

**A comparison of policies and practices
in assessment
in a Further Education Institution**

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature: _____

Date: _____



ABSTRACT

A new Outcomes-based Education (OBE) system, as well as a new Further Education and Training (FET) framework, has been proposed by the government to address past inequalities and provide a skilled labour force. The introduction of OBE has necessitated a paradigm shift in both educational and assessment practices.

The FET policies, led by the introduction of the Green Paper for FET in 1998, aimed to inform the FET institutions on the implementation of outcomes-based assessment. However, the implementation of these policies has posed many obstacles and challenges. Lecturers are unsure about the implementation strategies, and their attempts to cope with these uncertainties are seldom effective. Consequently, lecturers struggle to bring their assessment practices in line with the policies. This was the research problem of the study.

The aim of the study was to determine discrepancies between the policies and the practices. The FET policies and related literature were consulted to determine how assessment practices should change. Subsequently, a questionnaire and focus group discussions were used to determine the current assessment practices of lecturers at the Klerksdorp campus of Vuselela College. Thereafter, the requirements of the policies and the current assessment practices of the lecturers were compared to determine the extent to which the lecturers had adopted the new assessment practices.

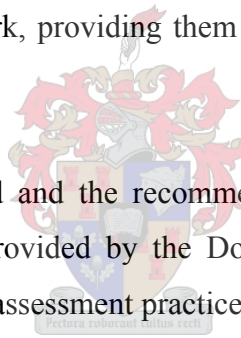
Various discrepancies were found. The first discrepancy existed between the implementation strategies of the new FET curriculum and the actual implementation process at the college. No learnerships had been implemented in the N-courses and the implementation process had been delayed several times. A second discrepancy existed between the requirements for lecturers to be registered as assessors and the registration process. Lecturers completed the training courses but struggled to register as assessors. A bottleneck existed with the registration process because of the number of lecturers that had to be registered. In addition, the training did not provide the lecturers with sufficient knowledge to implement outcomes-based assessment while the training was presented on the wrong National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level.

Another discrepancy existed with regard to the implementation of the learnerships and the implementation of outcomes-based assessment. Lecturers were only expected to implement

outcomes-based assessment in courses where learnerships had been implemented. This meant that lecturers who lectured on N-courses were still required to use more traditional assessment methods. While some lecturers preferred paper-based assessment methods, other lecturers felt that the restrictions imposed by the DoE were depriving them of the opportunity to use more alternative methods. Problems such as an increase in the workload, administration and paperwork and learner numbers were also experienced.

Regarding these discrepancies, it was firstly recommended that the DoE be realistic about implementation dates and be transparent about delays and problems. Lecturers could assist the DoE in the implementation process by writing unit standards. Secondly, it was recommended that the DoE should have an efficient structure in place to deal with the vast number of lecturers that would have to register as assessors. This can be done by employing extra human resources. Better training is necessary to support and empower lecturers to implement outcomes-based assessment. Thirdly, lecturers could be encouraged to implement the new assessment practices by giving them recognition for good work, providing them with assistance and appointing lecturers who act solely as assessors.

These discrepancies are more related and the recommendations more useful to this particular college than the assistance that is provided by the DoE by making the college aware of the obstacles and challenges that the new assessment practices pose.



OPSOMMING

'n Nuwe stelsel van Uitkomsgebaseerde Onderwys (UGO), asook 'n raamwerk vir Verdere Onderwys en Opleiding (VOO) is deur die regering voorgestel om die ongelykhede van die verlede reg te stel en in die behoefte aan geskoolde arbeid te voorsien. Die skuif na UGO het nie net 'n paradigmaskuif in onderwyspraktyke teweeggebring nie, maar ook 'n paradigmaskuif in assesseringspraktyke genoodsaak.

Die doel van die VOO-beleide was om die VOO-instellings aangaande die implementering van uitkomsgebaseerde assessering te adviseer. Die implementering van die beleidehet met baie hindernisse en uitdagings gepaard gegaan. Dosente was onseker oor die implementeringstrategieë en hul pogings om die onsekerhede te hanteer was selde suksesvol. As gevolg daarvan sukkel dosente steeds om hul assesseringspraktyke by die beleide aan te pas. Dit was die navorsingsprobleem van die navorsing.

Die doel van die studie was om teenstrydighede tussen die beleide en die praktyke te bepaal. Eerstens is die VOO-beleide en die toepaslike literatuur bestudeer om te bepaal hoe assesseringspraktyke moet verander. Tweedens is 'n vraelys en fokusgroepgesprekke gebruik om die huidige assesseringspraktyke van dosente aan die Klerksdorp kampus van die Vuselela Kollege te bepaal. Daarna is 'n vergelyking getref tussen die vereistes van die beleide en die bestaande assesseringspraktyke van die dosente om te bepaal tot watter mate hulle die nuwe assesseringspraktyke hul eie gemaak het.

Verskeie teenstrydighede is gevind. Die eerste teenstrydigheid het tussen die implementeringstrategieë van die nuwe VOO-kurrikulum en die werklike implementeringsproses by die kollege bestaan. Geen leerderskappe was in die N-kursusse geïmplementeer nie en die implementeringsproses is verskeie kere uitgestel. 'n Tweede teenstrydigheid het tussen die vereistes vir dosente om as assessors te registreer en die registrasieproses bestaan. Die dosente het die opleidingskursusse voltooi, maar dit moeilik gevind om as assessors te registreer. 'n Opeenhoping het by die registrasieproses ontstaan vanweë die groot aantal dosente wat geregistreer moes word. Die opleiding het ook nie die dosente met voldoende kennis toegerus om uitkomsgebaseerde assessering te implementeer nie terwyl die opleiding ook nie op die korrekte vlak van die Nasionale Kwalifikasieraamwerk (NKR) aangebied is nie.

Nog 'n teenstrydigheid het met die implementering van die leerderskappe en die implementering van uitkomsgebaseerde assessering ontstaan. Slegs dosente wat leerderskappe in hul kursusse geïmplementeer het is genoodsaak om uitkomsgebaseerde assessering te implementeer. Die dosente wat N-kursusse gedoseer het moes steeds van die meer tradisionele assesseringsmetodes gebruik maak. Terwyl sommige dosente in elk geval die meer tradisionele assesseringsmetodes verkies het, was daar ander wat gevoel het dat die beperkings wat die Departement van Onderwys voorskryf hulle van 'n geleentheid ontnem het om meer alternatiewe assesseringsmetodes te gebruik. Probleme soos die toename in werkslading, administrasie en papierwerk en studentegetalle het ook aandag geniet.

Met betrekking tot die teenstrydighede is daar eerstens aanbeveel dat die Departement van Onderwys meer realisties behoort te wees oor die implementeringsdatums en meer deursigtig behoort te wees aangaande probleme en vertraginge. Dosente kan ook ingespan word om met die implementeringsproses te help deur eenheidstandaarde te ontwikkel. Tweedens behoort die Departement van Onderwys 'n beter struktuur vir die registrering van assessors daar te stel. Dit kan gedoen word deur meer werknemers aan te stel. Beter opleiding is ook nodig om die dosente te ondersteun en te bemagtig om uitkomsgebaseerde assessering te implementeer. Derdens moet dosente gemotiveer word om die nuwe assesseringspraktyke te implementeer. Dit kan gedoen word deur aan hulle erkenning te gee vir goeie werk, aan hulle ekstra hulp te verskaf en deur dosente aan te stel wat slegs as assessors optree.

Die teenstrydighede is meer van toepassing en die aanbevelings meer waardevol vir die spesifieke kollege as die hulp wat deur die Departement van Onderwys aangebied word deur die kollege bewus te maak van die struikelblokke en uitdagings wat die nuwe assesseringspraktyke bied.

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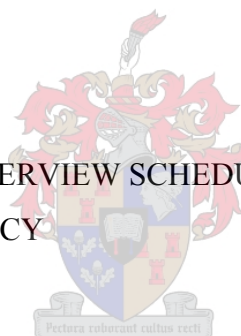


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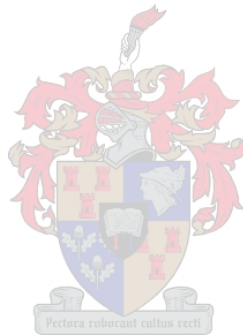
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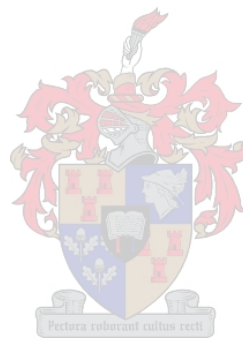
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The past decade (1995 – 2005), which was dominated by Outcomes-based Education (OBE) and the Learning Paradigm, among others, saw a dramatic transformation of assessment practices in South Africa. These changes in assessment practices are widespread and were caused, to some extent, by demands for accountability (Hay & Buchner, 1999; Pausch & Popp, 1998) and pressures on all educational institutions to become more effective, efficient and performance-based (Alexander, 2000). Linking assessment results to accountability and quality of institutions is not uncommon. The assessment of learners provides an indication of the quality of the curriculum and learner learning (Jacob, Luckett & Webbstock, 1999) while the interpretation of learners' results enables institutions to verify how well they are achieving their institutional outcomes (Maki, 2002).

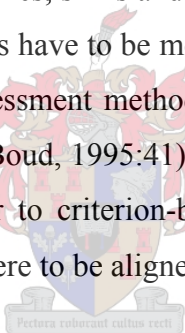
The increasing calls for educational accountability, among others, led to the rapid spread of various forms of OBE in the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia during the 1980s and 1990s (Killen, 2000a:1). The stimulus for OBE also comes from socio-economic sources. Key changes that are taking place in society and the economy directly shape educational reforms towards OBE. These changes include the nature of the socio-economy in the Information Age, the changing demographics of society, emerging new technologies and, consequently, the need to meet the requirements of a technologically competent workforce (Hartzenberg, 2001:141).

In South Africa, changing socio-economic and political contexts also pose challenges for education (Luckett & Sutherland, 2000). One of the most pressing demands for change has come as a result of the legacy of apartheid and social inequalities (Department of Education (See DoE), 1998c:8). As a result, a new education system based on an outcomes-based approach has been introduced to address the demands for access to education, redress and accountability (Kotze 2002:77; DoE, 1998c:27).

Added to this, a new curriculum and qualifications framework has been proposed for Further Education and Training (FET). According to the Department of Education (DoE), the framework

for the approval of Qualifications and Programmes for Level 2 – 4 (Institutions) would be declared a policy statement in March 2003 (DoE, 2003) while the integrated FET curriculum would be introduced and the Further Education and Training Certificate (FETC) recognised as exit qualification in 2005 (DoE, 1998a). The FET framework would be developed for the approval of qualifications and programmes for Level 2 to 4 while the new curriculum would be responsive to the skills needs identified in the Human Resources Development strategy, the National Skills Development Strategy and the FET policies (DoE, 2003:9). The new framework would follow an integrated approach to education and training in an attempt to provide a skilled labour force (DoE, 1998c:27). A strategy for achieving this integration in the FET curriculum would be learnerships (Gewe in Kraak & Young, 2001:14) and unit standard-based qualifications (DoE, 2003:6).

The move towards OBE, learnerships and unit standards has necessitated a change in the views and practices of assessment, especially in the FET band. This is in line with a range of related developments in international assessment in an attempt to promote skills and competencies (Broadfoot in Torrance, 1995:9). Outcomes, skills and competencies cannot be solely assessed by traditional methods. Assessment systems have to be more appropriate to the needs of learners and employers. As a result, alternative assessment methods, such as authentic, outcomes-based and integrated assessment, were called for (Boud, 1995:41). Biggs (2003) adds constructively aligned assessment to the list, which is similar to criterion-based assessment. Learning and teaching activities, as well as assessment tasks, were to be aligned with the learning outcomes of a course.



The policies that direct the new FET framework on assessment, namely the Green Paper on FET (DoE: 1998c), the Education White Paper (DoE, 1998a), and the FET Act (DoE, 1998b), agree that previous assessment practices have to change to support the new education system and to promote lifelong learning and the integration of education and training. According to the Green Paper (DoE, 1998c:46), "the traditional assessment paradigm, which was primarily based on cognitive learning and which compares one learner with another (norm-referenced evaluation) is unsuited to the challenges presented by the new policies which are aimed at the transformation and integration of education and training". The objectives of assessment would have to change accordingly to include guidance to learners by means of various assessment methods and meaningful feedback (formative assessment) and by providing valid and reliable information regarding learner achievement and competence (DoE, 1998b).

The Department of Education admitted that the transformation of the FET system and its assessment practices would not happen overnight. Neither would assessment policies be implemented without difficulty. That is why external examinations continue to be administered in the National courses (N-courses) until the new curricula, learning programmes, qualifications and assessment policies are in place (DoE, 1998c:47). However, the policies are clear on the changes that have to be made in the assessment paradigm and lecturers have to change their assessment practices accordingly.

1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

The assessment reforms proposed by the education policies are not always easy to implement. The first obstacle is the challenge that lecturers face to change their perspectives on assessment. This proves to be a difficult task because they received their training in traditional assessment practices. As a result, lecturers often implement new assessment procedures but their philosophies are still embedded in the traditional paradigm of assessment. Even with new assessment policies in place, traditional assessment paradigms remain dominant and are difficult to change (Barr & Tagg, 1995). This is true for pessimistic lecturers who are resistant to change as well as those who are eager to implement new assessment policies.

A second obstacle includes lecturers who are misinformed about the mechanisms of alternative assessment practices, which are part of the new FET framework. Such lecturers will either adopt coping strategies, such as going back to using outdated assessment habits and traditional methods, or they will apply a hybrid of knowledge that they have accumulated about different assessment practices (Hay & Buchner, 1999).

Although policy documents are clear about the transformation that assessment has to undergo, lecturers find it difficult to interpret and implement the policies in the classroom. Words such as "criterion-referenced", "formative", "continuous assessment", "peer assessment" and "group assessment" are perceived by lecturers as jargon without practical implications. Many training opportunities cover assessment only in the ideal situation. The content of training courses lack practical applications (Pausch & Popp, 1997; Hay & Buchner, 1999) and neglect the challenges that assessment reforms bring to the classroom.

Since the implementation of outcomes-based assessment in the General Education and Training (GET) band, numerous studies have been conducted to follow and monitor the implementation of the assessment policy in the GET band. The results from these studies showed that teachers are confused about the implications of outcomes-based assessment (Pretorius, 1998:82) and that they have concerns about continuous assessment (CASS) because the guidelines to implement CASS are vague and ambiguous (Vereen, 2001). Furthermore, it showed that many teachers feel that they had received inadequate training regarding assessment (Hartzenberg, 2001:142; Combrinck, 2003:51). The assessment policy documents are generally seen as confusing and unrealistic, with no clear and practical guidelines (Swartz, 2001:3).

A Nexus search provided information of research done on assessment at technikons. Genis (1997), in exploring the implications of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) for the development of a qualification at technikon level, also found that higher education is faced with the challenge of new approaches to assessment and evaluation in a competence-based education and training system. Firstly, there is no particular assessment model that is suitable to use in the NQF. It is only stated that assessment should be integrative. Secondly, it has yet to be established how the competences should be assessed at the different levels. There is thus ample room for development.

In the process of developing a theoretical framework for continuous assessment at technikons, Gerber (2002) found that current learning and teaching practices at technikons are still focused on pen-and-paper examinations while the assessment practices favour knowledge reproduction. This happens despite the requirements for assessment stated in the policy documents. Friedrich-Nel (2003) developed an assessment model appropriate to the needs of higher education in Health Sciences and Technology. She developed the model because new trends in assessment demand that generic and applied competence, in addition to traditional knowledge, be assessed. She found that lecturers have to undergo mind changes about assessment in the Outcomes-based Education and Training (OBET) approach. They still focus on grades and traditional assessment practices applicable to content-based education and training. The focus should rather be on learning integrated with assessment, where a variety of assessment methods are used to achieve the stated outcomes.

No research on assessment has been conducted at technical colleges and no results exist to indicate the extent to which assessment policies are being implemented in technical colleges. This is an

area of concern because, currently (2006), technical colleges provide education from the general education and training level to the higher education and training level and have to apply a range of educational and assessment policies.

The new assessment policies pose many challenges for FET institutions. This is especially true for the Klerksdorp campus of Vuselela College. The implementation strategies are seldom clear because courses are randomly targeted for the implementation of learnerships and new assessment practices, resulting in a vague situation at the college. Owing to the lack of guidance, the lecturers are unsure of what is expected of them. They use the only resources they know to make sense of the changes and to cope with the situation. Consequently, the assessment policies are not always successfully implemented.

It is clear that the implementation of the new assessment policies is clouded with problems. In short, the lecturers at the Klerksdorp campus of Vuselela College are struggling to bring their assessment practices in line with the new assessment policies. They face many challenges in this respect, therefore it is necessary to investigate these challenges and clarify them so that solutions might be put forward.

1.3 THE AIM OF THE STUDY



This study attempted to investigate and provide answers to the following questions:

- How should FET educators view the new assessment paradigm as set out by the FET policy documents?
- What is the current situation of assessment practices at the Klerksdorp campus of Vuselela College?
- What are the gaps between the current realities of assessment practices at a technical college and the requirements stated in the policies?
- What are the problems that cause the disparity between policies and practices?
- How can these gaps be narrowed in order for assessment practices to be implemented effectively according to the policies?

Through this study, the researcher attempted to promote an awareness of the reality of assessment problems in order to stimulate discussions on possible solutions. Assessment procedures deserve thoughtful attention because they are fundamental to teaching and learning (Gravett, 1996).

1.4 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

The terminology used in this research is not always properly understood in the context for which it is intended. The aim of this section is not to defend a certain definition or to debate different views of concepts, but to define the concepts in the context in which they will be used in this study, as well as to clarify any misconceptions.

1.4.1 Outcomes-based Education (OBE)

An outcomes-based approach to education is at the heart of the new FET framework. Consequently it is appropriate to use the definition of OBE that is given by the Department of Education (1998a, no page number): "OBE is a learner-centred, result-orientated approach premised on the belief that all learners can learn and succeed." A result-orientated approach implies that teaching, assessment and learning should focus on the intended outcomes at the end of a learning programme and not on the "inputs" or subject matter. The Department of Education (no date) also encourages a holistic approach to learning where not only content but also the process of learning is important.

Both content and the learning process are contained in the outcomes to be achieved at the end of the process. Learners should be able to demonstrate these outcomes in order to be considered competent. However, they can only succeed if the learning programme enables them to meet the requirements of the defined outcomes completely. This means that educational practices should assist learners in mastering the content (knowledge, skills, values and attitudes) in order to demonstrate the outcomes.

From a broader perspective, it is clear that OBE is a means of clearly focusing on every aspect in an educational system and organising around what is essential for all learners to enable them to be successful at the end of their learning experience (Spady, 1994:1). From this point of view OBE is a comprehensive approach that focuses on the successful demonstrations of learning sought from each learner. Battersby (1997) supports such a view of OBE and adds that the learning outcomes approach means basing the programme and curriculum design, as well as the content and teaching, on an identification of the knowledge, skills and values needed by both learners and society.

It is clear that OBE focuses on the learner and the learning path on which the learner embarks towards the achievement of set outcomes. Every learner has the ability to learn and to achieve the outcomes to be attained. As such, educational practices should be employed to assist learners in the learning process and direct them towards achieving the outcomes.

1.4.2 Assessment

Assessment has been seen as a tool for addressing the need to measure individual intellectual capacity (Broadfoot in Torrance, 1995). From this view, a common definition of assessment is the process of sampling learners' work, making inferences from it and subsequently estimating worth (Tait & Godfrey, 1999:247). Although many writers agree that assessment is a process, they disagree on the simplicity of such a definition. Rather, they view assessment as a process of identifying, obtaining, gathering and interpreting information (DoE, 1998b; Boys in Edwards & Knight, 1995:25; Freeman & Lewis, 1998; Workshop on OBE, 1999; Pretorius, 1998:82). This information includes all the evidence of learner achievement and not just a sample. The assessment process is also viewed by some as a systematic process, which implies an ongoing and continuous process (Gerber, 2002:16).

Writers are divided about how information, obtained from assessment, should be used. Some state that the information should be interpreted to gain a better understanding of learner achievement in order to direct ongoing teaching and learning (DoE, 1998b). Others say that the information should be used to judge the extent of learner learning in an attempt to improve it (Boys in Edwards & Knight, 1995:25; Freeman & Lewis, 1998; Workshop on OBE, 1999; Pretorius, 1998:82). Gerber (2002:16) states that assessment should not only supply information about the achieved level of learner competence, but that relevant feedback should be provided to the learner on how his or her learning can be improved. These views imply far more than estimating worth. Pretorius (1998:82) goes even further by saying that the information should allow stakeholders to make professional judgements about learners' progress.

These definitions and views have one aspect in common, namely that assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. It is especially central to the learning process because it has to determine how much learning has taken place, and to what extent it has taken place (Freeman & Lewis, 1998). This means that assessment also helps to determine the value of learning. It is a

way of finding out what someone knows, understands and can do (Pahad, 1997) in order to promote and validate learning (Freysen & Bauer in Otaala & Opali, 2002:224).

Although people see assessment as something that has the summative purposes of producing a grade, mark or classification summing up one's achievements, assessment is more than just taking tests and year-end examinations. It is far from synonymous with summative assessment where marks are produced to sum up a learner's achievements.

In summary, the process of assessment involves the gathering of the work that a learner has done, also called the evidence of learner achievement. The work is then interpreted and the information is used to understand the achievement level of the learner in order to improve learning by providing feedback. Although assessment is central to the learning process, in the end, the achievement of the learner also has to be judged to decide whether the learner can progress to the next level of learning.

1.4.3 Outcomes-based assessment

The assessment that accompanies OBE is often referred to as outcomes-based assessment.

Outcomes-based assessment is also seen as a process, but the information about a learner's achievements is measured against outcomes (Pretorius, 1998:82) and interpreted in terms of competencies and standards (Freysen & Bauer in Otaala & Opali, 2002:206). It determines whether a learner is competent when measured against set criteria, standards and nationally agreed outcomes for a particular phase of learning (DoE, 1998b; Workshop on OBE, 1999). The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) views outcomes-based assessment as a structured process of gathering evidence and making judgements about an individual's performance in relation to registered national standard qualifications (DoE, no date).

Outcomes-based assessment is linked to various other approaches to assessment, such as criterion-referenced assessment and competence-based assessment. Competence-based assessment is also used to make objective judgements about learners' achievement or ability to demonstrate competence with respect to outcomes and prescribed standards (Workshop on OBE, 1999). However, Lubisi, Parker and Wedekind (1997:37) argue that outcomes-based assessment can only be viewed as a subset of criterion-referenced assessment when it is used in industrial training.

Continuous assessment (CASS) is a third type of assessment that is seen as an alternative approach to input-based assessment because of its relation to outcomes-based assessment (Lubisi *et al.*, 1997:20). SAQA has considered CASS as the best model to assess outcomes of learning. This model implies developmental and diagnostic assessment and is seen as a subset of formative assessment. Currently, CASS takes place in Grades 10 and 11 at school level (DoE, 1998c:47). The Department of Education also mentions “school-based continuous assessment” as a future assessment measure (DoE, 1998c:47). Where technical colleges and FET institutions are concerned, no mention is made of CASS.

Considering the different types of assessment that are linked to outcomes-based assessment, Killen (2000b:79) states that "when we consider methods of assessment ... we find that there are no methods unique to OBE and there are no methods that can never be used in OBE".

1.4.4 Alternative assessment

Many approaches to assessment are used interchangeably. In general, the tendency in assessment circles is towards alternative assessment. Alternative assessment is seen as the opposite of traditional assessment, although some feel that traditional assessment is not entirely separate and different from alternative assessment (Freysen & Bauer in Otaala & Opali, 2002:206).

A common view of alternative assessment is that it is an overarching term that includes performance-based assessment and authentic assessment (Torrance 1995:1; Freysen & Bauer in Otaala & Opali, 2002:206; Lyons, Kysilka & Pawlas, 1999; Anderson in Anderson & Speck, 1998). Authentic assessment describes a range of new approaches to assessment, including competence-based assessment. With authentic assessment the learner has to perform real-life tasks and there is no gap between the assessment task and what happens in the world of work (Sutherland & Peckham, 1998). Performance-based assessment supports this view of assessment because it stresses the fact that systematic observations have to be made about the completion of real-life tasks. Performance-based and authentic assessment is in sharp contrast to traditional, norm-referenced assessment.

Although Freysen and Bauer (in Otaala & Opali, 2002:206) agree with the above view, they state that alternative assessment should also include –

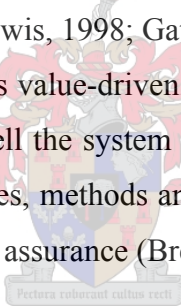
- holistic assessment;

- observation-based assessment;
- non-standardised assessment;
- innovative assessment;
- continuous assessment;
- standard-led assessment; and
- individualised assessment.

The reason for such a view is that these types of assessment are also considered to be opposite to traditional assessment.

1.4.5 Evaluation

The most common definition of evaluation states that evaluation is a process to generate information for judging and improving various components of a course. These components include syllabi, programmes, staff, educational processes, teaching strategies, resources, institutions and activities (Freeman & Lewis, 1998; Gathercoal, 1995; Matiru, Mwangi & Schlette, 1995:270). Here evaluation is viewed as value-driven, which means that it aims to determine the value of a system; how good or how well the system functions. Evaluation justifies conclusions about the success of learning programmes, methods and materials (Pahad, 1997). This definition of evaluation is closely related to quality assurance (Brennan & Shah, 2000).



In addition, evaluation also indicates how well learning has taken place in the sense that it aims to judge the collective effect of learning (Genis, 1997:56).

