evaluate, and authenticate my students' work before presenting it as evidence in their portfolios.	0	0	1 16,7%	5 83,3%
4	Assessment policy establishes a framework for the management, administration, and implementation of all assessments.	0	0	3 50,0%	3 50,0%
5	My head of department appears to be using the assessment policy as a punitive tool to always reprimand me.	0	2 33,3%	0	4 66,7%
6	I am aware of the assessment policy's influence on student achievement.	0	1 16,7%	2 33,3%	3 50,0%
7	The assessment policy is open to my discretion and is subject to variation.	2 33,3%	1 16,7%	2 33,3%	1 16,7%
8	I understand my roles and responsibilities in the conduct, administration, and management of assessment, and it is my responsibility to assess students according to the policy.	0	0	1 16,7%	5 83,3%

1 = Strongly disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Agree (A), Strongly agree (SA)

The results of the questionnaire are projected in Table 1 above, which shows that all participants (n=6) are 100% agreeable to questions A1 and A4 because 50% agree and 50% strongly agree. Question A2 shows that n=2(33,3%) strongly disagree and n=1(16,7%) disagree, while n=1(16,7%) agree and n=2(16,7%) strongly agree. Question A7 reveals that n=2(33,3%) strongly disagree and n=1(16,7%) disagree, while n=2(33,3%) agree and n=1(16,7%) strongly agree. The findings on questions A3 and A8 are similar, with 16,7% of participants (n=1) agreeing and 83.3% of participants (n=5) strongly agreeing. Question A5 reveals that the majority of participants (n=4) (66.7%) strongly agree, while 33.3% (n=2) disagree. Finally, question A6 reveals that the majority of participants are agreeable, with n=2(33.3%) agreeing and n=3(50.0%) strongly agreeing, while only 16.7% of participants (n=1) disagree. All of the aforementioned outcomes imply that all of the participants have the necessary skills to administer the assessment components in accordance with the assessment policy. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the participants understand their role in the management and administration of the assessment NC(V) programme. As a result, the findings support Arfo's (2015: 42) claim that once a policy has been developed and adopted, the next critical stage is policy implementation, which includes actual policy delivery and action in response to policy intent. The study found that it is critical and necessary to implement an assessment policy at TVET colleges.

7.3. Semi-structured individual interview questions

The semi-structured individual interviews for the assistant campus managers are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Semi-structured.

<p>1. Why, in your opinion, is it critical that the assessment policy be always implemented?</p> <p>Participant 1: Implementing an assessment policy is critical for determining the effectiveness and efficiency of your teaching and learning as a lecturer. As the assistant campus manager (academic), my overall responsibility is to ensure that teaching and learning follow the ICASS guidelines, which are included in the policy.</p> <p>Participant 2: To begin, a policy is a guideline that directs how we conduct assessments. As a result, it is critical that we adhere to the policy, remain consistent, and ensure that our assessments are of high quality.</p>
<p>2. What do you consider to be a difficult factor impeding the implementation of assessment policy?</p> <p>Participant 1: As an ACM, you have stakeholders such as lecturers, assessors, and moderators. Some of them will fail to comply with the assessment plan, which impedes the assessment policy's implementation.</p> <p>Participant 2: Some of our lectures do not follow the assessment policy; for example, as an assessor, the policy states that the assessor must mark within a certain time after conducting an assessment.</p>
<p>3. How do your senior lecturers, and lecturers perceive the implementation of the assessment policy?</p> <p>Participant 1: Their opinion on the implementation of the assessment policy is favourable. Positive perception is important because it leads to positive outcomes.</p> <p>Participant 2: The problem is that they complain about the workload because the assessment policy specifies timeframes. The policy states that once a task has been written, it must be moderated. Keep in mind that each of them has a role to play in the assessment process, and they are finding it difficult to fulfil their role within the timeframe specified.</p>
<p>4. How do you ensure that all parties involved follow and implement the assessment policy?</p> <p>Participant 1: Overarching the process and ensuring its smooth operation is an irregularity committee, which I chair as the assistant campus manager (academic). The irregularity committee examines the difficulties encountered in each assessment.</p> <p>Participant 2: In this case, I believe we can benefit from regular assessor training as well as monitoring the implementation of assessment policy.</p>
<p>5. How do you normally handle situations in which lecturers do not adhere to the assessment policy?</p> <p>Participant 1: Normally, I call a meeting with the lecturer in question to get his or her side of the story, and then, if necessary, I take the necessary steps to rectify the situation.</p> <p>Participant 2: Most people do get their things in order if you address them on a personal level. If the problem persists, I escalate it to the college management team, but this depends on the severity of the problem.</p>

The results of a semi-structured individual interview schedule for assistant campus managers (academic) are presented in Table 2. Based on the above results, the participants' overall opinion is that the assessment policy should be implemented. The preceding statement compensates Bacchi's (2014: ix) assertion that "policy is generally associated with a program, a course of action." Furthermore, the participants demonstrated their understanding of the factors that may impede the implementation of the assessment policy, as well as their role in resolving noncompliance. The preceding findings provided support for the conclusion that the level of the implementation of the assessment policy influences assessment outcomes.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, the paper demonstrated that the assessment policy is the guiding mechanism for the administration and conduct of various assessment components and should be implemented and administered at all costs. The paper contributes to improving the management of assessment through collaborative responsibility to overcome barriers to the implementation and administering of assessment policy. These findings can help TVET policymakers develop shared assessment policy initiatives and resolve conflicts during the process of the implementation and administering of assessment policy. As a result, TVET colleges must develop an assessment policy training program that will be included on their yearly calendar. Regular training or workshops on the assessment policy would instil a desire to do more, ultimately intensifying the policy's maximum implementation.

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