Some definitions emphasise the relevance of the components of a course to learners and the labour market alike (DoE, 1998c), while other definitions focus on the performance of such components (Freeman & Lewis, 1998). The fact remains that evaluation is an inclusive and holistic approach. It involves needs, values, measurement and criteria.

1.4.6 Evaluation vs assessment

Many people use assessment and evaluation interchangeably. In North America "assessment" often means what the British would call "evaluation". The British make a clear distinction between the two concepts while North Americans view evaluation and assessment as

synonymous. To them assessment can refer to the assessment of learner learning or to the evaluation of programmes (Harvey & Knight, 1996:136).

In South Africa assessment and evaluation are used synonymously. For instance, Luckett and Sutherland (2000) view assessment as providing judgement on education systems and feedback on the effectiveness of teaching and the extent to which learning outcomes have been achieved. Pahad (1997), on the other hand, states that evaluation interprets the findings of assessment to credit learners for the standards they have reached. In this study the British view will apply.

The writers who distinguish between assessment and evaluation state that evaluation incorporates assessment and measurement because of its inclusive nature (Gathercoal, 1995; Pahad, 1997). Assessment and evaluation are not separate educational practices. Although they are inseparable, guiding courses towards their ultimate aims, they have different meanings.

The aim of assessment is limited to determining the value of learning. The information of the assessment process can either be used in a formative way, to improve learner learning, or summatively, to determine the achieved level of learner competence. In essence, assessment refers to learners, the learning process and competencies (Friedrich-Nel, 2003). However, the learners are part of a system that enables them to learn. Institutions, programmes and staff support learners in the learning process. Evaluation broadly judges this collective effect of learning. Its objectives include activities at a variety of levels of institutional behaviours, such as determining the value of an educational system within which learner learning is taking place while also focusing on syllabi, programmes, staff and educational processes.

1.4.7 Further Education and Training

Generally, people are more familiar with the GET (General Education and Training) band and the HE (Higher Education) band than with the FET band. However, they wrongly think that GET comprises the entire school level, from Grade 1 to Grade 12, but the GET band includes Grade 1 to Grade 9 only. Grade 10 to Grade 12 fall within the FET band. Therefore it is important to clarify FET and FET institutions or providers.

According to the FET Act of 1998 (DoE, 1998b), FET encompasses all the learning and training programmes leading to the qualification from NQF levels two to four, as stated by the SAQA Act

of 1995. The level at which FET is presented fits in between the GET and the Higher Education and Training (HET) band. Institutions are called FET institutions when they are declared as FET institutions according to the Further Education and Training Act of 1998. Such institutions offer Grade 10 to Grade 12 and/or N1 to N3 learning programmes. Technical colleges and secondary schools are but only two of the various providers of FET (DoE, 1998a). In this study the focus will be on technical colleges as FET providers.

1.4.8 Learnerships

Learnerships are an integral part of the FET curriculum. Traditionally, apprenticeships were used to acquire skills, but they are being replaced by learnerships. Learnerships include the traditional apprenticeships but focus more on holistic learning (Gewer in Kraak & Young, 2001:14). This will be explained later.

There are different views on learnerships. Learnerships are seen as new vocational education and training programmes, methods of training, or structured learning processes providing the opportunity to obtain a qualification (Greenwood, 2003). The aim of a learnership is to allow learners to achieve a qualification that is recognised by the Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) and SAQA (Greenwood, 2003). It is clear from these views that a learnership is not a qualification but that it contributes to a qualification. In spite of this, the Department of Labour (DoL) views learnerships as nationally recognised qualifications (Department of Labour, 2003:2).

Learnerships have two components (Department of Labour, 2003:2). The one is a learning component where the learner engages in structured learning. The other component is a practical work experience or workplace component where on-site learning takes place in the form of mentoring or coaching. Learning has to include both components to ensure that the relevant education and training are combined appropriately in learning and assessment. This allows learners to use their skills practically.

The integration of education and training through a work-based route is the essence of a learnership (Greenwood, 2003). Another important facet of learnerships is the aim to fill gaps in learners' existing training and not to retrain them in skills and knowledge in which they are

already competent (Greenwood, 2003). It is for this reason that recognition of prior learning is so important, since it recognises what learners have already achieved.

In short, the learnership has to "facilitate the linkage between structured learning and work experience in order to obtain a registered qualification that signifies work readiness" (Greenwood, 2003:13). As a result, learnerships have to meet the requirements of the labour market and provide for lifelong learning. Because the emphasis of the programmes is on outcomes, learnerships do not only imply a work-based approach to learning, but also an outcomes-based approach.

1.5 RESEARCH APPROACH AND STRATEGY

The research was approached from an interpretive perspective in order to understand and interpret the meaning that lecturers at the technical college gave to the FET policy documents regarding assessment, the progress that they made to put the policies into practice and the obstacles that they experienced in implementing the new assessment policies.

The survey approach was used as a research strategy for this study. Surveys are common in assessment research. Most research mentioned in Section 1.2 used surveys as a research strategy. Although the survey approach has been linked to a more positivist meta-theory (Mouton, 2001) which lends itself to quantitative data, the survey was used in a qualitative manner in order to seek the perspectives of the lecturers regarding assessment policies. Denscombe (1998:27) states that "[t]here is nothing which inherently excludes the use of surveys with qualitative research." Based on Denscombe's (1998) analogy between social and geographical surveys, a reason for using the survey strategy was to obtain data for mapping the landscape of assessment. In doing so, beacons could be set out for lecturers at technical colleges so they can find their way through the obstacles they face when implementing assessment policies. In this sense, the research was illuminative. A second reason for using the survey strategy was to broaden the scope of the research in an attempt to understand the extent of the assessment issues.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

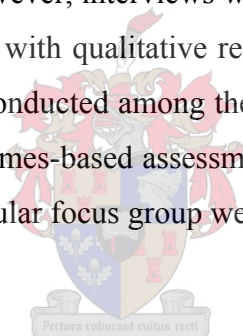
The appropriate methods used in a survey strategy are the questionnaire and interview. In this study the questionnaire and focus group interviews were used.

1.6.1 The questionnaire

A structured questionnaire was administered to the lecturers of a technical college. It was piloted before implementation to improve validity. The aim of the questionnaire was to obtain qualitative data about the extent to which the lecturers were familiar with the policies and the terminology used to describe the new assessment practices. The questionnaire was used to quantify the perceptions of the lecturers regarding the assessment policies. In addition to this, open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire to give the lecturers the opportunity to raise their own views on the issues that were raised in the questionnaire.

1.6.2 Focus group interviews

The limitations of surveys, such as the lack of depth and "surface level" analyses, have been rightly criticised (Mouton, 2001). However, interviews were used to add depth to the survey. The interview method has been associated with qualitative research and is also a valid method of the survey strategy. Focus groups were conducted among the lecturers to generate possible problems regarding the implementation of outcomes-based assessment as well as possible solutions to these problems. The respondents of a particular focus group were limited to a specific department of the college.



Any ambiguous, as well as original, information that arose from the questionnaire was pursued in greater depth in the interviews. The data of the questionnaire was compared with the data of the interviews to find similarities and differences between the two sets of data. This is called data triangulation. The data obtained from the questionnaire and interviews was also verified by means of triangulation by comparing it with the literature. Triangulation, where multiple research methods and techniques are used, is one of the best ways of improving the quality, reliability and validity of research (Denscombe, 1998).

No sampling technique was used with the questionnaire and it was handed out to 30 lecturers at the technical college. Non-probability sampling was used with the interviews, and more specifically purposive sampling, which is widely used in qualitative research. Purposive sampling is used when the researcher deliberately wants to select particular respondents because of their likelihood to produce the most valuable data. Therefore, the sampling is done with a purpose. As

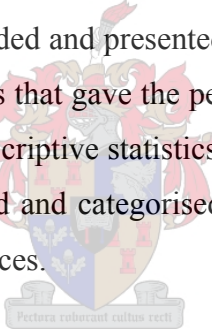
Denscombe (1998:15) explains, the sample is "hand-picked". In general, focus group respondents are not selected by means of systematic random sampling (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas & Robson, 2001:19). The interaction among respondents within a focus group is the crucial indicator of the composition of the focus group. Pre-existing groups within departments were used where lecturers had shared experiences and were familiar with each other.

1.6.3 Ethical statement

The data obtained from the questionnaires and interviews was handled with confidentiality and was only used for research purposes. The identity of the survey respondents was not revealed, in order to ensure their privacy.

1.6.4 Data analysis

The data from the questionnaires and interviews was analysed separately. Firstly, the data obtained from the questionnaires was coded and presented in the form of graphs where applicable. The statistics were limited to frequencies that gave the perspectives of the lecturers on assessment policies and issues. As a result, only descriptive statistics was used for interpretive purposes. The taped interviews were transcribed, coded and categorised according to the various aspects of the policies regarding new assessment practices.



It has already been mentioned that the aim of the survey was to generate qualitative data. This has certain implications for the analysis of the data. Qualitative analysis has come to be associated with words instead of numbers, in order to explain scenarios (Denscombe, 1998). Therefore the interpretation of the data from the questionnaire and interviews was explanatory and these explanations were based on non-numerical data. The process of qualitative analysis is also based on data reduction, which means that a voluminous amount of data is reduced to certain patterns, categories and themes (Creswell, 1994:153).

Coding is a fundamental part of data reduction. The coding procedure follows a systematic approach of analysing the interview data in order to organise and reduce it to manageable portions (Creswell, 1994:155). This is called analytic coding (Denscombe, 1998:210). Patterns and themes pertaining to the implementation of the policies, the lack of such an implementation and obstacles regarding the implementation of the policies were identified and coded. These coded

units were sorted into categories to help cluster the data into meaningful groups and to bring together all data pertaining to the abovementioned issues (Bloor *et al.*, 2001:59). Krueger (1994a:127) calls this procedure axial coding because the data is fractured and then reassembled in new ways.

Coding is followed by the process of interpreting the data in order to make sense of the data. The categories found were discussed against the backdrop of the reviewed literature and policies and interpreted in the broader context of the FET institution. The interpretation was built on the descriptive statements taken from the respondents' comments (Krueger, 1994a:127). The aim of the interpretation was to provide an understanding of the gaps between policies and practice and to present meaningful solutions. As Mouton (1996:161) puts it, "the interpretation will bring it all together".

1.6.5 Data presentation

The data obtained from the focus groups was used to construct interpretive narratives, using the participants' own language and perspectives regarding assessment. The aim was to capture both the words and the feelings of the participants. Creswell (1994:153) calls this process narrative report writing.

Many writers also suggest a spatial format to present information systematically because of its clarity and ability to show relationships among categories of information and informants (Creswell, 1994:153; Krueger, 1994a:127). This includes using schemas, matrices, network displays, diagrams and topologies. In this study, the data is presented in matrices to show the relationship of the data obtained from the various departments. Matrices were also used to list the problems that lecturers experienced with the implementation of assessment practices.

1.7 SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

The study was conducted at the Klerksdorp campus of Vuselela technical college, which provides Further Education and Training. This specific campus was chosen because it was selected as part of the pilot college initiative (DoE, 1998b). The pilot group of colleges acted as "experimental institutions" for systemic change. Only the one campus was targeted because of the qualitative

nature of the research. Six focus group interviews were conducted within three departments and each focus group consisted of four to six lecturers.

In an attempt to obtain valid information, care was taken to choose lecturers who had been closely involved in the initial stages of the implementation of the assessment policies. Although the study did not include an investigation into any of the assessment training courses that the lecturers might have attended or any other programmes related to assessment training, the knowledge that they had obtained from such courses was assessed.

At the time of the research, colleges in general were undergoing transition. Therefore the researcher could not account for any changes that might have occurred during the research period.

1.8 THE UNIT OF ANALYSIS

The unit of analysis for the study was 30 full-time lecturers of the three departments (business studies, engineering and the training centre) at the Klerksdorp campus of Vuselela College. Only the lecturers who had been trained as assessors were included.

1.9 CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

The following chapters adhere to the design that is set out in this chapter. Chapter 2 discusses the policies and literature on assessment practices. Chapter 3 describes the research that was conducted while Chapter 4 reports on the findings of the research that was undertaken at the college. In Chapter 5, concluding remarks are made regarding the results and the analysis of the data obtained in Chapter 4, and recommendations are made regarding the implementation of the assessment policies.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

2.1 INTRODUCTION

With the introduction of the new education system in South Africa much hope has been put on the further education and training (FET) system to address the human resources needs of the country, to redress past inequalities and to provide education to people who were previously deprived of quality education. Jansen (in Jansen & Christie, 1999:146) responds that OBE will fail for the very reason that the FET policy is being driven by political and economical imperatives. He states that there is no evidence that a change in the curriculum can lead to an improvement in the economy. Yet the Ministry's vision of a future FET system is still an open system that is responsive to the needs of individuals and the economy (DoE, 1998b:4).

In order to be responsive to the needs of individuals and the economy, FET institutions have to transform. The Further Education and Training Act (1998b), the Education White Paper on FET (1998a) and the National Strategy for FET (1999-2000) form the basis for developing a new nationally coordinated system and framework for further education (DoE, 2001).

According to the FET policies, the new framework has to be responsive to social and economic demands. Skilled people are needed to address the compelling human resources development needs (DoE, 2000). Unfortunately, in the past, skills acquisition has been neglected in favour of academic knowledge. However, FET has the task of integrating the education and training system (DoE, 1998a). The distinction between theory and practice, knowledge and skills and mental and manual labour has to be removed (Luckett & Sutherland, 2000). FET has to provide a balanced learning experience in order to play a strategic role in meeting government demands with respect to skills development and job creation (Gewer, 2001:4).

Concerning social demands, the new FET framework has to increase participation and promote equal access to education among the disadvantaged people who have been denied access to quality education in the past. The aim is to redress the past discriminatory practices (DoE, 2000) by shifting towards more open and flexible education and training systems where learner mobility and progression are enhanced (Luckett & Sutherland, 2000). In addition, the FET system has to provide opportunities for a learning society by encouraging lifelong learning within the National

Qualifications Framework (NQF). As such, lifelong learning is a crucial driving force for the transformation of the further education and training sector to create a learning society (DoE, 2001).

The new FET framework brought about a conceptual change from a syllabus-driven curriculum to a programme-based curriculum where programmes are diverse, relevant, accessible, responsive and of high quality (DoE, 1998a). These learning programmes also have to be flexible with multiple entry and exit points. They are underpinned by 12 critical and developmental outcomes, which include knowledge, skills and values that are transferable to work and learning contexts (DoE, 1998b:29).

Programmes offered by colleges need to be aligned with the NQF and be registered within the FET band (Gewe, 2001:6). The NQF supports outcomes-based education and the flexibility of delivery of education and training (DoE, 2000). Therefore the new FET curriculum, with its programmes, is seen as outcomes-based and learner-centred (Gewe, 2001:10). The NQF also promotes a modular approach expressed through unit standards and learnerships. Learnerships are an initiative of the Department of Labour and are legislated by the Skills Development Act (RSA, 1998) (see Section 1.4.8). The aim of learnerships is to support the integration of education and training and to provide in the need for skills development (RSA DoL, 1997).

The transformation of the FET curriculum also necessitates a change in assessment practices. Alternative assessment practices have to reflect the importance of the integration of knowledge and skills in learning programmes, lifelong learning, outcomes as stated in unit standards and the recognition of prior learning. The FET policies inform and direct the implementation of suitable assessment practices in the new FET curriculum. However, current assessment practices at colleges, for various reasons, do not always comply with the requirements stated in the policies. Some aspects of assessment, such as the assessment of outcomes, are successfully implemented while others, such as the recognition of prior learning, are neglected.

In Chapter 1 the following question has been posed, “What does the new assessment paradigm look like according to the FET policy documents?” This chapter aims to study the policies on assessment in order to answer this question. The literature is reviewed to obtain a clearer picture of the various aspects of assessment that has to change. Lastly, the role of the lecturer as assessor is discussed. The aim of this literature study is to provide a framework against which assessment

practices at colleges can be assessed. Against the backdrop of the literature, Chapter 4 focuses on the current situation of assessment practices at colleges in an attempt to determine its efficiency against the information from the literature. Ultimately, the aim is to identify the obstacles and gaps between policies and practice.

2.2 A REVIEW OF THE FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING POLICIES ON ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

The introduction of the new FET curriculum framework necessitated the drafting of new policies for education and assessment. These policies play a crucial role in the transformation of assessment practices because they challenge the traditional assessment paradigm (see Section 2.3.1). It is important to view assessment in the context of these policies in order for its implementation to be effective and successful.

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) also plays an important role in the transformation of assessment. SAQA (2001a:6) states that the assessment practices for all education and training qualifications registered with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) should be aligned with the assessment practices of Outcomes-based Education and Training (OBET). Therefore a statutory body has been established to oversee the development and implementation of the NQF on which all qualifications are to be specified, approved and registered in an outcomes-based format. It implies that assessment practices should focus on outputs and outcomes (DoE, 2000). Even workplace and vocational education have to employ outcomes-based and learner-centred assessment approaches.

The White Paper and Green Paper on FET are two important sources of the new framework for assessment. The Green Paper (DoE, 1998b:46) agrees with SAQA that learners have to be assessed in relation to the learning outcomes of the unit standard in the new approach to education. Here outcomes-based assessment is referred to as criterion-referenced assessment. SAQA also associates outcomes-based assessment with criterion-referenced assessment, where assessment of the individual is done against the standards that are stated in terms of the specific outcomes (SAQA, 2001b:24). Criterion-referenced assessment is in contrast with norm-referenced assessment. Norm-referenced assessment, which has dominated the traditional assessment paradigm (see Section 2.3.1), implies that every learner is evaluated against the performance of other learners, while the benchmark for criterion-referenced assessment is the

performance criterion for a specific outcome (Genis, 1997:55). In a norm-based system a normal curve is applied to evaluate assessment results.

Both the Green Paper and the White Paper on FET refer to two objectives of assessment. The first objective of assessment is to provide reliable and valid information regarding learner achievement and competency, to ensure the legitimacy of qualifications (DoE, 1998b:46; DoE, 1998a). Secondly, assessment has to be developmental and formative, to provide guidance to learners through appropriate assessment and feedback. This is in line with what is prescribed by the NQF and SAQA, namely that continuous formative assessment has to be implemented to guide learners and inform them on their progress.

The FET Act (No. 97 of 1998) requires that learning be assessed against NQF standards (RSA, 1998). Therefore the NQF principles for good assessment have to inform assessment policies and procedures by supporting recognition of prior learning (RPL); access, progression, legitimacy and credibility; flexibility, guidance of learners and integrated assessment (SAQA, 2001b:10). Integrated assessment needs to be incorporated to ensure that the purpose of the qualifications is achieved. It implies that a range of formative and summative assessments are used, as well as a variety of assessment methods and instruments, such as portfolios, simulations, workplace assessment, and written and oral examinations. A variety of assessment approaches and methods enhance flexibility, permitted that the approaches are fair, reliable, valid and practical.



Both SAQA (2001b:12) and the Department of Education (DoE, 1998a) emphasise the importance of recognition of prior learning (RPL) where learners are given credit for what they already know and can do, regardless of the manner in which the knowledge and skills have been acquired. Learners are assessed to determine the evidence of learning that they have already acquired. Therefore assessment policies should contain procedures for RPL (see Section 2.3.7). In doing so, learners are allowed to build up credits and transfer credits from one learning situation to another.

In commenting on the policies for FET, Gewer (2001) states that one means of equipping learners to engage with demands of the world of work is through learnerships. Learnerships are legislated by the Skills Development Act and are an initiative of the Department of Labour (RSA DoL, 1997). Each learnership is registered with a Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) and its qualification registered on the NQF by SAQA (Greenwood, 2003).

Learnerships focus in the assessment process on both observable performance and inferences over a suitable period of time within both the college and the workplace setting. The assessment process allows for the integration of knowledge and skills, theory and practice. Where possible, assessment should make use of naturally occurring performances because this provides authentic evidence of learner skills (SAQA, 2001b:57).

Concerning the involvement of FET institutions in the process of implementing new assessment practices, the White Paper (DoE, 1998a) refers to institutional autonomy and responsibility. Assessment is primarily the responsibility of the institution within a framework of approved curricula, outcomes and quality assurance. Institutions have to ensure the validity and reliability of assessment practices through external monitoring and moderation.

The Department of Education recognises that the transformation of assessment will be a long and difficult process. Therefore the policies on FET conclude that public examinations will be maintained at N3-levels at colleges until the new curriculum, learning programmes and assessment policies are in place (DoE, 1998a). Although all N-level examinations are set by the national DoE, they will be marked internally by college staff, using a national marking scheme (DoE, 1998b). However, currently (2006) it is aim of the Department of Education (2001) to incorporate classroom-based assessment as well as externally-based assessment, to support the development of outcomes as competencies and learner-centred education.



In summary, it is clear from the policies that assessment practices have to be outcomes-based, learner-centred, criterion-referenced, integrative, both formative and summative, continuous and that they will have to include various assessment techniques and methods. Assessment also forms an integral part of RPL and learnerships, where knowledge is integrated with skills. There is still a traditional component of assessment present at colleges while the implementation of the FET policies is in progress.

The different aspects of assessment, mentioned in the previous paragraph, are addressed in more detail in the following section against the backdrop of the related literature. The aim is to clarify these aspects in an attempt to understand the role that they play in the practical implementation of new assessment processes. Although self-assessment is not mentioned in the policies, it will also be discussed because of its relevance to lifelong learning.

2.3 ASPECTS OF ASSESSMENT ADDRESSED IN THE FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING POLICIES

When educators consult educational policies, more often than not they misinterpret certain concepts. A possible reason might be the fact that educators are not properly trained to understand the policies. Other reasons might be that educators feel that it is not their duty to understand the policies or that they are against transformation and do not attempt to understand the policies. It is also not always clear how assessment practices have to change to adhere to the requirements of the policies. This section looks at the different views of assessment concepts from the literature and provides a clear understanding of how the policies on assessment should be interpreted.

2.3.1 Traditional assessment

Traditional assessment, in the form of tests and examinations, has dominated assessment systems for a long time. For some lecturers it is the only assessment paradigm that they know and with which they are familiar.

Traditionally, assessment follows teaching and indicates whether learners have passed or failed (Boud, 1995:36). It amplifies the separation of knowledge and skills because of its bias towards knowledge. Therefore the traditional assessment paradigm is based primarily on cognitive learning and compares one learner with another using some form of test or examination, which takes place at the end of a semester or year (DoE, 1998b). The traditional role of assessment was not questioned in the past and existing assessment practices have only been refined. Consequently, assessment has seldom come under scrutiny in view of change.

Traditional assessment in itself is not wrong but it will have to change in order to fit into the new OBE system. The FET policies are not in favour of traditional assessment because traditional assessment *on its own* has no place in the new FET system (DoE, 1998a). Although it is seen as one of many assessment approaches, traditional assessment is not regarded as compatible with the principles of outcomes-based education (Lubisi *et al.*, 1997:18).

Innovations, such as problem-based learning and portfolio-based assessment, have challenged traditional assessment practices internationally (Hager & Butler, 1996:367). In addition, Boud (2000:155) is of the opinion that traditional assessment hinders the development of lifelong

learners and that “existing assessment practices are perhaps the greatest influence inhibiting moves towards a learning society”. Employers, on the other hand, are dissatisfied with traditional assessment procedures because these procedures concentrate on a narrow range of competencies compared to those that learners are likely to encounter in the workplace.

However, traditional assessment should not be discarded altogether. It should rather be viewed as part of a broader view of assessment. Certain aspects of traditional assessment, such as marks from examinations to indicate the progress of a learner, can still be used, but other aspects, such as examining only samples of work of a syllabus, are not acceptable any longer. In the new curriculum, all the outcomes have to be assessed and learners are considered competent or not yet competent with regard to a unit standard (DoE, 1998b).

Summative assessment (examinations) and norm-referenced assessment (grading and averaging) are considered as two forms of traditional assessment. These forms of traditional assessment can no longer be seen as the only and decisive forms of assessment. Both forms can only be used when they are part of a more integrative approach to assessment (Van Rooyen, 2001:25). Lecturers will have to use their discretion in deciding when summative assessment can take place or when a learner needs support in the learning process through formative assessment.

Although the assessment of knowledge is very important, the application of this knowledge in a practical context is even more important. Thus the assessment practices that were traditionally used for knowledge, input-based education and training systems are still useful in outcomes-based assessment, but cannot be the sole method of assessment (Van Rooyen, 2001:21).

In conclusion, although traditional assessment practices, on their own, are no longer appropriate for the new education and FET system, they still have a place in the new assessment paradigm and can be used in conjunction with alternative assessment practices. An alternative assessment paradigm has been suggested by SAQA, which is summarised by Sutherland and Peckham (1998:100). Table 2.1 provides a summary of the paradigm shift that is needed in assessment (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Sutherland & Peckham, 1998; Anderson in Anderson & Speck, 1998). These two columns should be seen as the two ends of a continuum rather than a dichotomy. SAQA suggests that there should be a better balance between traditional assessment and alternative assessment in OBE.

Table 2.1: Paradigm shift in assessment

TRADITIONAL ASSESSMENT	ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT
Norm-referenced	Criterion-referenced
Assessment in educational institutions	Assessment in multiple locations
Assessment of content	Assessment of outcomes and learning process
Assessment of individuals	Assessment of both individuals and groups
Learner is passive/ reactive	Learner is proactive
Teacher as marker/ assessor	Teacher in multifaceted role
Teacher as sole authority	Teacher in negotiation
Summative assessment	Formative and summative assessment
Course assessment	Module/ unit assessment
Assessment as objective, value-free and neutral	Assessment as subjective and value-laden
Assessment limited to one educational stage	Assessment towards lifelong learning
Assessment judgemental in nature	Assessment developmental in nature
Reliance on examinations	Variety of methods
Decontextualised assessments	Authentic assessment practices

2.3.2 Outcomes-based assessment

The main shift in assessment is from the traditional assessment paradigm towards outcomes-based assessment. The shift to outcomes-based assessment needs to be managed by reviewing, adapting and changing the current situation as prescribed by SAQA. As stated before, SAQA is not promoting an entirely different assessment structure. Rather, the aim is to blend the old with the new (Nelson & Futter, 1998:153).

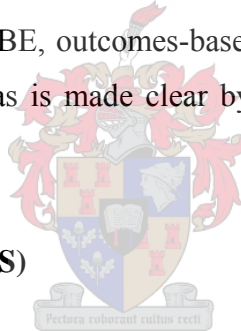
The shift to outcomes-based assessment is a trend followed in many countries. This trend includes a tendency towards competence-based assessment and criterion-referenced assessment (Broadfoot, 1999:118) (see Section 2.3.5). The shift in assessment from assessing inputs to assessing outputs has been striking in vocational education and training (Boud, 2000:153).

Against the backdrop of OBE, outcomes-based assessment is at the heart of teaching and learning practices at colleges (DoE, 1998b:47). Each unit standard clearly states the specific outcomes to be assessed as well as the assessment criteria. This enables learners to know exactly what skills they are expected to demonstrate and how their knowledge and skills will be assessed. Their learning activities are designed accordingly to assist them in mastering the required outcomes to the required assessment criteria (Pretorius, 1998:83). Ambler (2001:13) explains that the ultimate purpose of outcomes-based assessment is to judge the present abilities of individuals and to provide information and guidance about their progress.

OBE also supports a holistic approach to learning, which means that the outcomes that are assessed do not only contain knowledge, but also include skills, attitudes and values. Therefore assessment instruments should really measure what they set out to measure (validity) and be authentic (Battersby, 1997).

Although many educators narrowly think that continuous assessment (CASS) is the only assessment method associated with OBE, outcomes-based assessment is also linked to formative and criterion-referenced assessment, as is made clear by the Green Paper (DoE, 1998b:46) and SAQA (SAQA, 2001b:24).

2.3.3 Continuous assessment (CASS)



Although CASS is not the only type of assessment associated with OBE, it is considered the best model to assess outcomes of learning throughout the system because it enables improvements to be made in the learning and teaching process (DoE, 1998a). SAQA (2001b) also considers CASS as a prerequisite for OBE and an alternative approach to input-based assessment. As a result, the assessment for the Further Education and Training Certificate (FETC) will incorporate CASS. It is thus understandable why many educators view CASS as the sole assessment method of OBE (Lubisi *et al.*, 1997:20).

The main aim of CASS is to monitor a learner's progress throughout a learning process so that decisions can be made about ways to facilitate further learning (Pretorius, 1998:83). This implies that not all assessment endeavours should be used for grading purposes. CASS is closely related to formative assessment, where assessment is seen as a tool for learning, although CASS lends itself to both formative and summative purposes. Biggs (1999:143), using the term *progressive*

assessment instead of CASS, adds that progressive assessment can also be used for summative purposes by using the results taken during the learning process, for grading purposes.

Feedback is an integral part of CASS. The feedback from each assessment is used to inform further teaching and to improve learning (Luckett & Sutherland, 2000). This confirms the developmental and diagnostic purposes of CASS. The ongoing nature of CASS provides learners with opportunities to demonstrate that they have succeeded in achieving the outcomes (Nelson & Futter, 1998:153). It is important to note that CASS does not imply continual assessment (Luckett & Sutherland, 2000). While CASS is a cyclical process using feedback to inform the construction of the next assessment process, continual assessment is a repeated process, where each assessment process is treated independently and learners receive limited feedback (Sutherland & Peckham, 1998:102). Assessing continually only results in unnecessary work and weekly tests that lecturers have to set and mark (Lubisi *et al.*, 1997:20).

It is clear that a wrong understanding of CASS will only increase the administrative loads of lecturers. In many institutions CASS only means assessing continuously. The range of assessment tasks remains constant, while the number of tasks multiply significantly (Jansen, in Jansen & Christie, 1999). CASS should rather be viewed as a more progressive and holistic way of assessing learners by incorporating a diverse range of assessment methods.

CASS necessitates a focus on orals, practical work and achievements not readily accessible through written tests. Portfolios, projects, observation sheets, journals, as well as self- and peer assessment also support continuous, diagnostic assessment (Pretorius, 1998:83).

2.3.4 Formative and summative assessment

CASS is strongly associated with formative assessment, and to a lesser extent, summative assessment. Although formative and summative assessment are viewed as opposite approaches to assessment, they can be used in conjunction with each other. In fact, in OBE both formative and summative assessment are suggested.

Summative assessment is the more familiar concept because it was an integral part of the previous assessment system and supports the traditional paradigm of assessment. Summative assessment is synonymous with certification and making judgements about achievements because it usually

takes place at the end of a learning programme and is similar to year-end examinations (Pahad, 1997; Boud, 2000:155).

Because of the strong link between summative assessment and the traditional assessment paradigm, the misconception exists among educators that summative assessment is unsuitable in new education systems. However, SAQA (2001b:26) emphasises the use of summative assessment when a learner has completed a programme. The main purpose of summative assessment is to ensure that learners are competent to obtain a level and can thus progress to the next level (Workshop on OBE, 1999) but it is not to be used on its own. Formative assessment is a more appropriate approach to addressing the challenges of the FET policies.

Formative assessment refers to assessment that takes place during the process of learning and teaching with the purpose of aiding learning (Boud, 2000:155) and supporting the learner in the learning process (SAQA, 2001b:26). This is done by directing learners in the learning process. Formative assessment promotes learning by helping learners to obtain knowledge of what they know, understand and can do. More importantly, it tells learners how well they are progressing in the learning process. It informs the next step of a learner's development and encourages learners to reflect on what they do (Huddleston & Unwin, 1997:11).

Formative assessment is at the heart of learning. Consequently, it fulfils an important role in the initiatives of assessment towards promoting learning (Boud, 2000:155). Formative assessment is seen as the foundation for lifelong learning and self-directed learning (Knight, 2002:154). It is also a vehicle to support the Learning Paradigm. The article by Barr and Tagg (1995) on the Learning Paradigm has emphasised learner-centred teaching and assessment. Many other educators have also argued for the pivotal role of assessment in the learning process and the promotion of learning through assessment (Gerber, 2002:13; Torrance, 1995:33; Lauvas, Havnes & Raaheim, 2000:95). SAQA (2001b) also supports an assessment system that can be used as a tool for learning.

Formative assessment is linked to continuous assessment because learning is assessed continuously throughout the learning process to determine whether learning has taken place (Barr & Tagg, 1995:18). It should be noted that formative assessment does not imply the culmination of test marks throughout the term into a final term mark. The aim of formative assessment goes

beyond the addition of marks in that it is developmental and aids learners in the learning process (Boud, 2000:158).

Summative assessment can be successfully combined with formative assessment to influence learning. Results initially collected for formative assessment can be used for summative assessment, thus avoiding repetition (Ambler, 2001:13). However, Lockett and Sutherland (2000) warn that the different purposes of assessment should not be confused because if they are, assessment will neglect its educational role. They provide an example where a lecturer sets a test for formative purposes and then, because of a lack of time, decides to use the marks for summative purposes. Not only is such a practice unfair to the learners but it undermines the developmental nature of formative assessment. They also disagree with lecturers who assume that they can add up a series of formative results and use it to make summative judgements.

Summative assessment should rather be administered on a continuous basis throughout the learning experience by assessing at the end of each unit or outcome (Gerber, 2002:21). This notion of summative assessment does not confine assessment to a written examination that only assesses a sample of learning within a limited time (Van Rooyen, 2001:25).

However, the critics are even against such a view of summative assessment. Although Boud (2000:156) agrees that both formative and summative assessment should be included in the assessment process, with a strong focus on feedback, he remains firm that summative assessment cannot assist learners in the learning process. It drives out learning while aiming to measure it. It remains imperative that assessment designers evaluate materials to ensure that both formative and summative assessment provide “stepping-stones along the learning path” (Ambler, 2001:13). Both formative and summative assessment need to be designed, communicated and performed in a way that verifies the judgement awarded to the learning outcomes in a unit standard.

2.3.5 Criterion- and norm-referenced assessment

It has been mentioned that outcomes-based assessment is linked to criterion-referenced assessment. The reason for this is that criterion-referenced assessment is a central feature of OBE (Kraak, in Jansen & Christie, 1999:40). The prominence of learning outcomes, which is an important feature of outcomes-based assessment, implies criterion-referenced assessment. Some view outcomes-based assessment as a subset of criterion-referenced assessment (Lubisi *et al.*,

1997:37) while others view it as a precise form of criterion-referenced assessment (Knight, 1995:169). However, criterion-referenced assessment plays an important part in the new FET system.

The word “criterion” refers to the domain of outcomes against which the assessment scores are referenced (Ambler, 2001:14). Therefore assessment designs begin with the stated learning outcomes for a particular unit of learning. These learning outcomes are then transformed into pre-specific criteria, which are given to learners before they undertake assessment tasks so that they know what is expected of them (Freysen & Bauer in Otaala & Opali, 2002:217). A criterion-referenced approach to assessment, as required by SAQA, necessitates that one states explicitly the criteria to all stakeholders concerned, not just to learners, of what knowledge and skills are to be assessed (Luckett & Sutherland, 2000; DoE, 1998b). This enhances the transparency and fairness of assessment practices, which are two of the NQF principles for assessment. A learner's performance is then judged against these pre-specific criteria (Luckett & Sutherland, 2000). The criterion-referenced model reflects whether or not a learner possesses the knowledge and skills defined by the specific criteria (Torrance, 1995:79; McCallum, Gipps, McAlister & Brown, in Torrance, 1995:79).

Criterion-referenced assessment is not without flaws. Firstly, all assessment is subjective and criterion-referenced assessment is not above subjectivity. The fact that professional judgements form the basis for criterion-referenced assessment raises the issue, such as the subjectivity of such judgements, among others. Ambler (2001:14) comments on this matter in the following way:

Unless assessments can be contextually related, the advantage in separating performance into mastery/non-mastery disappears. Interpretation can reduce assessment to the level of trivia or to a checklist of unrelated and incoherent sets of skills which may have little relevance to instruction. It is this aspect that led to a great deal of criticism of the application of competency-based assessment to vocational education and training.

Secondly, it is believed that all learners that are pre-selected for criterion-referenced courses will be able to pass because OBE is based on the belief that all individuals can learn and succeed. Kraak (in Jansen & Christie, 1999:46) criticises OBE because it assumes that all learners behave in the same predictable way. This means that the display of competency can be mastered and measured with precision. Competency models attempt to describe competence in precise,

transparent and observable terms, to predict the specific outcomes of effective action. However, all human knowledge cannot be categorised with such precision.

Competence-based assessment centres on criterion-referenced assessment and is also strongly linked to outcomes-based assessment (Knight, 1995:170; Lubisi *et al.*, 1997:21) because competencies are specified in terms of outcomes. However, these outcomes are more related to jobs and tasks than knowledge (Gerber, 2002:22). Although the main concern of competence-based assessment is outcomes, the learning processes are also assessed. This enhances an integrated view of learning and assessment, with an emphasis on formative development and personal responsibility.

It is clear that in measuring outcomes, as in criterion-referenced and competence-based assessment, it is more sensible to interpret the level of the group's performance in terms of the difficulty of the task attempted, instead of interpreting the task's difficulty in terms of the performance of the group (Luckett & Sutherland, 2000). The latter interpretation refers to norm-referenced assessment. Norm-referenced assessment is a more familiar concept than criterion-referenced assessment because it is commonly used with traditional assessment practices. Norm-referenced assessment compares the performance amongst individuals within a group or specified level for which there is some typical average, which is the norm for that specified population (Ambler, 2001:13). It deals with rankings and relative performances among learners. Norms do not necessarily represent a desirable standard and controversy surrounds the effects that comparative and competitive assessment can have on learners.

Criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessment are not mutually exclusive (Luckett & Sutherland, 2000). It is possible to combine their strong points in the form of criteria-graded assessment, where criteria are stipulated for each particular assessment task in a grade (Ambler, 2001:14). However, the Department of Education (DoE, 1998b) remains adamant that criterion-referenced assessment be preferred to norm-referenced assessment.

2.3.6 Integrated assessment

Although the main shift in the traditional assessment paradigm is towards outcomes-based assessment, integrated assessment plays a crucial role in the new FET framework to integrate education and training.

In the mid-1990s there was a need for an integrated system for education and training in order to remove the distinction between theory and practice, knowledge and skills (Luckett & Sutherland, 2000). On the one hand some saw such a system as one where academic education differs from vocational training but through the NQF bridges are built between them by means of the portability of qualifications. On the other hand some felt that education and training should be merged. This meant that education and training should be identical. Yet both parties agreed that learning can best be assessed by using an outcomes-based approach to the curriculum (Deacon & Parker, in Jansen & Christie, 1999:60).

Both the White Paper and the Green Paper on FET constantly emphasise the integration of education and training in a coherent system. The distinction between knowledge and skills and academic and vocational aims has to be removed (Luckett & Sutherland, 2000). In the world of work, theory and practice is not separated and it should not be different in educational programmes. Therefore FET institutions, which still view courses as providing the theory component and the workplace as providing the practical component of a qualification, are under pressure to include skills and practices into their academic programmes (Otter, in Edwards & Knight, 1995:46; Lubisi *et al.*, 1997:43).

In the past, learning in the workplace has seldom been assessed or accredited. Many institutions also assess only knowledge and subject matter because it is easier to assess than practical skills (Edwards & Knight, 1995:10; Freysen & Bauer, 2002:206). This has created weaknesses in the existing vocational qualifications because of the bias of assessment methods towards the testing of knowledge rather than skills or competencies (Boys, in Edwards & Knight, 1995:25).

Consequently, FET institutions are pushed in a direction where theory and practice are seen more holistically (DeZure, 2000:300). As a result, learnerships have been introduced in South Africa to integrate theory and practice and a large component of the assessment in learnerships is work-based (Gewer, 2001:14). This means that the learner is assessed while performing the necessary tasks as required by the qualification. The other component of the assessment includes assignments and written assessment in a portfolio. The “final examination” is not the norm. Rather, learnerships focus on the assessment of applied competencies (Gewer, 2001) and ultimately, the achievement of applied competencies that is the concern of NQF-registered unit standards and qualifications (Van Rooyen, 2001:28).

In order to achieve applied competencies, the learner now receives structured learning, as well as on-site learning in the form of mentoring or coaching. Assessment is integrated to allow for the integration of knowledge and skills (Hager & Butler, 1996:368). In this context, integrated assessment practices are more closely aligned with the procedures that learners will be expected to carry out in the world of work (Hager & Butler, 1996:367), such as simulations and real-life situations (Sutherland & Peckham, 1998:102). These tasks are more practical, realistic and challenging than traditional paper-and-pen tests. They address the demand of assessing higher-order skills and competencies such as problem-solving and critical thinking (Torrance, 1995:2). It gives a learner an opportunity to apply his or her knowledge and skills.

Integrated assessment has also come to imply the assessment of both specific and critical outcomes in a unit standard (SAQA, 2001b:55). According to the Green Paper on FET (DoE, 1998b:103), critical outcomes have a broad focus on the capacity to apply knowledge, skills and attitudes in an integrated way because they are included in all qualifications. On the other hand, specific outcomes have a more fundamental nature and focus on demonstrated knowledge, skills and attitudes in contextual way.

Knowledge, skills and attitudes have to be assessed while assessment tasks are done in the context of application (Luckett & Sutherland, 2000). The aim is to develop learners holistically and to give them the opportunity to demonstrate certain life skills to enhance their learning as well as their private lives. Therefore the assessment of knowledge is still very important and norm-referenced and summative assessment will still be used, but as part of a more integrated approach to assessment (SAQA, 2001b:23).

Another interpretation of integrated assessment is the use of a combination of assessment methods and instruments for assessing outcomes (Ambler, 2001:18). The aim is to integrate the old and the new assessment methods, with not too much emphasis on one method (Sutherland & Peckham, 1998:102). Assessment methods will be discussed in a later section.

Authentic assessment is an important part of an integrated assessment system. Authentic assessment concerns the measurement of complex performances and higher-order thinking skills in real-life situations, on the job or in highly practical simulations (Engelbrecht, 1997). It attempts to bridge the gap between assessment tasks and tasks in the world of work by making use of

naturally occurring performance (Van Rooyen, 2001:23; Knight, 1999:102; Hager & Butler, 1996:367).

There are powerful arguments in favour of authentic assessment. The tendency towards authentic assessment is increasingly a characteristic feature of education systems in the developed world and authentic assessment appears more and more in educational literature (Broadfoot, 1995:9; Lauvas *et al.*, 2000:94). Wolf (in Torrance, 1995:93) states that the assessment of performance in real-life situations still offers the most natural form of evidence of competencies. The United Kingdom (UK) has embraced this approach in their further education where there are fewer traditional academic courses and more vocational courses (Wolf, in Torrance, 1995:88). The National Certificate of Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) uses authentic assessment in a performance-based form.

A different model to the measurement model for assessment has also emerged to support the integration of education and training. It is called the judgemental model (See Hager and Butler (1996) for a detailed discussion on the scientific measurement model and judgemental model of educational assessment.). This model addresses the problem of assessing workplace performance. It provides an understanding of what is involved in the practice of a profession or occupation, which is applied to prepare learners for their profession. The judgemental model can operate on two levels. Firstly, performances are conducted and assessed in a contrived setting (Hager & Butler, 1996:370). Learners are required to operate at a level that integrates several knowledge areas and skills, but it is done in simulated contexts. The second level is seen as closer to the ideal. This level is the highest level of integration of knowledge, skills and personal qualities. Assessment is conducted in the real working environment.

Despite the prominence of, and growing interest in integrated assessment, there seems to be a growing abundance of theory-based assessments that have little relevance to the practical skills that are expected of learners in the workplace. A reason might be that the constraints on contextual assessment are real and challenging (Ambler, 2001:13). However, the focus should remain on the long-term value of integrated assessment to the learner as well as the employer. Ambler's question (2001:13) should constantly be asked, "Are we approaching assessments as a quick means to an end, the end itself, or as an ongoing step in a national learning and skills development process?"

2.3.7 Assessment and the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

As with integrated assessment, the recognition of prior learning and the assessment thereof has become an important part of the new education and training framework for Further Education. All over the world, educators and trainers have to make better use of existing resources and “do more with less”. In an attempt to address this issue, some of the long-established ideas about education and training have been challenged through the introduction of recognition or accreditation of prior learning (Simosko, 1996). The aim of RPL is to save the time that is wasted on teaching people knowledge they have previously acquired.

In North America the term *prior learning assessment* (PLA) is used, in Britain *accreditation of prior achievement* (APA), *assessment of prior experiential learning* (APEL) or *accreditation of prior learning* (APL) is used, while the term *recognition of prior learning* (RPL) is used in Australia. In South Africa, and in this study, the latter term is used.

Despite the various terms that are used for RPL, they describe the same concept. Through a systematic and valid assessment process an individual's skills and knowledge, which have been attained experientially, are formally recognised and credited, regardless of how, when or why they were obtained (Simosko, 1996). RPL is built on the premise that people learn throughout their entire lives and that much of this informal and uncertificated learning can be equated with the skills and knowledge expected of learners who have completed more traditional and formal learning programmes.

Intrinsic to the concept of RPL is the notion that people can be assessed although they have not attended any particular learning or training programme. The focus is on what an individual has learnt and not on the time, place or method of learning, or even the motivation of the learner. Therefore RPL enables people of all ages, backgrounds and attitudes to receive formal recognition for skills and knowledge they already possess. It forces educators to acknowledge that any experience, whether formal or informal, may provide a powerful learning opportunity for an individual and that with proper assessment, the outcomes of that learning experience can be formally recognised and credited. It is clear that, among others, the aim of RPL is to cultivate attitudes towards lifelong learning and to provide greater access to education and training.

The NQF recognises that learning takes place in a variety of settings. It follows the trend of a number of colleges in the United Kingdom (UK) where RPL has been implemented in a wide range of vocational programmes (Simosko, 1996).

RPL plays an important role in learnerships. The aim is to fill gaps in people's existing training and not to retrain people in skills and knowledge in which they are already competent (Greenwood, 2003). Assessment and portfolios are used to determine what learners have already achieved. The process of assessment formally recognises learners' competence by determining their current knowledge and skills level (Greenwood, 2003). This process includes identifying what an individual knows and can do by assessing the individual against specific standard requirements and crediting the learner in the appropriate manner (Simosko, 1996).

There is a misconception that the assessment of RPL is something totally different from the assessment of learning. SAQA, however, clarifies this misconception by stating that there is no fundamental difference between assessing previous knowledge and current knowledge (SAQA, 2001b:44). The assessment of prior learning is also subjected to the NQF principles for assessment and the use of a variety of assessment methods. The learner seeking credits for previously acquired skills and knowledge still has to comply with all the requirements as stated in the unit standard. The only difference is that such a learner will not need to go through a learning programme. Crediting previous knowledge and skills is not dependent on time spent in a learning programme, but rather on the learner's readiness to demonstrate competence. A learner who feels ready can present him- or herself for assessment and submit the necessary evidence as required by the learning outcomes and assessment criteria (Van Rooyen, 2001:26).

There are many people who are sceptical about RPL and believe that it is an easy way towards obtaining qualifications (Simosko, 1996). Issues related to admission, assessment, staff development and organisational structures are also raised. RPL is but one of the challenges now facing further education colleges as they begin to embark on RPL as part of their normal provision. Yet, the benefits of RPL are numerous. It reduces the duplication of learning, opens access to formal recognition of knowledge and skills and assists in upgrading the skills of workers (Simosko, 1996).

2.3.8 Self-assessment

In addition to integrated assessment and the assessment of RPL, self-assessment is an important vehicle for realising the aims of the Department of Education for FET. Self-assessment is becoming more and more prominent in the assessment of learners to promote lifelong learning, which is emphasised in both the White Paper and the Green Paper on FET. Even in designing learnerships, provision has to be made for lifelong learning (Greenwood, 2003).

Lifelong learning holds certain implications for assessment. Learners need to learn to assess themselves in order to grow a culture of lifelong learning (Nelson & Futter, 1998:153). In doing so, they can determine how much they have learned and what knowledge and skills they still need to master. This emphasises self-assessment and the development of critical self-reflection (Sutherland & Peckham, 1998:102; Lubisi *et al.*, 1997:33). Learners become autonomous by taking responsibility for their own learning and monitoring their own progress.

Lifelong learning also necessitates a shift to sustainable assessment. Boud (2000:151) associates sustainable assessment with a learning society and lifelong learning. He maintains that sustainable assessment assists in meeting the current learning needs of learners as well as in developing learners' ability to meet their future learning needs. In fact, it sustains a person's learning throughout his or her life. This can only happen if assessment practices include authentic activities outside the classroom. Therefore the purpose of assessment has to shift from eliminating learners from the learning process to motivating them to engage in lifelong learning.

Self-assessment and sustainable assessment imply a shift in the control of assessment. Assessment is no longer the "exclusive domain" of assessors (Boud, 2000:151). They have to share the responsibility of assessment with the learners. Consequently, learners who have been passive and often oppressed by the assessment process can become active participants in the assessment process (McDowell & Sambell, 1999:111).

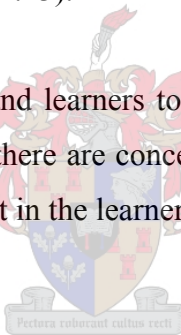
The predominant approach to the assessment of learners' work is still lecturer-led while the involvement of learners in assessment decisions is fairly uncommon (Boud, 1995:36; Fallows & Chandramohan, 2001:229). A proposed reason is that self-assessment is seen as separate from or incompatible with the more traditional forms of assessment (Tarras, 2001:606). Furthermore, lecturers could feel that in self-assessment they have to step back and give learners full autonomy

over their assessment. Boud (1995) disagrees with this view. He states that self-assessment cannot take place entirely independently and needs to be supplemented by peer and lecturer assessment. He goes further: "[S]elf-assessment in isolation is probably not a fruitful path to follow, but when moderated and used as an element of collaborative assessment, its potential is great" (Boud, 1995:37).

Self-assessment needs to be introduced cautiously because learners are not used to this form of assessment. Their concepts regarding assessment are dominated by years of summative assessment practices at school (Knight, 1995:36). Therefore many learners resist self-assessment because it is unfamiliar to them and they are not always able to assess themselves adequately. Others see self-assessment as the imposition of the lecturer's job upon them (Sutherland & Peckham, 1998:100). Lecturers, on the other hand, are concerned about security issues of self-assessment. They feel uneasy when they are not assessing the learners. Despite these potential problems, some are of the opinion that the results from self-assessment can be included in the final decisions of assessors (Van Rooyen, 2001:23).

It will take time to convince lecturers and learners to think of self-assessment as an ethical and reliable assessment practice. Although there are concerns regarding self-assessment, it should be included in assessment practices to invest in the learners' futures.

2.3.9 Various assessment methods



The incorporation of a variety of assessment methods in the assessment of learners is becoming increasingly important. With a greater diversity in the learner population, as a result of greater access to education, it is imperative to incorporate a wide range of assessment methods to accommodate the various ways in which learners learn (Maki, 2001:30). There is also a demand for assessing multiple achievements, assessing skills in an integrated way (Ambler, 2001:18) and assessing skills and values in addition to knowledge (DoE, 1998a).

The result is that tests and examinations, although seen as tried and tested methods, are no longer appropriate to assess skills, values and personal competencies (Otter, in Edwards & Knight, 1995:63). Best practices in assessment require that assessors move away from using only one approach, method or instrument to assess learners (Van Rooyen, 2001:26). Ambler (2001:16)

adds that “assessment instruments, formal or informal, can serve many purposes but rarely does a well-constructed assessment instrument serve multiple purposes equally well”.

The key principle of using assessment methods and instruments is that they need to be appropriate to the outcomes being assessed. Appropriate assessment methods have to reflect the measurement of the applied competence (Greenwood, 2003). It is critical to select the right combination of methods so that assessment measures what it sets out to measure.

A range of assessment methods and instruments are available to assessors, such as observation, written and oral questioning, portfolios, written assignments, tests, examinations, demonstrations, projects, case studies and simulations. However, the support for tests and examinations prevails. Many lecturers continue to use tests and examinations as their main means of assessment. A reason is that they do not have a thorough understanding of what each method measures and how each relates to the expressed outcomes and expected levels of learner performance. In addition, they seldom have the necessary knowledge of the various assessment methods and therefore need further training (Maki, 2001:29).

Another reason for using tests and examinations for assessing learners is that the alternative methods are not always easy to implement. For example, portfolios are popular because they assess relevant competencies at the appropriate levels. However, the use of portfolios is not always an effective means of assessment because it does present some methodological challenges (Maki, 2001:30). Firstly, choices have to be made regarding what should be collected, by whom and when, making it a subjective form of assessment. Secondly, a great deal of material has to be collected and evaluated. Thirdly, learners struggle with the requirements for compiling a portfolio (Nelson & Futter, 1998:158). In order for portfolio assessment to be successful, it has to be viewed differently from tests and examinations.

Concerning assessment in the workplace, there is still an argument for using paper-based assessment because it requires less time and support than practical or workplace assessment. Although practical assessment is time-consuming the question remains, “What is the real cost of failing to assess real skills?” (Ambler, 2001:16). Still, many lecturers do not put thought into the choice of an assessment method. What is alarming is that these single methods reflect their educational priorities and what they teach (Lubisi *et al.*, 1997:20).

It is clear that using appropriate assessment methods is a challenge that institutions face when they decide to commit to assessing diverse learner learning (Maki, 2001:30).

2.4 THE ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF ASSESSORS

Concurrent with the changes in assessment, the role of the lecturer has to change from being a lecturer who assesses to being an assessor. The lecturer, as the assessor, plays an important role in all the assessment practices described in the previous section. This in itself creates many challenges for lecturers at colleges. Traditionally, it was only expected of lecturers to set and conduct tests at the end of a chapter or learning unit while examinations were administered externally. Lecturers seldom thought about the purposes of assessment or how it can assist in the learning process. The main aim of assessment was to produce marks to add to the records of learners. They approached assessment in a haphazard and very individualistic way (Gathercoal, 1995).

By assuming the role of an assessor, lecturers are challenged to see assessment in a different light, as an integral part of teaching and learning and not just as a final form of evaluation. OBET differs fundamentally from the previous knowledge- and input-based system (RSA, 2001:7). Consequently, learning is no longer something that is done to the learner, but something in which the learner is actively involved. The role of the assessor has to change "from being a gate-keeper, using assessment to prevent learners from developing further, to supportive guide who has the success of the learner at heart" (SAQA, 2001a:7). The question is: Who is an assessor?

An assessor is any learning facilitator, such as a lecturer or trainer, who has traditionally administered assessment in addition to facilitating learning. The Department of Education expects all facilitators of learning to engage in assessment because assessment is an integral part of learning facilitation (DoE, 2001; RSA, 2001:5). Although it may seem logical that a learning facilitator should also be the assessor, it is not a requirement for assessors to be learning facilitators (RSA, 2001:14). This means that an assessor who is not a practitioner can also be registered (RSA, 2001:14). SAQA supports the view that an assessor is any practitioner who is responsible for the assessment of the achievement of learning outcomes (SAQA, 2001a:45).

2.4.1 The registration of an assessor

Although it seems that any person can become an assessor, he or she has to be registered as an assessor. Only a registered assessor is allowed to assess a standard or qualification. As such, “an assessor is a person registered by the relevant Education and Training Body in accordance with the criteria established by the Standards Generating Body (SGB) to measure the achievement of specified NQF standards and qualifications” (RSA, 2001:14). Not everybody that contributes to assessment needs to register as an assessor but a registered assessor has to coordinate and manage the assessment process and take responsibility for non-assessors.

To register, assessors have to meet the criteria for assessors as set out by the Standards Generating Body (SGB) and qualify against the generic assessor standard called *Plan and conduct assessment of learning outcomes* (Van Rooyen, 2001:24). This standard explains exactly what is required of assessors in terms of assessment of learning outcomes. Assessors are required to demonstrate competence against this standard and provide evidence of the necessary expertise, knowledge and experience in assessment (SAQA, 2001a:6). The competencies can be achieved through assessor training, recognition of experience as a practitioner assessor (RPL) or on the job training (Van Rooyen, 2001:24). In addition, assessors have to prove that they are able to assess a particular unit standard or qualification (SAQA, 2001a:45). Only then can a person be registered as an assessor with the relevant Education and Training Quality Assurance (ETQA) body (SAQA, 2001a:6).

The registration of assessors will ensure that all assessors are subject matter experts in the subjects that they assess, that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to make judgements regarding the specified NQF-registered standards and have met a consistent set of criteria as agreed by SAQA (Ambler, 2001:12). The rationale for such a registration is to ensure the credibility of summative assessments and a consistency of practices in relation to the assessment of NQF standards and qualifications (RSA, 2001:6).

2.4.2 The roles of an assessor

The set of criteria that each assessor has to meet is incorporated in the requirements, roles and procedures for assessors that are specified in the various policy documents.

According to SAQA (2001a:45) the roles of an assessor are to:

- demonstrate a broad understanding of outcomes-based assessment and the NQF;
- know what is expected of learners and the standards they have to meet;
- inform learners about the requirements of the unit standard or qualification so that they are clear about what is expected of them;
- support and guide the learner in the collection of evidence;
- help the learner plan for the assessment;
- understand what forms of assessment are appropriate to the field and NQF-level being assessed;
- ensure that the relationship between learner and assessor and the environment during assessment is conducive to assessment;
- consider factors, such as language, when assessing;
- conduct the assessment and provide feedback;
- meet all the documentation and recording requirements;
- forward the results to the relevant ETQA for certification;
- comply with the ETQA's moderation requirements;
- review the assessment process and make improvements where necessary; and
- get feedback on how the assessment has been conducted.

It is clear that these roles are more comprehensive than what lecturers are used to. Assessors have to be more involved in the assessment of learners by guiding and supporting them throughout the assessment process. They also have to do a pre-assessment evaluation of learners' readiness to be assessed. If a learner is not ready to be assessed, he or she should be referred back for extra training or another form of learning (Van Rooyen, 2001:23). The assessor should not expose a learner to assessment if the learner is not fully prepared for it.

SAQA also expects of assessors to know more than just the subject matter that they have to assess. A sound knowledge of OBE, the NQF and the outcomes stated in the unit standards is a necessity. In addition, assessors have to make careful decisions about the assessment methods and factors, such as language and racial issues, when they plan and design assessment activities. Another aspect of assessment that is novel to a new assessor is the reflection and feedback on the assessment process in order to make improvements. This is an important part of the assessment process because it ensures the quality of assessment.

In order to fulfil these roles, assessors need to acquire certain skills and expertise. SAQA (2001a:45) requires three areas of expertise that assessors need in order to be effective.

Firstly, an effective assessor has good interpersonal skills to communicate effectively with learners. It is necessary to keep learners informed about the assessment process and what is expected of them. Effective communication also ensures integrity and confidentiality on the part of the assessor. Secondly, assessors have to be subject matter experts. They must either have the same qualification or a similar qualification, preferably one level higher, than the one being assessed. Thirdly, an assessor has to be an assessment expert. He or she has to be proficient in the process of assessment and be able to use the assessment guide in the unit standard.

The skills of an assessor are critical to the achievement of quality outcomes. Ambler (2001:12) adds that an assessor needs to have the relevant planning, administrative and management skills in order to measure competence in an innovative manner. Assessors are seen as quality control managers for learning and development. The learning and assessment methodology has to suit the language, culture and educational level of each learner. Considering OBE, an assessor has to be able to plan and conduct assessment according to the learning outcomes. The results should be consistent and reliable, without bias, while the reporting should be efficient and secure. Documentation, which indicates whether a learner is competent or not yet competent, should be valid and authentic. Assessors should ensure ongoing improvements by performing self-evaluations when designing and carrying out assessments.

The requirements that are expected of assessors can be intimidating to the ordinary lecturer in the classroom. Changing assessment practices already constitutes a fundamental shift in lecturers' educational assumptions and values (Otter in Edwards & Knight, 1995:60). With their longstanding history of traditional approaches to assessment, a paradigm shift, although necessary, might prove to be difficult.

2.4.3 The current situation of assessors at colleges

Lecturers who function in the capacity of assessors as stated in the previous section, are few. For many, these requirements for assessors are an ideal that is not easily attainable. There are various reasons for this scenario.

Lecturers have various orientations towards assessment practices. A study done by Samuelowicz and Bain (2002:173) found that the orientations of lecturers range from an emphasis on the assessment of knowledge production to the assessment of knowledge construction, while their beliefs either emphasise a teacher-centred or a learner-centred approach. Assessment practices are linked to the perceived knowledge that learners should acquire and the familiarity that lecturers have towards certain assessment approaches. In South Africa, lecturers are more inclined towards traditional assessment, in which they were educated, and will, consequently, concentrate on procedures of content-based education (Pretorius, 1998:v). In general, lecturers use their own paradigm to make sense of the changes in assessment (Torrance, 1995:51).

The theoretical models differ from what happens at the practical level of the classroom where teachers work with their own theories (Malcolm, in Jansen & Christie, 1999:78). A critique, according to Jansen (in Jansen & Christie, 1999), is that teachers are worried because they do not know how to implement the changes in the curriculum. Teachers are unsure about how they should bring the policy into practice in their classes. The complex language of OBE does not help in this regard and makes it even further inaccessible for most teachers to give meaning to these policies through their classroom practices (Jansen, in Jansen & Christie, 1999).

It is against this background that lecturers often have negative attitudes towards changes. From their perspective, the changes in assessment interfere with real teaching (McCallum *et al.*, 1995:63) and the new proposed assessment approaches are not suitable to their classroom contexts (Pretorius, 1998:v). For many lecturers it seems easier to stick with the straightforward assessment tasks (Otter, in Edwards & Knight, 1995:60) and, therefore they will rather continue to support the known, tried and tested assessment systems (Edwards & Knight, 1995:10).

Lecturers also have negative attitudes towards their new roles as assessors. These negative attitudes usually originate from feelings of uneasiness. Lecturers are experts in their field of study and not necessarily in the area of assessment (De la Harpe & Radloff, 2000:173). With limited assessment expertise and a sense of inadequacy, lecturers have to face the demands of administering alternative assessment, keeping records and setting fair procedures for assessment (DeZure, 2000:309; Otter, in Edwards & Knight, 1995:56). This raises concerns whether the training that lecturers received and the skills that they obtained are appropriate and relevant (Torrance, 1995:150; Pretorius, 1998:v).

If these skills do not meet the standards as set by SAQA, lecturers will have to undergo extensive training. Edwards & Knight (1995:15) state that sufficient staff development, training and support are crucial for the implementation of alternative assessment. Despite the advantage of training (providing lecturers with an opportunity to become effective assessors), even training creates breeding grounds for resistance to change because of the perceived amount of energy and time required to learn new skills and roles (Pretorius, 1998:v). For many lecturers the area of assessment is just too vast a field to cover. However, this is not the biggest obstacle that lecturers identify when implementing new assessment practices and assuming new roles.

Lecturers complain most frequently about the lack of resources (Sutherland & Peckham, 1998:101). Staff at educational institutions are already overloaded with academic work and with limited staff resources an increase in the assessment workload will prove to be challenging (Sutherland & Peckham, 1998:98). Some assessment approaches, such as authentic assessment, are time-consuming because it takes a considerable effort to plan assessment tasks (Knight, 1999:102), and more often than not such assessment approaches also require feedback (Kandlbinder, 2002).

Research done among staff in the UK who are responsible for National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) assessment confirms these problems (Wolf in Torrance, 1995:92). New assessment practices increase the volume of assessment, the marking loads and demands on academic staff time. Because of limited resources, lecturers would rather assess for accreditation at the expense of assessment for learning (Boud, 1995:37). However, to ensure that skilled people emerge from the assessment process, we cannot compromise the design because there is a “traditional” concern about time and assessor resource constraints (Ambler, 2001:13).

The current situation of lecturers towards the implementation of new assessment practices and their new roles as assessors may seem bleak and insurmountable. However, it is important to recognise these obstacles in order to arrive at practical solutions and support the lecturers in this challenging but exciting field of assessment.

2.5 CONCLUSION

It is apparent that assessment plays an important role in the endeavours of the Department of Education to transform the South African educational system to OBE. Therefore a shift to

outcomes-based assessment is necessary. The FET policies are also clear about how assessment practices have to change and what role assessment should play in the new FET system. Assessment has to become more formative, where the learner is assisted in the learning process, and criterion-referenced, where the outcomes are assessed against pre-specified criteria. In addition, CASS, which implies formative and developmental assessment, has to be implemented because it has been recommended by SAQA as the best form of assessment to be used in OBE.

A shift towards integrative assessment is also required. According to the FET policies, the need for skills development can only be addressed when education and training are integrated. It means that knowledge and skills have to be assessed in an integrated manner, using authentic assessment practices. Skills that have been obtained in the workplace have to be assessed and accredited, while knowledge and skills that have been obtained in non-formal settings have to be recognised and accredited as well.

Besides skills development, lifelong learning is considered an important aim of OBE. In becoming lifelong learners, learners have to learn how to assess themselves and take responsibility for their learning. Self-assessment and sustainable assessment are critical to developing lifelong learners, since these aspects enhances skills that learners need to learn throughout their lives.

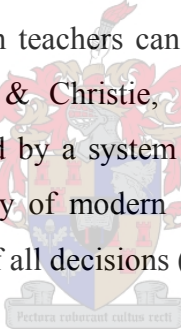
It is clear that traditional assessment *on its own*, in the form of summative and norm-referenced assessment, is not suitable for the new education system and FET system. However, the Department of Education and the reviewed literature warn that traditional assessment should not be discarded altogether. Assessment practices have to be balanced and appropriate for the situation at hand. Summative assessment has to be used in moderation with formative assessment while a range of assessment methods and techniques are called for.

According to Malcolm (in Jansen & Christie, 1999:78) “OBE is first and foremost a management system, an approach to managing curriculum control, curriculum design, assessment and reporting, teachers and accountability, change and innovation”. It is this management system that has proven to be problematic where OBE has been implemented. In one of his critiques on OBE, Jansen (Jansen & Christie, 1999:153) states that for OBE to succeed a number of factors need to be in place. Educators have to be trained, new forms of assessment have to be implemented and additional time is needed for managing this complex process, to name but a few. It seems that the

prerequisites for changing the curriculum to OBE are not in place and that adequate account has not been taken of the resources status of schools and classrooms in SA.

The international experience with OBE suggests that assessment changes only moderately with an outcomes-based innovation. Given their complexity, outcomes-based performance tasks probably cannot be used very frequently by classroom teachers, thus they will probably not totally replace more traditional assessments. It will exacerbate the administrative burden of change at the very time that rationalisation further limits the human resources capacity for managing such change (Jansen, in Jansen & Christie, 1999:153). In the final analysis, the question is not whether OBE should be implemented, but rather whether sufficient support and encouragement are being given to teachers by all interest groups in education (Rasool, in Jansen & Christie, 1999:176).

The problem is that teachers have limited participation where the implementation of the policies on assessment is concerned. The majority of teachers simply do not have access to information on OBE or understand OBE in instances where such information may be available. No process, systematic and ongoing, exists in which teachers can conceptualise and make sense of OBE as curriculum policy (Jansen, in Jansen & Christie, 1999:150). Teacher participation in the curriculum process can only be effected by a system of representative participation. Given the numbers of teachers and the complexity of modern society, it is unrealistic or impractical for everyone to be involved in the making of all decisions (Rasool, in Jansen & Christie, 1999:176).



Although the policies are clear on how assessment should change, they are not prescriptive about such transformation processes. The aim of this chapter has been to give an account of what the policies state regarding the transformation of assessment and to shed light on the different assessment approaches and how they should be interpreted. The following chapter will look at the research approach and methodology that have been used to determine how, and to what extent, the Klerksdorp campus of the Vuselela College has interpreted the FET policies on assessment and has incorporated these policies in the classroom.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the FET policies on assessment practices were reviewed in an attempt to establish the direction that FET institutions have to take to implement assessment practices as prescribed by these policies.

This chapter outlines the research design. “A research design is a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:29). A need for design and planning is most urgent when errors and mistakes have to be eliminated (Mouton, 1996:108). This chapter also discusses the research paradigm, strategy, data collection methods and the data analysis process of this study.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGMS

Any research is imbedded in a paradigm, a point of departure from which the research is approached. As Denzin and Lincoln (1998:26) put it, “The net that contains the researcher’s epistemological, ontological and methodological premises may be termed a paradigm or interpretive framework, a basic set of beliefs that guides action.” They believe that all research operates from an interpretive paradigm, which is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied. It includes positivism, post-positivism, constructivism, feminism, ethnicity, Marxism and cultural research. Each interpretive paradigm places specific demands on the researcher in terms of the questions to be asked and the interpretations to be made (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:26).

This view of a single interpretive paradigm is not commonly accepted. Most social scientists distinguish between two main paradigms, namely positivism and post-positivism (Mouton, 1996:47; Denscombe, 1998: 239; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:124). There are researchers who find post-positivism to be too general and refer to it as the interpretive paradigm. The question that separates these two paradigms is the extent, if at all, to which the natural and social worlds are similar or comparable (Mouton, 1996:47).

Those who agree that there are sufficient similarities between the social and natural worlds are known as ontological naturalists or positivists (Denscombe, 1998:239). Positivism is seen as an approach to social research that seeks to apply the natural science model of research to investigations of the social world. It is based on the assumption that there are patterns and regularities in the social world, just as there are in the natural world. Consequently, the aim of social research is to discover the patterns and regularities of the social world by using scientific methods that are effective in the natural sciences.

Those who disagree with the positivists are classified as anti-positivists or post-positivists (Mouton, 1996:47). The post-positivists believe that the differences between the social world and the natural world are so fundamental that there can be no basis for using the same methods and techniques in both worlds. This paradigm includes the constructivists, interpretivists and phenomenologists. Realists, who are also seen as post-positivists, believe that, although there are fundamental differences between the social and natural worlds, there are also certain similarities, which justify the adoption of similar approaches (Mouton, 1996:47).

These different paradigms have significant consequences for the practical conduct of research, as well as for the interpretation of findings. Although the boundaries between these paradigms seem well-defined, it must be kept in mind that many of the principles of natural science could be borrowed and used in social science. They are useful because they make us aware of the multi-dimensionality of social research.

This study is approached from an interpretivist paradigm because the knowledge will not be obtained through experimental manipulation of human subjects but through the understanding of subjects by means of conversation. Reality and knowledge are socially constructed and can have multiple meanings (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:27). Therefore the researcher seeks the perspectives of the participants and aims to construct holistic views of knowledge. In addition, interpretive research methods try to describe and interpret people's feelings and experiences in human terms and in rich detail rather than through quantification and measurement (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:124). Methodologically, interpretivism is mostly associated with natural settings where the investigator is the primary data gatherer and interpreter, using qualitative methods.

3.3 QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

Research methodologies can be classified as either quantitative or qualitative. A quantitative methodology is based on the positivist paradigm while a qualitative methodology is associated with more diverse methods employed in the social sciences. Although qualitative research can also be drawn to a more narrowly defined positivist conception of human experience and its analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:5), this view is not common.

Qualitative research is characterised by a multi-method approach and is drawn to the interpretive paradigm (Silverman, 2000:113). It incorporates triangulation, observation and focus groups to assist qualitative researchers in seeking a better understanding of complex situations. Because of its multi-method approach, qualitative research can be many things at the same time (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:6). However, it is committed to a naturalistic perspective and interpretive understanding of human experience in terms of their own definition of their world. The focus is on an insider perspective rather than on an outsider perspective, emphasising the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied (Mouton, 1996:130).

The qualitative approach is also characterised by a holistic, inductive and generative nature (Silverman, 2000:113). Qualitative methods construct new ways of understanding and consequently emphasise the socially constructed nature of reality. Researchers use qualitative methods because they are more concerned with the process of construction than simply with outcomes or products. In fact, the word “qualitative” implies an emphasis on processes and meanings that are not measured in terms of quantity.

Qualitative research is generally viewed as opposite to quantitative research. The main differences between qualitative and quantitative research are found in the data collection and data analysis processes. Quantitative research relies on measurement to compare and analyse different variables while qualitative research uses qualifying words or descriptions to record aspects of the world (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000:37).

Consequently, there has been a rivalry between quantitative and qualitative research. The tendency exists to consider numerical data as more reliable and easier to utilise than qualitative data, because statistical techniques are used (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000:98). The fact that qualitative research is stronger on descriptive narratives than on statistical tables raises the

question of reliability because it is not always clear how researchers categorise the qualitative data. However, qualitative researchers justify the lack of reliability by claiming that qualitative concepts have strong construct validity because of their roots in the world of the subjects. (Reliability and validity are discussed in Section 3.5.1.)

Many researchers support qualitative research. Silverman (2000:8) states that there are areas of social reality that cannot be measured by statistics and therefore quantitative studies may be inappropriate to use. In these areas purely qualitative research is often the most adequate method of investigation because it can provide a deeper understanding of social phenomena that would be obtained from purely quantitative data. (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000:98). There are social scientists who believe that science is inconceivable without non-numerical data to assist in interpreting numerical data and that a disregard of qualitative information would lead to an incomplete description of social reality (Silverman, 2000:8).

It is important to adopt a balanced view regarding the strengths and limitations of quantitative and qualitative research. Whether data is quantitative or qualitative is very important since it determines how data can be utilised (Silverman, 2000:8). One needs to realise that qualitative and quantitative research is not mutually exclusive. It is even possible to combine qualitative and quantitative techniques (Mouton, 1996:38). Increasingly, researchers are recognising the benefits of combining qualitative and quantitative procedures, resulting in greater methodological mixes that strengthen the research design (Krueger, 1994a:29). There are researchers who use basic descriptive statistics to analyse qualitative data. It is even possible to count certain kinds of data in a qualitative investigation, such as participants' reactions or emotional reactions. Therefore it is possible to use a survey strategy, usually quantitative in nature, with a multi-method approach, which is a feature of qualitative methodology.

3.4 SURVEY RESEARCH

The principal aim in choosing a research strategy is to achieve the best procedure for dealing with the research topic and for answering the research questions. The survey is the most frequently used mode of observation in the social sciences because of its various attractive and useful characteristics (Babbie, 1992:261).

Survey studies are usually quantitative in nature and aim to provide a broad overview of a representative sample of a large population (Mouton, 2001:152). Therefore surveys provide wide and inclusive coverage of the individuals that are under investigation. Sample surveys are very rarely conducted for the purpose of describing a particular sample. Rather, they are conducted for the purpose of understanding the larger population from which the sample was initially selected (Babbie, 1990:41).

Another useful characteristic of surveys is the fact that they may be used for descriptive, explanatory or exploratory purposes (Silverman, 2000:5). Many surveys have the aim of making explanatory statements about the population while surveys that are used for exploration purposes act as a search device. With descriptions the researcher is not necessarily concerned with why the observed distribution exists but merely with what that distribution of certain traits or attributes is.

Surveys are also suitable for small-scale qualitative research. Because quantitative and qualitative methods are compatible, a qualitative approach can draw upon the approaches, methods and techniques of surveys (Mouton, 1996:39; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:5). Creswell (1994:174) supports the view that there are successful combinations of survey research and qualitative procedures. This combination was used in this study.

The survey strategy is suitable for this study because with surveys individual people are the main units of analysis (Babbie, 1992:262). It is important to determine what the position of the lecturers is towards assessment policies and practices. Survey research is often used to ask people an analysis or interpretation of certain aspects (Babbie, 1992:146). Such data can be collected by means of experiments, field research and other modes of observation. The interview is an alternative method of collecting survey data. Sometimes questions are asked by an interviewer and sometimes they are written down and given to respondents for completion (as in self-administered questionnaires) (Babbie, 1992:146). Instead of asking respondents to read questionnaires and enter their own answers, researchers ask the questions orally and record respondents' answers (Silverman, 2000:5).

Another reason for employing a survey strategy is its flexibility to incorporate a whole range of methods to increase a broader view of the study (Denscombe, 1998:6). An increasing number of researchers are using multiple methods of data collection in order to triangulate the data.

3.4.1 Triangulation

Triangulation is strongly associated with a multi-method approach (Mouton, 1996:156; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:73). In general, triangulation suggests the “collection of data in many ways and from diverse sources by using a variety of methods and techniques of data collection in a single study” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:73). The purpose of combining methods is, in part, for complementary reasons. The underlying assumption is that various methods complement each other because of their different biases and strengths. As a result, their respective shortcomings can be balanced out (Creswell, 1994:174), thus strengthening the reliability and validity of the methods.

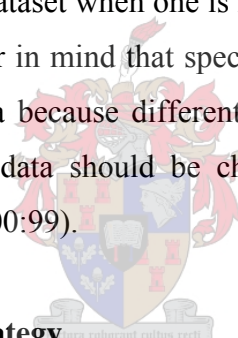
In this sense, triangulation has come to mean convergence of results among researchers (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:198). However, in the disorderly world of empirical research, independent measures never converge fully and therefore Denscombe (1998:84) views triangulation rather as the corroboration of findings by comparing the data produced by different research methods. The alternative methods allow the findings from one method to be checked against the findings from another. Denzin and Lincoln (1998:5) view triangulation as an alternative to corroboration rather than as a tool or strategy of corroboration. Bloor *et al.* (2001:72) add that multiple methods cannot validate but only deepen our understanding of a topic.

The combination of multiple methods provides different perspectives on a subject (Babbie, 1990:63), which adds breadth and depth to a study. That is why a multi-method approach is inherently the focus of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:5). Terre Blanche & Durrheim (1999:128) call this type of triangulation methodological triangulation. It refers to the distinctive perspective that each research method provides. One can obtain a better understanding of a phenomenon by approaching it from different angles. Here, triangulation attempts to secure an in-depth understanding of phenomena.

In this study an in-depth understanding of the assessment practices at the college was obtained by triangulating the data of the questionnaire, the data of the focus groups and the information on assessment obtained from the policies and related literature. Each of these gave a specific perspective that was necessary to understand the situation regarding the implementation of the new assessment practices at the college.

It is clear that triangulation has numerous advantages. A benefit of triangulation is that it involves more data and can therefore improve the quality of the research (Denscombe, 1998:84). Mouton (1996:39) adds that the use of multiple methods and techniques are actually one of the best ways to improve the quality of research. Different perspectives and the opportunity to corroborate findings can also enhance the validity and reliability of data (Mouton, 1996:156). Triangulation provides some confidence that the meaning of the data is consistent across methods and that the findings are not too closely related to a particular method. Silverman (2000:98) questions the use of triangulation to improve the reliability of a single method because it is not always clear whether methods follow or complement each other.

From a qualitative perspective, multiple methods are attractive because they seem to provide a fuller picture. However, they can often be a mistaken hope. Silverman (2000:99) explains that “this whole picture is an illusion that can lead to fragmentary research based on an under-analysed dataset when researchers are having difficulties in analysing one set of data”. The reason for this is the temptation to move to another dataset when one is having difficulties in analysing one set of data. However, it is important to bear in mind that specific types of data collection are designed for collection of certain types of data because different methods respond to different questions (Mouton, 1996:156). Methods and data should be chosen that will give one an account of structure and meaning (Silverman, 2000:99).



3.4.2 Advantages of the survey strategy

The survey strategy has numerous advantages. These advantages can be summarised as follows:

- Surveys can be used to describe the characteristics of large populations and as a result large samples become feasible to investigate (Babbie, 1992:278).
- Surveys are flexible in that many questions may be asked on a given topic (Babbie, 1992:278).
- With survey research the information is obtained directly from the participants and because the research is focused on the data rather than on theory, the research is purposeful and structured (Denscombe, 1998:27).
- Survey research covers the breadth of a study and the coverage of a sample is inclusive (Denscombe, 1998:27).
- Surveys are as easily associated with large-scale research, where many people or events are studied, as with small-scale qualitative research (Denscombe, 1998:27).

- There is the potential to generalise to a large population if an appropriate sampling design has been implemented (Mouton, 2001:153).
- Surveys concentrate on research at a specific point in time (Denscombe, 1998:6).

3.4.3 Disadvantages of the survey strategy

As with all methods of observation, a full awareness of the inherent or probable weaknesses of survey research can partially help to resolve them. The disadvantages of survey research include the following:

- As a result of the requirement for standardisation, designing questions that will be at least minimally appropriate to all respondents may disregard the questions that are most appropriate to many respondents (Babbie, 1992:278).
- Survey research can seldom deal with the context of social life (Babbie, 1992:278).
- In a sense, surveys are inflexible. If one has found new avenues to explore one cannot change the survey instrument (Babbie, 1992:278).
- Survey research is generally weak on validity and strong on reliability (Babbie, 1992:278).
- With some survey studies there is a lack of detail and depth of the data (Denscombe, 1998:28) as well as insider perspective (Mouton, 2001:153).
- The emphasis on wide and inclusive coverage limits the degree to which the researcher can check on the accuracy or honesty of the responses. It is therefore weak on validity but strong on reliability (Denscombe, 1998:28; Mouton, 2001:153). A solution is to employ a number of different research methods in studying a given topic.
- Survey data are sometimes very sample and context specific (Mouton, 2001:153).

It is clear that a survey is an advantageous strategy. Yet, its advantages prove to be disadvantages at the same time. It is flexible in the sense that it can be used for both quantitative and qualitative research but it favours quantitative research because it struggles to deal with the context of social life. The research instruments that are used during surveys are not equipped to accommodate the dynamics of social life. Surveys also cover the breadth of a study at the expense of a more in-depth and detailed study. Surveys are very sample and context specific but, on the other hand, the coverage of a sample is inclusive and the results of a survey can be generalised to a larger population.

One should be careful when deciding to use the survey strategy. It should be appropriate to the study that is being undertaken and should complement and direct such a study. Considering the advantages and disadvantages, the survey strategy was found to be appropriate for this particular study. The advantages of the survey strategy have been used to the advantage of this study. Although the survey strategy makes large samples more feasible it is not restricted to large samples. In fact, the smaller sample seemed to overcome the disadvantages. The fact that the respondents had been chosen on the grounds of their connection with outcomes-based assessment ensured that the questions were appropriate to all the respondents. The small number of respondents in the focus groups gave the researcher the opportunity to check the accuracy of the responses and probe for detail and depth. Consequently, the validity of the study was increased. The next section shows that a number of different research methods have been employed successfully.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Data collection involves applying measuring instruments to a sample or cases selected for the investigation (Mouton, 1996:67) while methodology is a general approach to studying research topics. It determines which methods are used and how each method is used (Silverman, 2000:89). In this study a multiple method approach was used. The aim was to enhance the depth of the study by considering assessment policies and practices from different perspectives to obtain a better understanding of the assessment situation at the college.

The choice between different research methods depends upon what one is trying to find out. In this study the questionnaire and focus group interviews were identified as the most appropriate methods to obtain data on assessment. The decision was mainly influenced by the fact that questionnaires and interviews are primarily used in survey research (Denscombe, 1998:7; Babbie, 1992:152). Focus groups are a contemporary extension of a survey and an interpretative aid to survey findings (Bloor *et al.*, 2001:9). However, the qualitative nature of the study was also considered. Usually qualitative methods of data collection, such as observation and interviewing, are favoured by the interpretive paradigm, because they produce rich and detailed information. Therefore qualitative researchers collect data in the form of written or spoken language, which enables them to understand the phenomena through the instances that emerge in specific contexts (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:44).

Qualitative research is not associated with distinct methods; neither does it privilege a single methodology over another (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:5). It places an emphasis on providing a deeper understanding of social phenomena through the data than would be obtained from purely quantitative data (Silverman, 2000:89). Qualitative methods should allow the researcher to study issues in depth, openness and detail as they identify and attempt to understand the categories of information that emerge from the data (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:42).

3.5.1 Reliability and validity of measuring instruments

Both reliability and validity are important to every research instrument (Silverman, 2000:90). The real skill in designing good measurement instruments involves finding a technique that is adequate in terms of both reliability and validity. The researcher needs to ensure that his or her methods were reliable and the conclusions valid (Silverman, 2000:10).

Reliability is mainly concerned with the degree of consistency of an instrument over time. This means that a particular measurement instrument, applied repeatedly to the same objects, will yield equivalent results and description of a given phenomenon each time (Babbie, 1992:129). Mouton (1996:110) adds that if the same instrument is used, the same data will be obtained if the conditions under which the data are collected are kept as constant as possible.

Reliable instruments have to be accurate and stable (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000:125). This is a problem for interpretive researchers who view the reality that they are investigating as unstable and changing. They do not expect to find the same results repeatedly. On the contrary, they expect that people will behave differently and hold different opinions in these changing contexts (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:64). Instead of the criterion of reliability, they propose that findings should be dependable. Dependable findings refer to the degree to which the reader can be convinced that the findings did indeed occur as the researcher says they did. Dependability is achieved through rich and detailed descriptions.

In general, validity refers to the extent to which an empirical instrument provides data that accurately reflect and represent the real meaning of a concept (Babbie, 1992:132; Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000:125). There are three types of validity. Validity that is concerned with what constitutes a credible claim or the best approximation to the truth is called construct validity (Silverman, 2000:90; Mouton, 1996:109). The instrument has to measure what it set out to

measure. It asks questions such as “What does the instrument actually measure?” and “What do the results actually mean?” (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000:131).

If a researcher can show that an instrument measures all the various components of a variable, by referring to the related literature, then the instrument has high content validity (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000:131). A researcher has to make a list of the different pieces of information that the instrument is required to uncover and then design questions to secure that information.

Internal validity ensures that precautions are taken to eliminate other possible explanations for the results that are observed (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:431). One way of ensuring internal validity is through triangulation. Multiple sources of data are collected with the hope that they all converge to support a particular hypothesis or theory. In addition, all the alternative explanations of the results have to be considered. This approach is frequently used in qualitative research, where triangulation is used to support the validity of the findings (Babbie, 1992:133).

According to Mouton (1996:109) the only feasible way to maximise the validity of a questionnaire is by minimising or eliminating all foreseeable threats to validity in the research process. Firstly, in the construction a valid questionnaire, the literature from which the items are chosen to construct the instrument has to be exhaustive with regard to the phenomenon being investigated. Secondly, the categories used in the questionnaire have to be unambiguous and mutually exclusive. Thirdly, a single scale cannot be used to measure two or three different aspects of a phenomenon. Fourthly, where sampling is concerned, representativeness is necessary to ensure validity.

Focus groups are valid if they are used for a problem that is suitable for focus group enquiry and one does not deviate from the procedures. Data will be invalid if the problem does not lend itself to focus groups (Krueger, 1994b:30). (See Section 3.5.3 for a justification of the use of focus groups for this study.) There are various other forms of validity that have to be considered during focus group interviews. Face validity refers to the way in which the participants relate to the questions that are asked during the focus group sessions. It can be increased by adapting the questions to the needs of the particular participants (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000:133).

Reliability also has to be considered when designing and conducting focus group interviews. Factors that affect the reliability of data are the researcher's, as well as the respondents'

characteristics and orientations (Mouton, 1996:144). In asking respondents for information, the questions should be relevant, clear and the respondents have to be able to know the answers to the questions (Babbie, 1992:130). Unfortunately, total reliability does not ensure that measuring instruments measure what they set out to measure. The danger always exists that people will give answers, reliable or not.

There is a close relationship, as well as a certain tension, between reliability and validity. Often researchers face a trade-off between validity and reliability (Babbie, 1992:133). Unfortunately, reliability drops as validity increases (Silverman, 2000:10). Yet, the key validity criterion for data collection is reliability, which is a precondition for measurement validity (Mouton, 1996:144). An instrument with very high reliability is useless if it has poor validity (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000:131).

In the next sections on questionnaires and focus group interviews it will become clear how the reliability and validity of the data and measuring instruments have been addressed and controlled.

3.5.2 Questionnaire

Questionnaires can be administered in various ways. The postal questionnaire is the typical form of a mail survey (Denscombe, 1998:7) where there is no direct contact between the researcher and the respondents. These questionnaires are also called self-administered questionnaires and are seen as a quantitative data collection technique (Blaikie, 2000:233). In addition, questionnaires can be used with direct personal contact with respondents, which are called scheduled structured interviews (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000:105). In some cases it might even be appropriate to administer the questionnaire to a group of respondents gathered at the same place at the same time (Babbie, 1990:176).

In this study, a self-administered questionnaire was handed out to a group of 30 lecturers. These lecturers were full-time lecturers and belonged to the Engineering and Business Studies Departments. The Engineering Department consists of fewer lecturers than the Business Studies Department. Theoretical subjects, such as mathematics, science, drawing, mechanical subjects and electrical subjects are being lectured by these lecturers. Although the department used to consist mainly of men, women are increasingly being appointed in the fields of mathematics, science and electronics. In the Business Studies Department business subjects, such as

entrepreneurship and marketing, are lectured, as well as languages, hair-dressing and sport management. Some of the subjects are lectured on matric level. The part-time lecturers are appointed on an hourly basis and accordingly they are only present at the college when they have to give a lecture.

Permission to administer the questionnaire was obtained from the two heads of department (Engineering and Business Studies) during a pre-meeting. The questionnaire was explained to the lecturers; they were given the opportunity to complete the questionnaire in their own office or classroom and had to hand it in by the end of the day. Babbie (1990: 56) calls such a survey a cross-sectional survey because the data is collected at one point in time from a sample. No sampling was done here because the staff at the Klerksdorp Campus consisted of 30 lecturers only. Eleven lecturers completed and returned their questionnaires.

Care was taken to ensure that the questionnaire related to the context of the respondents. The questionnaire included sections on the knowledge, implementation, problems and attitudes that lecturers had regarding assessment policies and practices. A week before the questionnaire was administered the lecturers attended an information session on the transformation of assessment at technical colleges. The respondents were also competent in answering the questions because all of them had attended assessment workshops and were waiting to be registered as assessors with the relevant SETA. Therefore the respondents were able to provide reliable information. Babbie (1992:148) stresses the fact that when asking respondents to provide information, one should continually ask oneself whether they are able to do so reliably.

3.5.2.1 Constructing the questions

The term *questionnaire* suggests a collection of questions and statements (Babbie, 1992:163). The data are collected by asking people questions or asking them to agree or disagree with statements representing different points of view. Often a researcher is interested in determining the extent to which respondents hold a particular attitude or perspective. Then there is a choice between open-ended questions and closed-ended questions.

Closed-ended or structured questions are the more popular type of question used in a questionnaire. The respondents are asked to select an answer from among a list provided by the researcher. As a result, closed-ended questions provide a greater uniformity of responses, are

more easily recorded and processed and can often be transferred directly into a computer format (Babbie, 1990:127). Another advantage of closed-ended questions is that the data can easily be compared (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000:119).

Closed-ended questions are not without their disadvantages. Closed-ended questions are restricted by the number of possible answers. Added to this, a chief shortcoming of closed-ended questions lies in the researcher's structuring of responses (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000:119). The researcher may overlook or exclude some important responses, which can also restrict the respondents in their responses. However, this is a problem that can be rectified.

In the construction of closed-ended questions, one should be guided by the two structural requirements (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000:120). Firstly, the response categories provided should be exhaustive and they should include all the possible responses that might be expected. This can be done by doing a good pre-analysis to discover the major possibilities, which will ensure the quality of the response categories. Often, researchers add a category labelled "others" or "please specify".

Secondly, the answer categories must be mutually exclusive. The respondent should not feel compelled to select more than one category. This can be ensured by carefully considering each combination of categories and checking whether a person could reasonably choose more than one answer. The responses to a given question should also be clear. Another precaution is to add an instruction to the question asking the respondent to select the most appropriate answer. Over-restrictive responses and exclusion of responses can be reduced by including open-ended questions.

The main distinction between open-ended and closed-ended questions is that the open-ended questions are not based on previously conceived answers. The respondents are asked to provide their own answers to the questions and this gives them the chance to give their own account of a situation or concept (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000:119). Open-ended questions also support, among others, studies that are based on the qualitative analysis of data (Babbie, 1990:127).

The result of open-ended questions is responses that may be complex and not easily comparable to those of other respondents. Open-ended responses also have to be coded prior to data entry and before they can be processed for computer analysis. This coding process often requires that the

researcher interpret the meaning of responses, opening the possibility of misunderstanding and researcher bias. There is a danger that some respondents will give answers that are essentially irrelevant to the researcher's intent (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000:119).

In this study, both open-ended and closed-ended questions were included in the questionnaire. It gave the researcher flexibility in the design of the items and made the questionnaire more interesting to the participants. The closed-ended questions were constructed by using the literature review of Chapter 2. This was done to ensure that all the possible responses were included. The category "others" was also added to provide for any other response options. Definitions and descriptions of assessment terminology that are used in the policies were taken from the literature in order to test whether lecturers were familiar with the terminology. Closed-ended questions were included in order to compare the policies on assessment and the assessment practices that lecturers were experiencing at the college.

Open-ended questions were included to enhance the qualitative nature of the questionnaire and to give the participants the freedom to give their own views or accounts of assessment practices in their classrooms.

With the design of the questionnaire and the construction of the questions, care was taken to ensure that questionnaire items:

- were unambiguous and clear;
- did not contain double-barrelled questions;
- did not expect a single answer to a combination of questions;
- were short; and
- were not biased or prejudiced (Babbie, 1992:150).



3.5.2.2 Piloting the questionnaire

Piloting is a very important step in the design of a questionnaire. The aim of a pilot study is to test the applicability of the set of questions and statements in the questionnaire. The questionnaire should preferably be pre-tested in the manner intended for the real study (Babbie, 1990:222). This is done by selecting a representative sample of the target population where the sample is selected in exactly the same fashion as is intended for the final survey.

In this study, it was difficult to use a representative sample for piloting the questionnaire. No sampling was used with the questionnaire because the college had few staff members. Therefore the questionnaire was given to five colleagues who had been lecturing at technical colleges. Although they were not a representative sample they were familiar with the assessment practices at technical colleges. They checked for the clarity of instructions, questions and responses and indicated the time it would take to complete the questionnaire. The necessary changes were made.

3.5.3 Focus group interviews

The term *interview* covers a wide variety of forms and a multiplicity of uses. Interviews can be structured, semi-structured, unstructured or open-ended (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:48). With the exception of the scheduled structured interview, the most common type of interviewing is the individual, face-to-face interview. In addition, interviewing can also take the form of face-to-face group interviewing, questionnaires and telephone surveys (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:73). These different types of interviewing are suited for different situations and can yield a great deal of useful information (Neuman, 1994).

Considering the qualitative nature of this study, it is important to emphasise in-depth or unstructured interviews as qualitative data collection methods (Neuman, 1994). They are open-ended, revolve around a few central questions and provide a greater breadth than the other types of interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:36). The aim is to find out where participants are coming from, what they believe, experienced and feel (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Conducting an interview is a more natural form of interacting with people (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:128). Therefore a researcher has to put him- or herself in the role of the participants and try to see the situation from their perspective, rather than impose the world of academia and preconceptions upon them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:57).

Qualitative researchers are often described as being the research instrument because the data collection is dependent on their personal involvement in the setting (Silverman, 2000:99). The researcher becomes an insider (Blaikie, 2000:242). Thus the interview is not a neutral tool because the interviewer creates the reality of the interview situation and the interview is influenced by the personal characteristics of the interviewer, such as race, class, ethnicity and gender (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:36).

The two main threats to the validity of interviews are observer bias and the observer effect. Observer bias refers to invalid information that results from the perspectives that researchers bring to the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). When people are likely to change their behaviour or responses when they are aware that they are being observed it can lead to the observer effect (Denscombe, 1998:47). The situation might have been different if the researcher was not present. The researcher may identify with a participant or be negative towards another. The qualitative researcher has to be cautious because he or she has to be both involved and unbiased at the same time. “The spoken or written word always has a residue of ambiguity, no matter how carefully we word the questions and report or code the answers” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:48).

In this study, the focus group interview was selected, among others, for its versatility. Recently, the use of focus groups has been expanded from being used by market researchers to being useful in obtaining a variety of views or opinions about a topic or issues (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Focus group can be used when insights are needed in exploratory studies or when factors relating to complex behaviours need to be uncovered (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:133).

Focus groups were also chosen because of their qualitative nature, which attempts to describe people in a natural setting (Krueger, 1994b:27; Blaikie, 2000:242; Morgan, 1997:2). Conducting interviews in a more natural environment is important because group participants influence and are influenced by others, just as they are in real life (Krueger, 1994b:19). Focus groups rely on interaction and stimulation among group participants themselves (Litosseliti 2003:2; Morgan, 1997:2). It is true that lecturers are more inclined to discuss issues and topics in a tearoom among themselves than individually in an office.

Although it should be noted that qualitative data provide insights into the attitudes, perceptions and opinions of participants, focus groups cannot report on individual behaviour or norms (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:391; Krueger, 1994b, Bloor *et al.*, 2001:21). Focus group discussions provide in-depth data through group interaction. Morgan (1997:17) states that when one wants to determine whether focus groups are appropriate for the study, the question should be asked, “How actively and easily would participants discuss the topic of interest?” In this study, the group interaction was explicitly used to produce data less accessible without interaction. Krueger (1994b) states that the researcher should want ideas to emerge from the group.

In general, people feel more comfortable talking in a group than alone (Neuman, 1994) and this is no different for lecturers. They are used to discussing issues in groups during tea-time. When participants react to other participants' ideas, there is the opportunity for the whole group to explore the idea and it can give the researcher a much deeper insight into a topic. It also provides an opportunity for participants to learn from each other (Krueger, 1994b).

3.5.3.1 Focus groups and group interviews

It is commonly accepted that a focus group is seen as a type of interview, and particularly an interview conducted with a group of participants, hence the term *group interviewing* (Krueger, 1994a; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:133). Although the terms *focus groups* and *group interviews* are used interchangeably, there are people who differentiate between a focus group and a group interview (Krueger, 1994a). There are important distinctions between these two types of interviews.

The focus group is a special type of group in terms of purpose, size, composition and procedure (Krueger, 1994b:6). Focus groups rely on interaction and stimulation among group participants themselves, while group interviews consist of an alternation between questions and responses of individual participants in the group (Litosseliti 2003:2; Morgan, 1997:2).

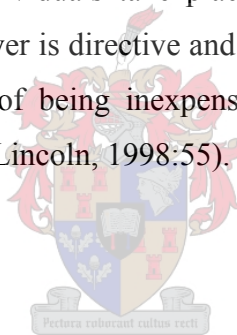
The composition of a focus group is usually homogeneous, where the members share common characteristics and a background of similar experiences although they do not necessarily exist naturally as a social group (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:388). Where the respondents of a focus group do exist naturally as a social group, for example where members are from the same department, naturally occurring data are obtained (Bloor *et al.*, 2001:21). Although the focus group is characterised by homogeneity there is still sufficient variation among participants to allow for contrasting opinions (Krueger, 1994b:77).

The composition of a focus group plays an important role in group dynamics, which are at the heart of focus group discussions. Focus group methodology, like participant observation, allows for access to the interaction between participants and group norms (Krueger, 1994b). It also yields rich data on the meanings of group processes associated with a given topic (Bloor *et al.*, 2001:4).

With focus groups the interviewer is not in a directive role. The focus should not be on the interviewer but rather on the group members and their interactions. Therefore the researcher assumes the role of a facilitator who tries to evoke the group dynamics. He or she asks questions to initiate discussions, but then allows participants to take the responsibility for stating their views and drawing out the views of others in the group (Krueger, 1994b). The facilitator needs to be aware of the personal and interpersonal dynamics at work within the group (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:388). The success of the focus group depends on the skills of the group facilitator. Everyone in the group should get an opportunity to contribute to the discussion. More often than not, interpretive researchers find themselves talking to people rather than observing them (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:391).

Group interviews are more straightforward. The same processes of a one-to-one interview apply to a group interview. The members of group interviews are diverse and the interest does not lie in the group dynamics but rather in the information that they provide. In the group interview the systematic questioning of several individuals take place simultaneously in formal or informal settings. Here the role of the interviewer is directive and the question format is unstructured. The group interview has the advantages of being inexpensive, data rich, flexible, elaborative and stimulating to respondents (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:55).

3.5.3.2 The focus group process



In addition to the questionnaire, six focus group interviews were conducted among the lecturers of the college. Two focus group interviews were conducted in each of the three departments (Engineering Studies, Business Studies and Training Centre). Two focus group interviews were held at the Engineering department, two focus group interviews at the Business Studies department as well as two focus group interviews at the Training Centre. The reason for the number of focus group interviews were determined by the number of lecturers in the different departments that were available for the interviews.

There were four participants in each focus group. All the focus groups consisted of men and women except the focus groups of the Training Centre where all the lecturers were men. Lecturers within a specific department could choose one of the two focus group interviews that suited their schedule. The subjects that the lecturers taught varied within a particular focus group. For example, the four lecturers from one of the focus groups in the Engineering Department

lectured mathematics, science, boilermaking and electronics while a focus group of the Business Studies Department consisted of an English, sport administration, computer and hair-dressing lecturer. All the lecturers that took part in the focus group interviews at the Training Centre facilitated practical subjects in either a mechanical or an electrical direction.

Although there are researchers who prefer seven to 10 participants in a focus group (Krueger, 1994b), the size of a focus group can range from four to eight respondents (Neuman, 1994). Smaller groups show considerable potential because such sessions offer ample opportunity to talk, and they are more practical to set up and manage than larger groups (Bloor *et al.*, 2001:31).

The permission of the respondents was obtained to record the focus group interviews with a dictaphone. In each case the topic to be discussed was introduced after which the focus group session was started with an introductory question to put everyone at ease. A broad list of questions was used to develop a discussion among the participants. The participants were allowed to speak freely while the facilitator made sure that participants became involved in the topic under discussion, that no one dominated the discussions and that they remained focused. Group members were allowed to influence each other by responding to ideas and comments in the discussion (Krueger, 1994b). The researcher was mindful of the fact that successful focus groups discuss a range of topics that not only cover the issues that researchers already know to be important but also introduce a set of issues that the researcher had not anticipated (Krueger, 1994b).

The focus group was ended with final remarks and questions to clear any misconceptions. The researcher retained the right to formulate other questions as judged appropriately for a given situation. (See Appendix B for the focus group interview schedule.) The duration of each focus group ranged from 30 minutes to an hour.

3.5.3.3 Advantages and disadvantages of focus groups

Some advantages of focus groups have already been mentioned. Krueger (1994a:34) adds the following advantages:

- Focus group interviewing is a socially-oriented procedure. It places people in natural, real-life situations.
- As in the case of participant observation, one can obtain access to group interaction.

- The facilitator is allowed to probe where there are misconceptions about the comments of the participants.

Morgan (1997:13) adds that the two defining features of focus groups are a reliance on the researcher's focus and group interaction. A focus group produces an opportunity to collect data from groups discussing topics that are of interest to the researcher.

According to Krueger (1994a:36) the disadvantages include the following:

- The researcher has less control in the focus group interview.
- The data are more difficult to analyse.
- The danger of the existing groups is that there are superior-subordinate relationships and the participants are not on equal footing.
- There are pre-established lines of communication among colleagues.

In this study, the focus group interviews were conducted in the staff room of the college because it is the one place where lecturers usually discuss education-related matters over tea. Thus it placed the lecturers in a natural setting. It also enhanced the interaction among the lecturers because they felt more comfortable in their own environment. The fact that lecturers of the same department were grouped together did not create any problems. The lecturers were comfortable with one another because they were used to discussing matters as a group. The focus groups of the Business Studies department were divided into the lecturers who were involved with the learnerships and the lecturers who lectured N-courses. This caused interesting dynamics between the lecturers and provided valuable data.

Concerning the control of a focus group interview, Morgan (1997:6) states that the researcher's interest provides the focus of the interviews. The aim of a focus group interview is not to control and consequently to inhibit the discussions among the participants. The focus of the discussions is more important. In this study, the researcher defined the discussion topic to be outcomes-based assessment and focused the discussions by stating four main questions beforehand. These questions also formed the categories that were used to analyse the data.

3.5.3.4 Sampling

Sampling involves decisions about which people, settings, events, behaviours or social processes should be used as data sources (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:45). This section aims to explain the decisions that were made during the sampling process.

Qualitative research is not characterised by the random sampling of a large number of people with the intent of making generalisations, as is the case with quantitative research (Silverman, 2000:99). Instead, the selection of participants for a sample tends to be based on non-probability sampling where the sample size is small and a few participants are purposefully selected who can provide the best information on the phenomenon to be investigated (Denscombe, 1998:26; Creswell, 1994:148). The reason for this is that qualitative research is more concerned with detailed and in-depth analysis than with statistical accuracy (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:45).

Being qualitative in nature, this study used non-probability sampling and, specifically, purposive or judgemental sampling. This type of sampling is based on judgements made by the researcher to select participants with a specific purpose in mind, namely to provide relevant information (Denscombe, 1998:15). The focus is on the particular qualities of the people chosen and their relevance to the topic of the investigation (Mouton, 1996:36). This implies that the researcher already knows something about the specific participants and deliberately selects the sample on the basis of his or her own knowledge of the population (Babbie, 1990:97).

Purposive sampling is essential when using focus groups (Bloor *et al.*, 2001:31; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:388). Participants are selected according to what they already know about the field and because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic of the focus group (Krueger, 1994).

This was a very important factor because only certain lecturers had implemented the new assessment policies in their courses and were consequently involved with outcomes-based assessment. These lecturers were specifically chosen to be in one focus group. The other lecturers who had not implemented the new assessment policies were chosen to be in another focus group. The reason for their inclusion was to determine the level at which they were implementing new assessment practices as set by the assessment policy of the college. The choice

of lecturers for the different focus groups was done in conjunction with the heads of department. The researcher was familiar with the staff because of previous research that had been done at the college.

An advantage of purposive sampling is that it is informative. It allows the researcher to focus on people who are knowledgeable regarding certain aspects of the research (Denscombe, 1998:15). However, a researcher needs to be aware of assumptions that accompany non-probability sampling. For instance, there is no indication that the participants who are included in the sample are representative of the overall population (Denscombe, 1998:12) and therefore non-probability sampling often leads to non-representative samples (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000:92). Babbie (1990:97) goes as far as stating that the survey findings based on non-probability sampling would not represent any meaningful population. Although he calls such a survey a pre-test rather than a proper survey, in qualitative research people are not necessarily selected on the basis of being representative (Denscombe, 1998:26). Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:45) state that instead of insisting on representative samples, researchers should ensure that their findings are transferable to other contexts or groups similar to those being studied.

Because purposive sampling relies more heavily on the subjective judgements of the researcher regarding the sample than on objective criteria, sampling error and bias have to be addressed (Blaikie, 2000:205; Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000:92). Yet, thinking critically about the parameters of the population in which one is interested and choosing the sample carefully on this basis can address sampling error and bias. Silverman (2000:105) reiterates that sampling in qualitative research is neither statistical nor purely personal. It is, or should be, theoretically grounded.

According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:381) sampling has to take place until saturation has been reached:

Saturation occurs when new information no longer challenges or adds to the emerging interpretative account, when no relevant new information emerges, when category development is dense and rich, when relations among categories are well established and validated and when there is a sense that the theoretical account is nearing a complete and adequate form.

In this study six focus group interviews were held.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis contains three linked sub-processes, namely data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing or verification (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:180). In the next chapter the data analysis will be approached in a systematic way, using these sub-processes as steps to analyse the data. A brief description of the analysis process follows below.

Analysis means the resolution of a complex whole into its parts (Mouton, 1996) while it is also viewed as attributing meaning to the words (Denscombe, 1998). The types of analysis that pertains to focus groups include conversational analytic approach, analytic induction and logical analysis (Bloor *et al.*, 2001). In this study the data were analysed by means of content analysis as described by Litosseliti (2003). Although Denscombe (1998) views content analysis as a quantitative type of analysis, content analysis was used in this study both in a qualitative and quantitative manner (cf. Mouton, 2001).

The quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis play complementary roles in the data analysis process (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000:138). The issue of whether to count codes is controversial in a focus group because of its qualitative nature. There are writers who feel that quantifying focus group results is a common analytic mistake and that one should feel justified to answer the research questions without counting the codes (Litosseliti, 2003). Yet focus groups will always remain a qualitative technique for generating data regardless of how the data are handled (Morgan, 1997:60). In this case, the analysis relied on more interpretive summaries of the data than on counting of the codes.

Relatively predetermined research issues were investigated and therefore a more structured approach was used to gather, analyse and report the data. Firstly, transcripts of all the audio-tape recordings were made. Each piece of raw data material was identified with a unique serial number or code for reference purposes. Notes were added regarding the body language, pauses and hesitations of respondents. This process is called indexing.

Secondly, the data were processed by doing data reduction. A coding procedure was used to reduce the raw data into categories. These categories were coded by using a priori templates (Morgan, 1997:60). They corresponded with the questions asked during the focus group

interviews. All the key statements were identified and fitted into a category. Each group discussion covered the same topics in more or less the same order, and these topics were addressed. Similarities and differences were identified across the number of focus groups on the same topic. Morgan (1997) warns that where coding is concerned, the group, and not the individual, should be the unit of analysis.

A narrative and bullet form of reporting was used where appropriate. Although it is common to consider the frequency of comments to establish priorities (Krueger, 1994a), in this study most of the comments were entertained in order to obtain an in-depth view of the assessment process at the college. Regarding the problems that lecturers experienced, the question was asked, "How many groups mentioned and/or discussed the particular problem?" The descriptive process was followed where descriptive statements were used to summarise the statements of respondent comments. The interpretation built on the descriptive process. It presented meaning and understanding through interpretive narratives.

The data were systematically summarised by using matrices, where appropriate, to indicate what each group said in response to a particular question. This enabled the researcher to make comparisons across the spectrum.

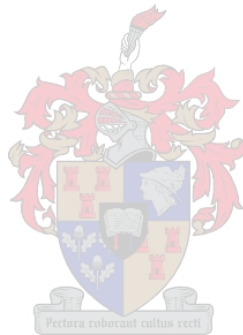
A more quantitative form of coding was used to analyse the data of the questionnaire. Simple counts of the responses to the different questions were made without performing any statistical tests because the analytic tool that was used was simple descriptive analysis and normal statistics do not apply to descriptive statistics.

The results of the questionnaire were counted manually and the frequencies of the responses were used to determine which questions had received the most responses. These frequencies were displayed by using tables and figures in order to make the results more understandable. Analysis was done by attaching meaning to the data, drawing conclusions and linking the results to the literature.

In Chapter 4 the collected data from the questionnaire are presented in the form of tables and graphs that are then described and interpreted. The responses from the open-ended questions have been summarised in descriptive statements. Descriptive statistics, a quantitative form of content analysis (Mouton, 2001), was used to analyse the data.

3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has placed the research in the context of an interpretivist paradigm and has discussed the survey strategy. The data collection methods have also been discussed in detail, while aspects such as reliability and validity have been addressed. This chapter provides the basis for the data analysis that is expounded in Chapter 4.



CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to determine the current situation of the college regarding assessment and how its assessment practices compare with the stipulations of the policies.

A questionnaire and the focus group interviews that were discussed in detail in Chapter 3 were administered among the lecturers of the college. The aim of these data collection methods was to obtain data in order to answer the research questions that were stated in Chapter 1 (see Section 1.4). In this chapter, the findings are reported and the results interpreted.

The findings from the questionnaire and focus groups are dealt with separately. Firstly, the collected data from the questionnaire are presented in the form of tables and graphs that are then described and interpreted. The responses from the open-ended questions are summarised in descriptive statements. Descriptive statistics, a quantitative form of content analysis (Mouton, 2001), was used to analyse the data.

Secondly, the results obtained from the six focus group interviews are presented visually in the form of tables and graphs to give a clear view of the results. The results were analysed by means of content analysis and simple descriptive analysis (Litosseliti, 2003). Although the aim was not to quantify the focus group results, descriptive counting was used to determine how often certain topics were mentioned in the different focus groups. A structured approach was followed to analyse the results (Morgan, 1997). Predetermined issues were investigated and consequently categories corresponded with the questions that were asked during the focus group interviews. A final interpretation was made by comparing the results from the questionnaire with the results that were obtained from the focus group interviews.

4.2 RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The aim of the questionnaire was to gain information regarding the knowledge that lecturers had regarding outcomes-based assessment, the extent to which they implemented the concepts of outcomes-based assessment in their classrooms, problems that they experienced with

implementing outcomes-based assessment and the views that they held regarding the new assessment system. The questionnaire is presented in table A1 in Appendix A.

The response rate of the questionnaire was 37% (n = 11). The low response rate can be attributed partially to the fact that lecturers might have been more willing to discuss outcomes-based assessment in a group than responded to it in writing and partially to the fact that many lecturers had not yet had the opportunity to implemented outcomes-based assessment and might not have seen it necessary to complete the questionnaire. As a result of the low response rate, the results could not be generalised to all the lecturers at the college. It is suggested that the biographical information of the respondents who completed the questionnaire (see Table A2 in Appendix A) be kept in mind throughout the discussion of the results of the questionnaire. The respondents were mainly women from the Department of Business Studies. Many of the respondents were older and more experienced lecturers who held a Higher Education Diploma. The respondents taught subjects across the spectrum of subjects available at the college.

Despite the low response rate, the questionnaire provided valuable information that set the context against which the lecturers participated in the focus group interviews.

4.2.1 Knowledge about outcomes-based assessment

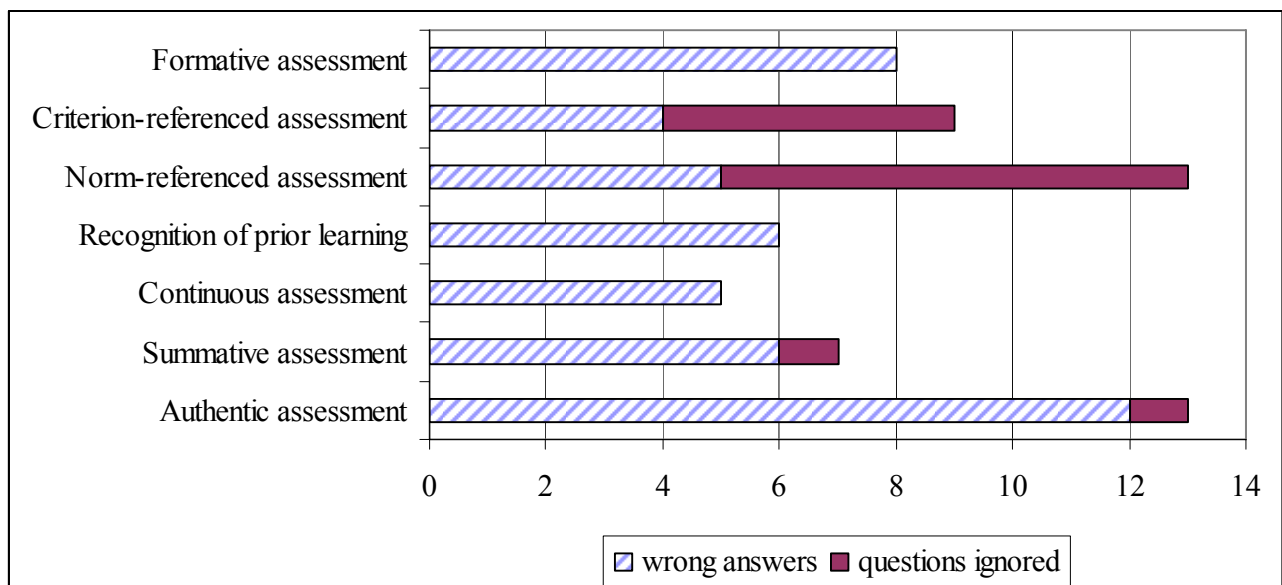
As mentioned in the previous section, Section A of the questionnaire (See Table A1 of Appendix A) provided the biographical information, and thus a profile, of the respondents who had completed the questionnaire. Section B of the questionnaire focused on the type of training that the respondents had received as well as the level of knowledge that they held regarding certain concepts of outcomes-based assessment. The data from this section are important to establish whether the respondents were empowered and knowledgeable to implement the new assessment system. Sections C2, C4 and E1 of the questionnaire also provided information regarding the knowledge level of the respondents.

Table 4.1: Type of training regarding outcomes-based assessment (n = 11)

Type of assessment training	Number of respondents
Workshop presented by the Department of Education on OBE	2
Workshop presented by the Department of Education on assessment	3
Assessor training with the relevant SETA	10
Workshop presented by the college on OBE	3
Workshop presented by the college on assessment	2
Booklets or circulars on assessment	1

Table 4.1 provides a summary of the type of training that respondents had received. Most of the lecturers had received assessor training with the relevant SETA, while on average, only a small percentage of respondents had attended workshops relevant to the new education and assessment system.

When asked to indicate whether descriptions of certain concepts of assessment were true or false, the respondents obtained an average of 50% correct answers with the highest mark being 71% and the lowest mark being 29%. Figure 4.1 indicates the number of wrong answers together with the answers that the respondents omitted because they were unsure about the answer. The figure shows that formative assessment and authentic assessment received the most incorrect answers, which indicates that lecturers were not familiar with the concepts while they were unsure about the meaning of criterion-referenced assessment and norm-referenced assessment.

**Figure 4.1:** Knowledge regarding various approaches to assessment (n = 11)

Sections B2, C2, C4 and E1 (see Table 4.2, Table 4.3, Figure 4.2 and Figure 4.3) indicated how the respondents perceived outcomes-based education (OBE) and outcomes-based assessment.

Table 4.2: Terms that respondents associate with outcomes-based assessment (n = 11)

Assessment terms	Total responses
Continuous assessment	7
Recognition of prior learning	8
Authentic assessment	2
Summative assessment	6
Norm-referenced assessment	0
Formative assessment	5
Criterion-referenced assessment	1

Table 4.2 provides a summary of the terms that respondents associated with outcomes-based assessment. Respondents associated continuous assessment and the recognition of prior learning with outcomes-based assessment while summative assessment and formative assessment also received a high number of responses. They agreed that norm-referenced assessment should not be associated with outcomes-based assessment but they gave the same indication for criterion-referenced assessment, which is the opposite of norm-referenced assessment. The respondents indicated that the assessment of outcomes, skills and the application of knowledge should receive priority to assist learners in an OBE environment (see Fig. 4.2).



Table 4.3: Perceived views on assessment (n = 11)

I view assessment as...	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
an addition to teaching.	1	0	7	2
an essential part of teaching.	0	1	6	4
helping learners to learn.	0	1	8	2
helping lecturers to improve their teaching.	0	3	5	3
a way of making decisions about teaching.	0	3	7	1
being primarily about the allocation of marks and grades.	3	5	2	0
a means of reporting on learner progress.	0	1	7	2

Concerning the perceived views of the respondents on assessment, as shown in Table 4.3, respondents viewed assessment primarily as a means of helping learners to learn. Table 4.4 also indicates that most of the respondents agreed that assessment helps learners to learn. In addition to this, assessment is seen as a way of making decisions about teaching and reporting on learner progress. Although the respondents agreed on the importance of assessment in the teaching and learning process they differed in their views regarding the position and role of assessment in the teaching and learning process. Some respondents viewed assessment as an addition to teaching, while the rest of the respondents saw assessment as an essential part of teaching. Only 50% of the respondents indicated that learners should be involved in the assessment process and get the opportunity to assess themselves. This is why many respondents agreed that lecturers were the authoritative assessors at the college (see Table 4.4).

4.2.2 Implementation of outcomes-based assessment

Set against the background knowledge that the respondents had regarding outcomes-based assessment, Section C of the questionnaire focused on the implementation of assessment methods in the classroom and the rationale behind the choice of such assessment methods. The aim was to determine to what extent and with what success lecturers employed new assessment methods with the information that they had obtained from the training courses. The open-ended questions provided the respondents with the freedom to explain the assessment practices that they implemented in their classrooms. The results of the aspects that the respondents assessed and the objectives for assessing these aspects are summarised in Figure 4.2 and Figure 4.3.

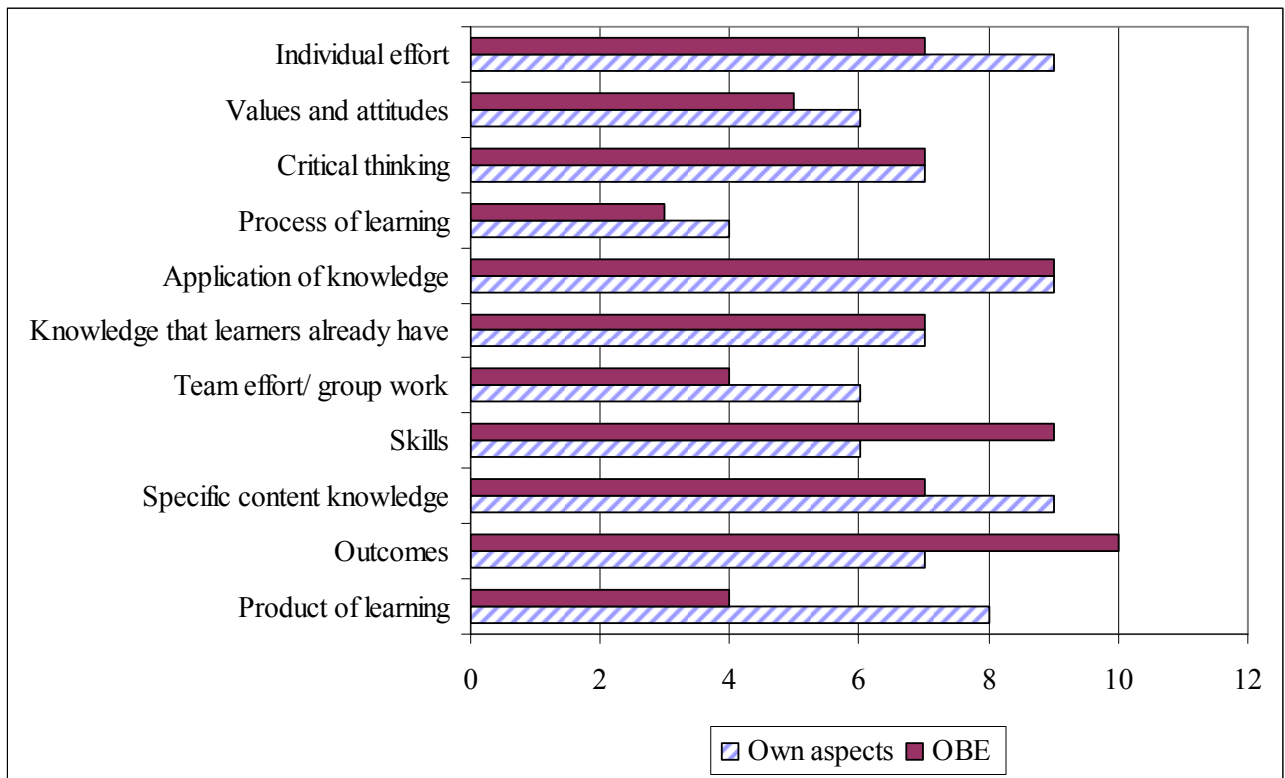


Figure 4.2: Aspects assessed according to own knowledge and according to OBE (n = 11)

Figure 4.2 shows that many respondents still favoured the assessment of content knowledge and individual effort, although they indicated that OBE requires the assessment of outcomes. They assessed critical thinking, the application of knowledge and knowledge that learners already have in accordance with what they knew OBE expected of them. Although the assessment of team effort and group work did not receive many responses, respondents agreed that assessment methods that promote co-operative activities are commonly experienced at the college (see Table 4.4).

The results of Figure 4.3 show that respondents mainly assessed the learners to determine whether they were competent and to assist them in the learning process. It is interesting to note that the respondents motivated and encouraged learners through the assessment process in an environment where assessment used to exclude and eliminate learners. These views are supported by the experiences that the respondents had of assessment being more developmental than judgemental (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4: Assessment practices implemented at institution (n = 11)

Experience	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Assessment tests memorisation rather than understanding.	1	8	2	0
Learners are assessed in real-life situations.	0	2	9	0
Assessment methods promote co-operative activities (group work).	1	2	7	0
Assessment helps learners to learn.	0	1	10	0
There are time constraints on assessment tasks.	0	1	9	1
Lecturers are the authoritative assessors of achievement.	0	1	9	0
A variety of assessment methods are being used.	1	2	8	0
Assessment is more developmental than judgemental.	1	2	7	0
The focus of assessment is more on the learning process than on the content.	0	4	5	1

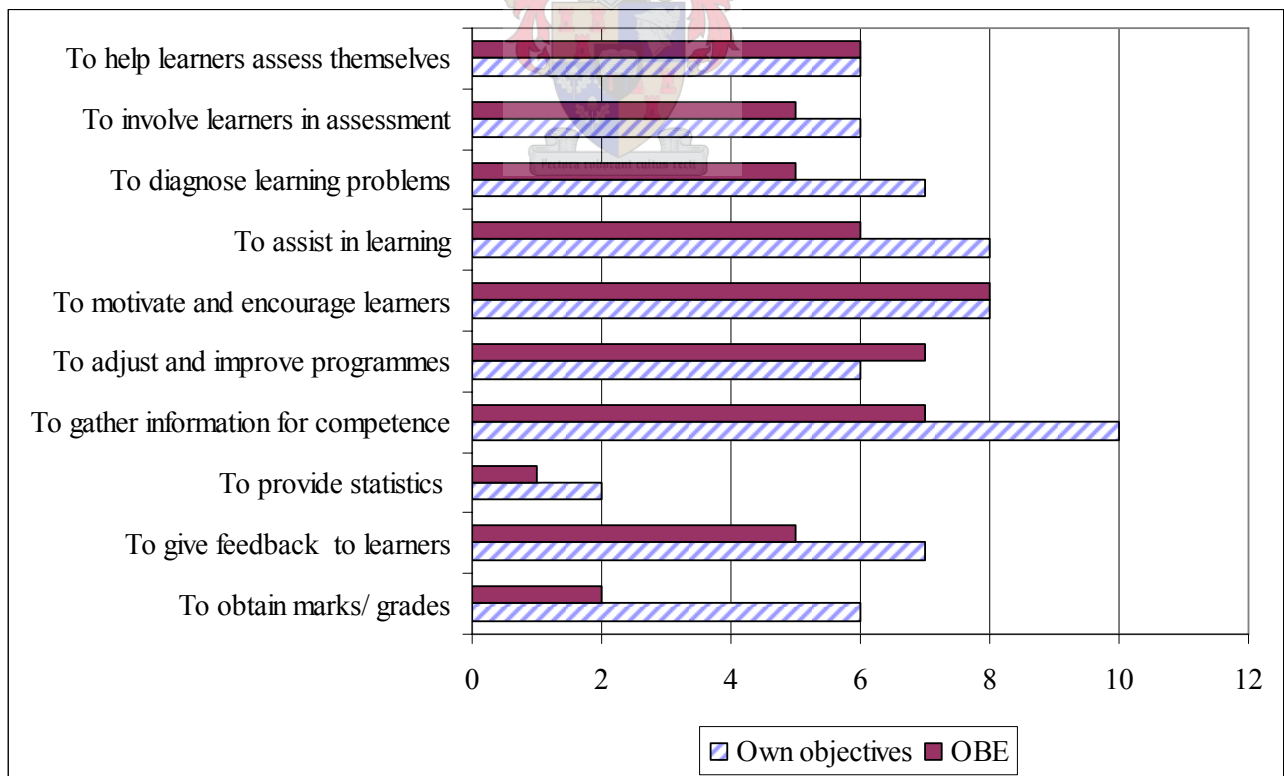
**Figure 4.3:** Objectives for assessing learner learning (n = 11)

Table 4.5 shows that the respondents preferred to achieve the objectives, as shown in Figure 4.3, by using assessment methods, such as written tests, formal examinations and written assignments. Assessment methods that are associated with outcomes-based assessment, such as rubrics, portfolios and learning journals were never or seldom used. Yet group or peer assessment was often used. Computer-assisted assessment was also not popular.

Table 4.5: Assessment methods implemented at institution (n = 11)

Methods	Never	Seldom	Often	Regularly
Essays	5	3	2	0
Written tests	0	0	1	10
Rubrics	5	1	1	0
Formal examinations	0	0	1	9
Portfolios	5	2	1	3
Self-assessment	2	2	3	3
Written assignments/worksheets	1	1	2	6
Case studies	4	1	2	4
Problems	1	1	4	4
Group or peer assessment	1	3	6	0
Orals / interviews	2	3	5	0
Learning journals	6	2	2	0
Multiple choice questions	0	2	4	3
Computer-assisted assessment	7	0	0	2
Projects	4	2	2	1
Presentations	3	5	1	1
Reports	2	4	2	1
Practical assignments	3	0	3	4

These results are confirmed by the results shown in Table 4.4 where respondents indicated that they experienced a variety of assessment methods being used at the college, as well as the responses of the open-ended questions (see Table 4.6). The results indicate that respondents applied and attempted various assessment methods. Importantly, the respondents attempted many of these assessment methods although they did not see them as appropriate methods. However, they still preferred to use written tests and assignments. One respondent stated that she used

written tests based on case studies. They mainly indicated that these methods were the best way to assess learners and that they were accurate methods of determining the knowledge that learners had of the content.

Table 4.6: Reasons for implementing assessment methods (n = 11)

Assessment methods	Applied/ attempted methods	Preferred Methods	Appropriate Methods
Self- and peer assessment	2	0	0
Written tests	5	8	5
Verbal communication	1	0	0
Formative and summative assessment	1	1	1
Continuous assessment	1	1	1
Essays	1	0	0
Case studies	2	1	4
Formal examinations	1	2	1
Problems	1	1	0
Written assignments	5	5	1
Observation in the workplace	1	1	2
Portfolio of evidence	1	1	1
Practical assignments	2	3	3
Presentations	1	0	0
Computer-assisted assessment	1	1	1

The results of the open-ended questions also showed that different respondents considered different aspects when they had to choose an assessment method. These aspects include:

- what learners must be able to do or know in a job situation and the ability to apply it in real life;
- the needed level of knowledge, skills and understanding;
- appropriate methods that can declare a learner competent or not yet competent;
- economical, best practical method of assessing learners;
- what the unit standards prescribe in the outcomes; and
- methods that will give the best feedback on the learners' competency.

When respondents had to indicate what methods they thought were appropriate to assess the learners, they still favoured written tests. However, methods that are more practically inclined,

such as case studies, practical assignments and assessment in the workplace, also received attention. They provided the following reasons for their choices:

- It is the closest to real situations.
- It works, is accurate and was successfully applied.
- The syllabi content is based on facts and knowledge that learners have to reproduce. It is also practical to see if learners can apply the theory.
- Languages require a variety of assessment methods to assess the various aspects of the subject.
- Computer practice is practical.

4.2.3 Problems with the implementation of outcomes-based assessment

The implementation of the new, as well as the traditional, assessment system is bound to be accompanied by problems. This section aimed to shed light on problems that lecturers experienced with the implementation of assessment as well as on the frustrations that they experienced as a result of these problems. These results are presented in Table 4.7. The workload of lecturers was singled out as the most frequent problem that lecturers experience. The load of their work was increased by administration and paperwork of assessment, an increase in learner numbers and limited resources and providing feedback. They also experienced time constraints regarding assessment tasks at the college (see Table 4.4). Problems regarding inadequately prepared learners were experienced less frequently but were still considered a problem. These problems included cheating and plagiarism and inadequately prepared learners.

Table 4.7: Problems with the implementation of outcomes-based assessment (n = 11)

Problem	Never	Seldom	Often	Always
Workload because of the amount of assessed work.	0	0	3	8
Cheating and plagiarism related to self and peer assessment.	0	5	6	0
The recognition of prior learning.	2	6	1	2
Providing feedback.	1	3	6	1
Administration/ paperwork.	0	0	3	8
Having to state assessment criteria explicitly.	1	2	5	1
Finding an appropriate assessment method.	2	4	3	0
Increasing learner numbers and limited resources.	0	6	0	5
Inadequately prepared learners.	0	1	8	2
Confusion among lecturers because of constant change.	0	1	5	4
Lecturers lack assessment skills.	1	7	3	0
No support from the department/ institution.	3	2	3	1
Time-constraints.	0	2	3	5
Difficulty of assessing practical skills.	1	2	3	4

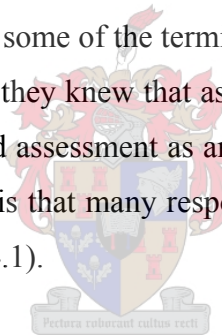
4.2.4 Attitudes regarding outcomes-based assessment

Although there was one respondent who was very sure of his/her ability to implement outcomes-based assessment, most of the respondents were divided about their confidence and knowledge to implement outcomes-based assessment (see Table 4.8). Nine respondents indicated that they still had unanswered questions regarding outcomes-based assessment. The results showed that the respondents were still confused about certain concepts that are related to outcomes-based assessment. From Table 4.2 it is clear that only familiar concepts, such as continuous assessment, were dealt with in training courses while less familiar concepts, such as authentic assessment and criterion-referenced assessment, were neglected. Despite these attitudes, most of the respondents indicated that they supported outcomes-based assessment and that they felt positive about implementing outcomes-based assessment.

Table 4.8: Attitudes regarding outcomes-based assessment (n = 11)

Attitude	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel confident to implement outcomes-based assessment.	0	5	5	1
I am aware of what the Department of Education expects of me regarding outcomes-based assessment.	1	3	4	2
I support outcomes-based assessment.	0	4	7	0
I feel positive about implementing outcomes-based assessment.	1	1	8	0
I still have unanswered questions about outcomes-based assessment.	0	1	7	2

In conclusion, it is clear that the respondents did not feel confident enough to implement the new assessment policies. The results of the questionnaire showed that the respondents were not empowered enough with the appropriate knowledge to implement the assessment policies successfully. They did not understand some of the terminology, which resulted in a distorted view of assessment. For instance, although they knew that assessment should be central to the learning process, many respondents still viewed assessment as an addition to teaching and did not use it in a formative way. The reason for this is that many respondents misunderstood the term *formative assessment* (see Table 4.2 and Figure 4.1).



The limited knowledge of the respondents regarding outcomes-based assessment showed in their assessment practices. They knew that OBE mainly requires the assessment of outcomes but they still preferred to assess individual effort and specific content knowledge by using mainly written tests, formal examinations and written assignments. They were aware of what methods are more conducive to assessing outcomes but they still felt that the traditional methods were more accurate. Again their knowledge failed them because they tried to use these assessment methods to assist learners in the learning process, to diagnose learning problems and to provide feedback to the learners.

It should be noted that many of these respondents had not implemented outcomes-based assessment officially because learnerships had not been introduced in their subjects yet. Yet they had the knowledge to experiment and implement various assessment methods. This is indeed what they did, which shows that the respondents were positive towards and supportive of

outcomes-based assessment despite the fact that they experienced various problems, such as an increase in workload and administration, limited resources and increasing learner numbers.

4.3 RESULTS OF THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

In addition to the questionnaire, six focus group interviews were conducted among the lecturers of the college. Two focus group interviews were held at the Engineering department (referred to as Group E1 and Group E2), two focus group interviews at the Business Studies department (referred to as Group B1 and Group B2) as well as two focus group interviews at the Training Centre (referred to as Group T1 and Group T2). Each focus group consisted of at least four respondents.

Some of the focus group interviews were conducted in Afrikaans and therefore the verbatim quotes in Afrikaans will be given in brackets where applicable.

In general, the questions asked during the focus group interviews (see Table B1 in Appendix B) were based on the requirements for implementing outcomes-based assessment as stated by the policies on assessment and related literature (refer to Chapter 2). These questions can be grouped into the topics listed in Table 4.9. The table indicates how the different focus groups responded to the questions related to these topics. For instance, the members of Groups B1, E1 and T1 did not think that feedback was important because they did not mention or discuss it at all. One member of Group B2 mentioned that she was giving feedback to her learners while the members of Groups E2 and T2 took part in detailed discussions on how they provided feedback to learners.

Table 4.9: Responses of questions related to the following topics

	B1	B2	E1	E2	T1	T2
Assessor training and registration	XX	XX	X	X	X	XX
Assessment policies		X		X	X	X
Assessment methods and approaches	XX	XX	XX	XX	X	XX
Feedback		X		XX		XX
CASS	XX	XX		X		
The recognition of prior learning		XX				XX
The integration of knowledge and skills	X	XX	X	X		X
Assessment in the workplace	X	XX	XX			XX

X = topic mentioned by member/s of the group;

XX = topic discussed in detail by all the members of the group

4.3.1 Assessor training and registration

According to the assessment policies it is important that lecturers are registered as assessors with the relevant SETA. The aim of the questions on assessor training and registration (see Table B1 in Appendix B) was to provide a more in-depth knowledge of the status of respondents as assessors than were provided by the questionnaire.

Table 4.10: Information on assessor registration and training

Focus group	Responses
T1	The respondents received letters of confirmation from the SETA that they were competent. They did not have registration numbers yet because they still had to register with the EDTP SETA.
T2	50% of the respondents had registered as assessors while the other 50% were in the process of registering by compiling portfolios.
B1 and B2	The respondents received training in order to register as assessors. They had handed in portfolios of evidence. Everybody had been trained as assessors.
E1 and E2	The respondents had completed courses on assessment but were not registered as assessors.

Table 4.10 shows that many respondents had received training in order to register as assessors but had not registered as assessors yet. Initially the respondents from the Engineering department gave the impression that they had not done anything to become assessors, but when prompted, they stated that they had received assessor training and were waiting for their accreditation certificates.

Focus groups T1 and B2 discussed problems that they had experienced with assessor training and registration. The discussion among the respondents of Group T1 focused on the time that it took to register as assessors. In some cases the registration process was delayed for up to nine months while the assessors from ISCOR and Van der Bijl Park had to wait two and a half years before they received their registration certificates. The respondents reasoned that the SETA had not anticipated the thousands of lecturers that had to be trained and registered as assessors. However, MERSETA (Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Education and Training Authority) allowed them to assess although they were not in the possession of registration papers.

The same group was also dissatisfied with the assessor training and, more specifically, the generic assessor training that they received. The discussion went as follows:

- I don't agree with the training. The training was a general training while I am only in the fitting shop. Nobody has showed me the best way to train a fitting learner. ("Ek stem nie saam daarmee nie. Hierdie assessor-training is byvoorbeeld 'n algemene ene en ek is byvoorbeeld net in die fitting shop. Niemand het my nog gesê, 'Hoor hier, dit is fitting-opleiding training met module daardie, dis die beste metode om daardie outjie op te lei' nie.)
- That type of training is only obtained through experience. At the end of the day you have to do as you see fit. ("Jy sien, daardie opleiding gaan jy slegs optel deur praktiese ervaring. ... Dit gaan oor wat jy die beste vind in jou shop.")
- It is interesting to note that everybody, from the business studies to the boilermakers, did the same assessment course assmt01. ("Wat nou vir my interessant is, né, almal, maak nie saak wat jy gedoen het nie, het dieselfde assmt01 gedoen. Of jy nou by business studies is, engineering studies of boilermakers.")
- But there are two levels. ("Maar daar is twee vlakke.")
- But it is not applied to your subject. ("Maar dit is nie toegepas op jou vakgebied nie.")
- If you have to give a lecture you have to use their study material, even if it is not in your field of study. I do not like the generic aspects at all. ("As jy daar 'n klas moet aanbied, moet jy uit sy leermateriaal kies. Dis nie eens in jou eie lyn partykeer nie. Ek hou nie van daai generiese aspekte nie.")
- The method of assessment is more applicable to the theoretical part, the task that the learner has to complete. You already have papers for such tasks. ("Nee, ag kyk, die metode van assessering gaan vir my meer oor die teoretiese deel, wat baie belangrik is. Dit gaan oor die taak wat verrig word en die taak se verrigting het jy alreeds papiere voor as 'n gekwalifiseerde ambagsman.")

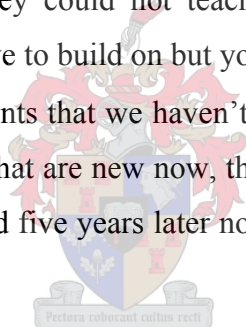
The respondents of Group B2 had also experienced problems with assessor training. Initially, they were trained on an NQF (National Qualifications Framework) level 4 but the SETA withheld their certificates because the SETA required assessor training on a NQF level 5 for registration. The process of registration was delayed because, although the respondents had received recognition of prior learning, they still had to hand in additional portfolios in order to be upgraded to an NQF level 5. Similarly, the training of the respondents of Groups E1 and E2 had to be upgraded to an NQF level 5.

The focus groups mentioned the following matters that were covered during assessor training:

- A learner can only be assessed when the learner is ready to be assessed.
- The methods of assessment.
- The policies on assessment.
- Going through the forms that declare a learner competent or not yet competent.
- How to set a test and an assessment guide.

Some of the respondents were not able to apply their assessor training yet (see Section 4.3.2). A respondent commented, “At the moment we’re in a limbo. We’re teaching as we have to.” Other comments included:

- “... but at least if we are trained, if they eventually are geared to start with it, they don’t have to sit with a backlog to train a lot of educators and facilitators. So, at least something is finished, something is in place. So, that was good.”
- “It is like starting to ride a bicycle. If you can do it once you never forget it ... So there is naturally going to be things they could not teach you, because they taught us a broad perspective and from that we have to build on but you won’t forget what you learned.”
- “But you think about developments that we haven’t touched on or recent developments that we didn’t learn three years ago that are new now, the old stuff has gone out of fashion. It is this gap between our training and five years later now we start doing, there has been a lot of new stuff building.”



The results from the questionnaire support the results of the focus groups as summarised in Table 4.10. Most of the respondents received assessor training but only a small percentage of the respondents attended additional workshops or courses on outcomes-based assessment or OBE. The results from the focus groups shed light on the problems that the respondents experienced regarding assessor training and registration. The next section gives a clearer indication of the current situation of assessment practices at the college.

4.3.2 The current situation of assessment practices at the college

The questions that were asked during the focus group interviews to obtain a view of the current situation of assessment practices at the college (see Table B1 in Appendix B), focused on the following topics:

- Knowledge about the requirements of the assessment policies and SAQA

- The implementation of CASS, the recognition of prior learning and assessment methods
- The degree to which the courses at the college allowed for the integration of knowledge and skills.

The respondents of the various groups implied that outcomes-based assessment was strongly linked to learnerships. The respondents of Groups E1 and E2 only taught N-courses. Their courses had not yet been converted to learnerships and as a result they had not implemented outcomes-based assessment formally. The respondents of Groups B1 and B2 were divided into lecturers who were involved with learnerships and those who were lecturing N-courses. The only learnerships that were offered at the college were the sport learnership and the hair-care learnership. A respondent of Group B1 stated, “We don’t sit with learners, as we learned in assessor training, going through that form and saying competent or not yet competent. We don’t do that yet. Learnerships do that.” Another respondent said that currently there were no formal programmes piloted at the college in terms of outcomes-based assessment. The training that they provided was still based on the traditional methods, namely tests and examinations.

The respondents were frustrated by the fact that learnerships had not yet been implemented. A respondent of Group E1 said, “I think we are all waiting for, I mean, there is a task team at the department at the present moment supposed to write the new syllabi or new unit standards. The rumour has been here for about two years now that N4, N5 and N6 will be phased out and every time it has been postponed and postponed because they haven’t got the solution yet.” Another respondent of group E2 confirmed that they were working with an organisation to initiate the unit standards. She was of the opinion that the unit standards had not been implemented yet because it required such an amount of work. Consequently, nobody wanted to do the work or change to learnerships.

The training centre was still using the traditional apprenticeships, which functioned on a modular system. However, the modules had been upgraded. The learnerships of the mines were in place. A respondent of Group E1, as well as a respondent of Group E2, confirmed that the training centre was applying unit standard-based training. They added that the training centre was training artisans according to the unit standards of MERSETA. The learners had to complete modules before they could qualify as artisans.

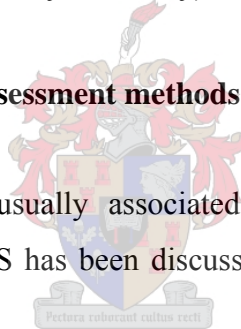
4.3.2.1 Assessment policies

The assessment policies did not receive much attention and the respondents were vague about the contents of the policies. Although some of the respondents of Groups B1 and B2 said that they had seen the policy documents, they did not know what the policies on assessment entailed. They mentioned that they were implementing their own assessment policy that was written in conjunction with the NQA (National Quality Authority) and the SETA. The policy was added to the quality system of the college. The lecturer involved in the hair-care learnership followed a different set of guidelines than the rest of the college.

The respondents of Groups E1 and E2 were not implementing the above mentioned policy because they had not implemented learnerships yet. They had obtained information regarding the assessment policies during information sessions but were still following the prescriptions of the Department of Education regarding assessment. The Training Centre had to adhere to the policies of MERSETA and the MQA (Mine Quality Authority).

4.3.2.2 The implementation of assessment methods and approaches

Continuous assessment (CASS) is usually associated with outcomes-based assessment and therefore the implementation of CASS has been discussed separately from the other assessment methods and approaches.



CASS was mainly implemented informally by respondents because it was not required for the N-courses, school-based subjects or learnerships. One respondent of Group E2 implied that he used CASS because he gave his learners homework daily and transferred those marks to the term mark. Another respondent was very adamant when she stated that she did not want to implement CASS because it was too much work.

The respondents of Group B1 explained the position of CASS at the college. Although continuous assessment was used in Grade 12 subjects, the Grade 12 learners at the college wrote three examination papers, the third paper replacing a CASS mark. According to a respondent, CASS was not compulsory and each lecturer did as he or she saw fit. As a respondent put it, “The CASS that I want to do with my English is my own choice.” The unit standards required that marks be

given continuously so that different aspects could be assessed. One respondent of Group B2 made an interesting comment regarding CASS:

The “children” (she was previously a teacher - author) constantly have to make some or other nice thing, such as writing a letter. In the old times we gave marks for various things. Now they just give it a grand name. (“Die kinders moet nou gedurig een of ander mooi dingetjie maak, jy kan ‘n briefie skryf. Dit is maar in die ou tyd wat ons klein puntjies gegee het vir dit en dat. Nou roep hulle dit net grand.”)

However, another respondent replied that in learnerships CASS was called formative assessment.

The variety and frequency of assessment methods that were applied depended on the lecturer as well as on the group of learners that were taught. There was no prescription from either the Department of Education or the college regarding the assessment methods that lecturers used. Table 4.11 gives a summary of the current assessment practices as reported by the different focus groups. The fact that Business Studies and Engineering Studies had not yet implemented outcomes-based assessment was reflected in the assessment methods that they used.

Table 4.11: Current assessment practices

FOCUS GROUPS	ASSESSMENT PRACTICES
E1 and E2	Two to three tests during the trimester plus an external examination. Two smaller tests and one big test, such as an internal examination. A test once every week, on a Friday. Daily homework that is assessed.
B1 and B2	Grade 12 subjects: CASS and two examinations. Learnerships: CASS and a portfolio of evidence of the work done at home. An oral assessment with a checklist. Formal assessment in the form of a test. N-courses (including computer typing): small continuous tests and external examination Hair-care: Continuous assessment and “practical observation assessment”. Computer studies: Learners complete tasks on the computer.
T1 and T2	Summative assessment at workplace (ISCOR). Self-tests. Oral tests. Criterion-tests (proficiency tests). Practical or theoretical tests. Trade tests. No percentages. Competent/ not yet competent

Some lecturers felt that they were restricted in the choice of assessment methods. A lecturer of Group E1 explained that, although they could experiment with the methods they had learnt in the courses, they were still forced to assess according to the traditional system because of the prescribed syllabi and the external examinations. Yet they had the freedom to manipulate the frequency and level of tests to determine the term mark (see Table 4.11). As a respondent commented, “Most have done the teacher’s diploma and in the diploma you have learned about all these funny assessment methods of assessment ... and you can apply some of that methods in your classroom but not everything.”

The respondents of group E2 shared their assessment practices with the rest of the group. Their assessment practices contained traces of outcomes-based assessment. Their responses are quoted below:

- My learners write small tests every week and the learners mark their own work. But these marks only counted 10% of the term mark because it is not the real thing that learners are going to get in the exams. (“Wat ek wel doen is ek skryf elke Vrydag met my klas ‘n toetsie, sommer kort. Hy merk hom sommer self en ek vat daai punt, dit is 10% van my opstuurpunt. Maar dit is nie die werklike ding wat jy gaan kry as hy eksamen gaan skryf nie. So sy gewigswaarde is nie vir my baie groot nie.”)
- I do not give the learners small tests but I give them problems on the chalkboard and then walk through the class to give individual assistance. In doing so, I can determine which learners can do the work and which learners need help. (“Ek gee nie baie klein toetsies nie, maar ek gee ‘n ding op die bord en dan help ek maar hier en daar. Ek laat hulle baie meer werk as wat dit gewoonlik was, waar ek staan net. Ek moet sê die enigste ding wat ek baie verander het met hierdie nuwe stories is om meer individuele aandag te gee. So begin ek agter kom, die een kan en die een kan nie.”) The other respondents agreed with her.
- I did not change my assessment methods but I learned to let the learners work harder. And when the learners experienced problems I provide individual assistance. (“...wat my baie help, is om die studente meer te laat werk. Ek laat hom werk, ek gooi hom in die diepkant, ek kry baie beter terugvoer waar hulle saam met mekaar werk en bymekaar leer.”)
- I assess almost everyday. They write essays, I work through it and give them feedback. I use these assessment opportunities to obtain marks but also to motivate the learners to work. (“Ek assesseer amper elke dag. Hulle skryf, dan werk ek dit deur, dan gee ek dit terug.

Maar die punte dra ek oor na hulle termynpunt toe. So ek stel alles op net om hulle te motiveer om te werk.”)

These respondents continued their discussion by mentioning feedback. One respondent made a summary of common problems that had been experienced during a test and then gave feedback when she handed out the test results. Another respondent confirmed this method of feedback. A third respondent only gave individual feedback when her classes were small and she had enough time. A fourth respondent added that he preferred to mark the test in the presence of each learner so that the learner could obtain immediate feedback. The rest of the respondents agreed.

Group B2 also discussed feedback. In general, when learners received their marked tests, the test was discussed with them in the group. However, the learnerships required individual feedback. One respondent explained that the lecturer sits with each learner, explains where a mistake was made and tells him or her whether he or she is competent or not yet competent. (“Jy kan sit met elke een van hulle en vir elkeen van hulle sê: ‘Hier’s jou fout, hier’s jy competent, hier’s jy nie competent nie.’”)

Regarding their assessment practices, the respondents of Group T2 explained the order of assessment. Firstly, a learner wrote one or more theoretical self-tests. Criterion tests, received from MERSETA, were then given to the learners who felt that they were competent to be assessed. In some modules the learners were assessed orally to determine whether they had done their own work. Another respondent explained that he marked the tests in the presence of the learners to give them instant feedback. With practical work, the lecturer either said “yea or nea”. A learner should be constantly aware of what he did right or wrong.

Another respondent of Group T2 stated that their method of training was 100% based on outcomes. Each module started with the outcomes to be achieved and these outcomes were reflected in the criterion test. This corresponded with what the respondents of Group B2 said about outcomes. The outcomes of the unit standards gave a lecturer an idea of how to undertake the assessment and were used to determine whether a learner was competent or not yet competent.

4.3.2.3 The recognition of prior learning (RPL)

It seems that RPL had not been fully employed at the college. Only two focus groups discussed the recognition of prior learning. Group T2 stated that, although they applied RPL, it was not common to do so. The reason for this was that the Training Centre targeted learners who had completed school and seldom enrolled learners from other colleges. Only learners with previous training were considered for RPL because the standard of training differs from institution to institution. One respondent described the process:

When a learner enrolled for a course, he or she had to bring certified copies of previous training as proof of previous training. Depending on the documentation, a learner might not do the module. He or she will be given the criterion test first. In other words, the learner does not learn to make the table; he has to make the table. (“Kyk, hy moet vir jou sekere dokumentasie bring en hierdie dokumentasie moet gewaarmerk wees. Die onus is op hom om vir jou te bewys hy het daardie deel van die werk klaar gedoen of hy het genoeg kennis om daai deel van die werk te doen. En dan kry ons dit en op grond daarvan dan gee ons vir hom baiekeer nie ‘n module om dit te doen nie, maar ons gee hom direk die kriterium om te doen. Met ander woorde, hy leer nie om die tafel te maak nie, hy moet daar vir ons die tafel maak.”)



The assessment for RPL and full-time learners was the same because the standards of MERSETA and MQA had to be maintained.

Group B2 had various approaches to what they called RPL. According to one respondent, the only form of RPL applied to learners who had finished school and wanted to enter the college at N4-level. The college used a Swedish scale to determine whether a learner qualified for a course. If a learner did not qualify, he or she had to do additional school subjects. Another respondent added that the traditional entrance requirement still applied and that a learner could receive recognition for business subjects done at school level. A third respondent stated that there was a policy for RPL but it had not yet been applied. According to the lecturer from the hair-care department it was impossible for a learner to obtain RPL because it was not possible to teach learners at different levels.

4.3.2.4 The integration of knowledge and skills

As with the recognition of prior learning, the integration of knowledge and skills did not receive much attention. Again, this was partially due to the fact that learnerships had not been implemented in the whole college. Although this was the case, the respondents did explain how the theoretical part and practical part of the courses were connected.

A respondent of Group B1 mentioned that learners wrote a separate theoretical examination and a practical examination in the computer course. Later on, she contradicted herself when she stated that learners wrote only one examination paper that combined the practical and theoretical components. The respondents of Group E1 stated that the practical classes were separate from the theoretical classes and that these practical classes were being offered after hours. An electronics lecturer shared with the rest of the group that a practical course had been initiated on the basis of the N1 Electronics course to provide learners with an insight into the theoretical part of the course. Hearing this, a respondent explained what the situation in England was regarding the assessment of practical courses.

- “That (workplace assessment) is the only way you can assess actually whether a learner is competent or not because if you are thinking in terms of a boilermaker or a fitter, he is working in a training centre. He is working in a protective environment. Everything is there. He gets through the job. But take that guy and put him back in a session and nothing is there. He has to make a plan to get a thing working. That is a true reflection whether he is competent or not.”
- Another respondent said, “But I think your training must include that preparation phase. He must plan, he must organise and he must get his material. That should be part of the unit standard.”
- “Ja, but that’s what I said, but you can’t assess him in the workplace, there in the training centre environment. You have to assess him in the workplace. You’re going to need it, a session that you can do the assessments on the job to enable the staff members to do it.”

Group T2 had a long discussion on the integration of knowledge and skills. According to one respondent, MQA required learners to spend 30% of their time at the Training Centre and the remainder of the time at the workplace. They called it on-the-job-training. However, the Training Centre did not have enough lecturers to assess the learners in the workplace. Another problem was that the lecturers needed to have the relevant qualification, which some lecturers did not have

any longer and, concerning the mines, they had to go underground, which had safety and insurance implications.

A respondent of Group E2 indicated that a learner had to complete the N2-level before progressing to the Training Centre where each course was divided into 88 weeks of theory and 80 weeks of the practical component. A respondent of Group E1 stated that the Training Centre was more practice-oriented, but added later that drawing was a practical subject and that it was not possible to teach a practical subject in a unit standard-based way. A respondent of Group E2 was of the opinion that unit standards could only work for practical subjects.

Group B2 also discussed the topic of an integrated theory and practical model in detail. It appeared that the Sport learnership consisted of a practical and theoretical component. The learners spent a week at the college and three weeks at the workplace. A respondent explained that the ideal was to have assessors in the workplace but, in reality, the lecturers had to administer the assessment themselves. The learners who took the Computer course had to be assessed at the college for practical reasons. The Hair-care learners were assessed in the workplace, whether it was at a private salon or the salon at the college.

4.3.3 Problems with the implementation of outcomes-based assessment

As with the questionnaire, questions regarding problems with the implementation of outcomes-based assessment were asked to determine the problems lecturers were experiencing or could expect to experience when implementing outcomes-based assessment. These problems should be seen against the context of the previous section. The problems were discussed by the lecturers from different perspectives, ranging from problems with current assessment practices to problems anticipated in the new assessment system.

The questions that were asked did not explicitly refer to problems. The aim was rather to encourage a discussion on limitations and strengths, advantages and disadvantages and challenges and concerns regarding outcomes-based assessment. Although the respondents were prompted to talk about these problems, some of the problems were raised while other topics were being discussed. Any other problems that were not relevant to the implementation of outcomes-based assessment were omitted.

A respondent of Group B1 was frank, “That is what we will tell you; we will sit with you and tell you all the problems that we encounter.”

Table 4.12 provides a summary of the problems that surfaced. Each problem is discussed in detail in the following sections. The respondents from the Training Centre mainly had problems with learners but they also addressed the workload, SETAs, standards and assessor training and registration. The respondents from the Business Studies department and the Engineering department complained more about the resources and external problems but also addressed learner-related problems.

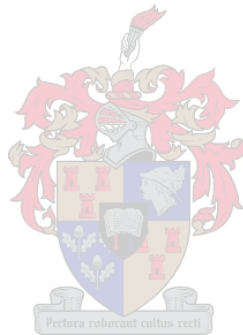


Table 4.12: Problems with the implementation of outcomes-based assessment

	B1	B2	E1	E2	T1	T2
Learners						
Large numbers	XX	X	X			
Insight and general knowledge						XX
Ability and aptitude	X					XX
Language proficiency				X		XX
Ethics	XX	X				X
Resources						
Time	XX	X	XX	XX		
Workload	XX	XX	XX			X
Administration and paperwork	XX	XX				
External factors						
SETAs	XX				XX	XX
Management		XX		XX		
Standards and assessment criteria			XX		X	
Assessor training and registration	X	X			XX	

X = problem mentioned by member/s of the group;

XX = problem discussed in detail by all the members of the group

4.3.3.1 Learners

The issue of learners received various degrees of attention. Groups B1 and T2 had the most pressing problems with learners.

The respondents of Group T2 felt negative about the quality of learners that enrolled at the Training Centre. In general, the learners had inadequate general knowledge and lacked the required ability. One respondent explained that learners could not answer simple questions regarding the application of theory because they did not know the basic theory. Furthermore, these learners struggled to understand the instructional language. They did not know the meaning of some of the terminology and were not able to explain concepts in their own words. A respondent of Group E2 made the comment that children who had been exposed to Curriculum 2005 could not read or spell correctly and that this had an effect on their further studies.

Another respondent of Group T2 felt that the type of learner that enrolled at the Training Centre was mainly a person who did not have other options after Grade 12. These learners were admitted to a course regardless of their abilities. The respondent believed that the previous system delivered a better product because the learners had to write aptitude tests to determine whether they had the ability to study a course. He made the statement that not everyone can become a surgeon. (“Laat ons eerlik wees, nie almal kan chirurg wees nie.”) Success was guaranteed because learners who passed the aptitude tests were usually responsible and motivated and they were easily employed. A third lecturer stated that learners without motivation had a negative impact on him. A respondent of Group B2 was also negatively impacted by learners who were unmotivated and who disappeared from classes.

Another aspect that concerned the respondents of Group T2 was the ethics among learners. During self-assessments the learners wrote the answers from their module books. A respondent of Group B1 experienced a scenario where she was not always sure whether the portfolios of evidence that the learners had to hand in were their own work. She explained how she had encountered dishonesty among learners the previous day:

They hand in a portfolio of evidence of work they had done at home and bring it. And this is one of the problems because you don't always know whether that portfolio is their work. And in the unit standard that I did yesterday three of the ladies copied each other's portfolio of evidence. They gave in exactly the same portfolio of evidence to the gentleman. So, what do I do then? What do I do in such a case? I told them I don't know if the SETA is going to come and assess them because you copied from each other. It's not your own work. How do you know that it is not their own work?

Learner numbers also received much attention. An English lecturer of Group B1 described the situation of the language subjects, which were compulsory for matric learners:

If I had to assess according to the subject English, now every learner has to take English in matric, it means that the classes are big. You are looking at thirty to forty people in a classroom at school. Here we have luckily at the moment about twenty five. Now to sit with each individual with an assessment sheet, to declare the person competent or not yet competent, could take many days on that one item. So time is a

factor. The load of the syllabus is a factor. I think under those circumstances the theory works but in practice it is not going to work.

Another respondent added:

You will never finish your syllabus and it all comes back to the teacher or the lecturer. I mean, let's face it, everything has got its benefits, but in practice, time and numbers are not going to work. ... If I have a say, English and Afrikaans will remain like that, like it is now for ages and ages. That's the only way you can teach it. You cannot take in a school with 42 – 45 learners and do it this way. It is practically impossible.

The Hair-care lecturer of Group B2 said that she could not cope with 30 learners. Another lecturer confirmed that he did not know how she managed to complete her work. She was not able to finish the assessments in time and had to assess the learners between lectures.

When a respondent of Group E1 mentioned the problem of big classes, another respondent provided a solution.

- “What I would like to add onto this discussion is certain of the things can be assessed in small groups. Then you evaluate the exercise, the outcomes of the exercise and that will then be the determining competencies of the individual members. If you have thirty in the class, if you work in small groups of maybe five, you've got six little different projects which you have to evaluate. And that will make it easier.”
- Another respondent agreed, “There are ways in which you could make things work for you.”
- However, another respondent was not so sure about group work, “Ja, but now you talk about group work, but where you must decide whether mr ... is competent or not, if I take five people to work with mr ... that means all five people are competent. But is mr ... competent, yes or no? ‘no’ means that he was just a passenger.”
- The first respondent replied, “Hold on, hold on ...” but was interrupted by the previous respondent.
- “No, you need to do what we do in the trade. Each person does his own assessment.”
- “But that is not how group work works. In group work you have to facilitate, observe what is happening within the group.”

It is clear that learner numbers were closely linked to time-constraints and workloads. These aspects are discussed in terms of resources in the next section.

4.3.3.2 Resources

Resources refer to the time, workload and administration that were needed to assess learners in an outcomes-based manner. The respondents had different views regarding the time constraint. Some were concerned about the time it would take to assess the learners in an outcomes-based way while other respondents were concerned that the courses would have to be stretched to provide for learners who worked at their own pace.

Group E2 had diverse opinions regarding the time factor. When asked how they felt towards implementing outcomes-based assessment in the future, they responded in the following way:

- I cannot see how they can implement outcomes-based assessment in our type of courses because the term is too short. (“Ek kan nie sien hoe hulle dit in die tipe opleiding wat ons gee dit reg gaan kry nie. Die termyn is in elk geval te kort. Hulle sal die tydperk moet verleng, met ander woorde, ons gaan al die basiese onderrig-goeters moet verleng en vir wat?”)
- “If you think of outcomes-based education, one of the first things they tell you when you start doing that course is that you can only assess a learner when he is ready to be assessed. But we are limited to a time-frame to finish the syllabus in ten week’s time. ... This is definitely not learner-paced; we are doing it syllabus-paced.”
- Another respondent compared what she had experienced in the USA with what was happening in South Africa. She mentioned that the aim was ultimately to have an educational system that is like the American system. But it meant longer school hours. Although lecturers might not like the longer school hours, it worked. (“Ek was drie jaar daar (in Amerika) in die onderwys ...Dit is waarheen ons beweeg. Bv. langer skoolure. Die studente is meer blootgestel aan langer ure om te sit en leer en huiswerk doen en prakties doen. Dit gaan nie lekker wees vir die onderwysers of lektore nie, maar ek het gesien daai kant dit werk.”)
- The first participant responded by stating that the longer a course was the less a learner would be interested in what was done and the less he or she would remember what he or she had done. He tried to prove his point by asking the other participants whether they could remember what they had done in matric. They all responded by saying no. (“Hierdie ding

word uitgereken en hoe langer jy 'n ding uitrek, hoe minder stel 'n ou belang op die ou end wat jy werklik kan doen. Onthou jy nog wat jy in matriek gedoen het?")

- Another respondent disagreed with the previous respondent by saying that she did not think that courses would take much longer than was currently the case. She explained that if a learner could do something, then he or she could progress to the next level. He or she did not have to wait 10 weeks to be evaluated. Everybody agreed with her. ("Ek dink eintlik nie dat dit gaan so lank wees nie. Ek voel dat as 'n ou 'n ding kan doen, dan kan hy aangaan. Maar hy hoef nou nie tien weke te wag voordat hy nou eintlik geëvalueer word nie.")

The respondents of Group E1 had similar comments regarding the time-factor.

- "There will be an extra load because your whole preparation for classes will be different because the moment you start with that type of thing, with outcomes-based education as such in your class, there are not time periods described to complete the syllabi in. That means I can have twenty learners in my class and all twenty learners are on a different standard."
- "I think what's going to happen with this 'he can finish in his own time'; he will still have to finish in a certain time-span. We had that with the ABET (adult-based education and training)."
- "In the practical training we have that because to be competent in a certain job for the unit-based training you must be able to do a practical element in five or three hours to be competent. If you take more than three hours you're not competent."

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A respondent of Group T2 confirmed what the latter respondent of Group E1 had said. Although a learner was able to work at his or her own pace, there was a certain time-frame in which the module had to be completed. One of the criteria of the criterion test contained a time limit.

The Hair-care lecturer of Group B2, encouraged by a fellow respondent, complained about the fact that she could not assess her learners because she was not accredited as an assessor. She was only allowed to assess the learners in the presence of an external examiner. These examiners were either not available or charged R1 000 a day. As a result, she could not complete the assessments on time. The other respondents of the group sympathised with her situation. She also complained about the loaded syllabus. "It is not to the advantage of the learners because they cannot finish a course which they finished in the past in one year. I can't tell them you must come back next year again. It's impossible." One respondent was very sympathetic towards her.

The respondents involved with the learnerships, complained about the time-consuming administration and paperwork that accompanied the assessment process. A respondent told the other respondents who have not yet implemented the new system,

You should be worried about what's coming. For each little piece of work, for every letter, for everything you do, this is what it entails. (She showed them her file.) And then you must have another one in which you add all the names of your learners. So it's lots and lots of paperwork. It took me thirty minutes to mark this for one learner. And then it took me fifteen minutes to sit with that learner and explain and sign because both of us have to sign. Now take your day, take thirty learners and spend forty-five minutes with each learner. Your day is too short because you still have to eat and sleep.

Another respondent was concerned about what the previous respondent said. He stated,

So what we're going to be doing is give them the work and say, 'Good luck and may God go with you and I'll see if you're competent or not.' There's no time to even teach this stuff, that's how it's going to be. There's going to be so much work dished out to them and they've got to do it and get a portfolio going and we are going to just have to assess them and hope for the best." He added, "We do the work, we're dedicated but I think the administrative work swamp everybody to a point of leaving. The admin will drive people away from this college. It's now become paper-based as opposed to teaching.

Everybody agreed with him.

Similarly, the respondents of Group B2 were negatively impacted by the amount of paperwork and administration. Evidence was required by the National Qualifications Authority (NQA) for every aspect of the assessment process: the notice for assessment, the assessment itself, feedback and the results. Everything regarding assessment had to be in writing so that the process was more transparent to the learner. The load of paperwork also increased with an increase in learner numbers. A respondent explained that this was due to the fact that learners were allowed to be assessed more than once if the first time was not successful. For each round of assessment a different test had to be set, it had to be marked, the learner had to sign all the paperwork, feedback

had to be given and the process had to be repeated. The fact that only eight out of 25 learners were found competent in her class meant that most of the learners had to be assessed for a second time. However, the college policy stated that a learner could only be assessed a maximum of three times, after which he or she had to repeat the subject.

Issues with the unit standards were also a cause for concern. The respondents of Group E2 wanted to know who was going to be responsible for the writing of the unit standards. They feared that they would have to write the unit standards when their syllabi were going to change. It meant an increase in their workload.

This corresponded with what actually happened in the learnerships that were described by the respondents of Group B1 and B2. A respondent explained,

You see what our problem is, what we are at now. They give us the unit standard. From the unit standard we have to sit and write the learning material. Then you have to go and stand in front of a class and facilitate that learning material. And then you get all your paperwork. I'll show you what my paperwork entails.

A respondent of Group B2 stated that they had not received any guidelines as to how they had to assess the unit standards. They had to rewrite the unit standard, formulate it better and find more information. Another respondent suggested, "What I think would solve the problem is if you have people, writing learning material, you have facilitators, you have assessors. If I am an assessor, I can sit and I do assessments from morning, noon till night, that's fine."

4.3.3.3 External factors

External factors that caused problems and were seen as potential problems for implementing outcomes-based assessment refer to factors that were beyond the control of the lecturers. These factors included the functioning of the SETAs, the maintaining of standards and the way in which the changes were managed and communicated.

Focus groups T1, B1 and B2 raised the problems concerning assessor training and assessor registration with the SETA. These problems have been discussed in Section 4.3.1.

These focus groups also experienced other frustrations with the SETAs. According to a respondent of Group T1, MERSETA did not make the learners' results available on time. As a result many learners had lost their jobs because they did not have proof of their qualifications. Another respondent added that there was so much conflict between the different SETAs that the assessment system of education was in a limbo.

The respondents involved with the learnerships (Sport and Hair-care) of Group B1 struggled to obtain approval and accreditation for their programmes from the SETA.

- A respondent referred to the situation of the lecturer at Hair-care. He stated that she had struggled to obtain accreditation for her course, without any assistance from the department. (“Ter wille van haar (the facilitator) record gaan dit interessant wees as jy vir haar sê hoe lank sukkel jy al om die akkreditasie in orde te kry. En wat se reaksie kry jy van die departement af: niks nie.”) The rest of the group laughed when he made the statement. They were very sympathetic towards the lecturer from the Hair-care learnership.
- The Hair-care lecturer added that she was not allowed to assess the learners because her course had not been accredited yet. The SETA was of no help to expedite the accreditation process. (“Ek mag geen assessments doen nie, want ek is nie geakkrediteer nie. Hulle het my akkreditasie verlede jaar eenvoudig gekanselleer ... As ek die SETA bel, stuur hulle my van bakboord na stuurboord ... Op die ou end weet ek self nie wat om te doen nie.”)
- A lecturer from the Sport learnership said that they had already started with the classes while they were still waiting for the accreditation from the SETA. (“Ons het met hierdie learnership, die sport learnership, het ons begin verlede jaar ... en twee weke gelede het ons eers ‘n besoek gekry van die SETA om die akkreditasie te kry. Alles is nou in, nou sal ons hoor of ons dit mag gegee het, al vir ‘n jaar lank. En dit is ons krisis.”)

A respondent of Group T2 had mixed feelings regarding the involvement of the SETAs. Initially he had felt that there had to be regulations and guidelines to ensure that standards were maintained. Yet, he felt that the people who set these regulations and guidelines were not qualified to do so. According to him, they did not know the system and it had already taken longer “to get nowhere”. They were left in the dark, which placed an enormous stress on the leaders of the Training Centre. Another respondent added that they constantly had to adapt to instructions from the different SETAs because the different SETAs had different modules and module codes.

Communication between the different parties involved in assessment received much attention. A respondent of Group B2 felt that there was a communication gap between the Department of Education, the Department of Labour and the SETAs. Another respondent added that the communication problem had ripple effects that affected the college as well. The other respondents confirmed this statement. Elsewhere the first respondent also said that the different departments needed to decide among themselves how assessment should take place and then provide direction to the lecturers. At present, they had to continue with their work despite a lack of direction from the SETAs.

Similar problems were experienced with the way in which changes at the college had been managed in the Engineering department. Everybody in Group E2 disagreed with the current top-to-bottom management, which had resulted in a lack of information and communication.

- The department of education should have been transparent and ought to have given clear guidelines regarding the process and sequence of change. This would have given the lecturers the opportunity to give their input. (“As dit van onder begin het boontoe, ek dink dit sou beter gewees het. As hulle ons gesê het die riglyne, hier’s waarheen ons gaan, laat my daaraan werk. Dan kan ons onse insette daar bysit. Ons gaan eers met dit begin, miskien assessering, of eers unit standards, net so stapsgewys.”)
- I feel left in the dark about these changes. The only information that I received was to attend courses. (“Ek voel net persoonlik die dinge is vir my baie duister. Daar is nie vatplek nie. Jy weet, almal weet dit is so en almal sal verander, maar niemand kry ‘n ding wat sê, okay dit is, dis net, okay ons wag maar vir eendag as iemand hier inkom en sê. ‘Gaan op die kursus.’ ... al’s hang in die lug, maar ons weet iets moet gebeur, maar hoe, wat, waar, wanneer weet ons nie.”)

This type of management produced negative feelings. A respondent stated that they had to follow one person’s vision blindly, a person who had not conducted proper research to determine whether the new system would work. These changes were forced onto the lecturers although there was no guarantee that the system would work. (“Kom ek gaan vir jou sê, ons gaan nou agter een ou se visie aan. En hy het nie navorsing gedoen nie. Hy het nie gegaan en genoeg inligting gaan insamel om te kyk of sy visie gaan werk nie. Hulle druk dit af en forseer dit op ons af.”)

Another respondent added that the department should first have experimented with the new system before implementing it and stressed the point that it was important to know whether a

system was going to work before implementing it. (“Ek wil vir jou sê, die hele storie hoekom ek so negatief daaroor is, Hoekom het kurrikulum 2005 nie gewerk nie? Dit is ook ‘n ding wat van bo af geforseer was en op die ou einde het hy in ‘n doodloopstraat geloop ... Nou moet hulle teruggaan na die ou stelsel toe. Nou werk ons na hierdie nuwe assesseringstelsel toe. Waar gaan hy op eindig?”)

Finally, respondents of Group E1 had a lengthy discussion on the issue of standards, which related to the traditional assessment system. On the one hand they had to maintain their own standards when they assessed learners, but on the other hand they had to adhere to the standards of the department on external examinations. The following comments were made:

- “If you think about national exams, national standardisation, and all these funny Russian formulas that they are using at the department ... They say, for example, in science the norm is 40%. So, it doesn’t matter what you do in your class, 40% of your learners must pass the exams, the others will fail.”
- “They’ve got an adjustment.” The other respondents confirmed this statement.
- “They change the term marks. That was where the problems started.”
- “Yes, they deducted 11% from a learner’s term mark saying the lecturer was too lenient.
- “And when they say we should compile a term mark they don’t specify how we should compile the term mark. They say we have to use our own discretion.”

The same group also discussed assessment criteria:

- “They say basic numeracy. What is basic numeracy?” (Another respondent said that it is fundamental numeracy.) “They don’t specify the level of competency with basic numeracy. For example, if I train a boilermaker, he must know about volumes and areas.”
- “Yes, but that is part of your numeracy.”
- “Where’s my starting point and my end point? ... A boilermaker must calculate volumes and areas. Electricians must be able to read a tape-measure. So there are different levels of competency for numeracy.”
- A respondent provided the answer, “The unit standards have critical outcomes and these outcomes will have its own assessment criteria.”

After the advantages and disadvantages of outcomes-based assessment had been discussed, the respondents were asked to state their feelings about outcomes-based assessment. The next section provides a summary of their feelings.

4.3.3.4 Feelings and attitudes towards outcomes-based assessment

The views and attitudes of the respondents of the focus groups fell within a continuum that ranged from positive views to negative views. The lecturers who were involved with the learnerships were more inclined to be positive about the new assessment system. Although they had experienced the difficulties firsthand, they compared the positive and negative aspects and tried to view outcomes-based assessment from both sides:

- Initially we struggled with the learnerships, but after a year we know now what to do. (“Ja, by die learnerships weet ons dat, kyk, jy het verskriklik klei getrap, maar nou dat ons al ‘n jaar lank met learnerships besig is, nou begin ons, met hindsight, weet ons eintlik eers wat ons moet doen.”)
- “There are pros and cons to everything. There is definitely a positive aspect of assessing competent or not yet competent because you’re dealing with a person one-to-one. You’re not standing in front of a class handing out poetry, saying you all didn’t do well, you must do it again. With the one-on-one process, yes you can individually give the individual a lot of encouragement and personal time but it’s that time that you spend, you’ll never get through a syllabus if they expect the same syllabus to be taught in the future.”
- “It has got its pros and cons, I mean, let’s face it, everything has got its benefits, but in practice, time and numbers is not going to work.”
- In the sport learnership we were thrown in the deep side and we just had to cope. In between classes we had to do all these things. With further training one improves one’s practices. (“Hoe ons dit gedoen het in ons sport learnership, want ons is absoluut in die diepkant gegooi. Ons moes net swem. So baie van die goed is op ‘n baie lukrake manier gedoen. En dan moes ‘n mens nog jou klas gee, jy het praktiese opgestel en gedink dit is reg. Maar, in hindsight, en dan met verdere opleiding en kursusse wat ons bygewoon het, sien ‘n mens ander dinge en kan jy net beter en beter raak.”)
- We took the bull by the horns and did things the way we thought was right. (“...maar ons het maar die bul by die horings gepak en maar gedoen soos wat ons nou maar gedink het dit moet gedoen word.”)
- Firstly, two wrongs do not make a right. Many times the new systems do not work because they are implemented for the wrong reasons. They cut a hole in a paper and then cut a hole in a second paper to cover the first hole. Yet I am positive if all the teething problems have been sorted out. (“In die eerste plek, ek sê altyd, ‘Two wrongs does not make a right.’ En ek

dink baie kere van die nuwe sisteme is nie vir my reg nie. Dit is geïmplimenter om 'n verkeerde ding reg te maak, maar hulle maak dit reg met 'n verkeerde ding. Hulle maak 'n gat in 'n papier en sny dan 'n gat uit 'n ander papier om daai papier se gat toe te maak. Maar in die algemeen is ek baie positief om vorentoe te gaan, as al hierdie teething-problems uitgeskakel is en as ons 'n sisteem het wat kan werk vir ons.”)

- I think the system is good because I have experienced it in America and is that not our goal in the end? (“Ek dink weer dis 'n goeie ding, omdat ek dit reeds ervaar het in Amerika. Dis tog waarheen ons wil beweeg.”)

Some lecturers, who still had to implement outcomes-based assessment, were negative towards the new system:

- “The system could have worked in South Africa if we could have taken all classes and make them fifteen.”
- “The old system has been going for hundreds of years and it has been successful. Your greatest intellectuals went to class, had their lectures, had their assignments marked and write exams. Why are we changing things because of changing ... creating untold trouble and causing many, many good teachers to leave the profession out of sheer, sheer frustration?”
- “I totally agree ... both of us teach a language and I honestly don't see this new system working for languages.”
- I can tell you that the system is doomed. (“Dit kan ek vir jou sê, dis gedoem.”)
- Remember, I have a positive view. There is no way that it is going to work. I am just being realistic. (“Ja, maar onthou ek het 'n baie objektiewe siening. Ek kan nie sien hoe dit gaan werk nie. Ek is nou doodeerlik. Ek is meer realities.”)
- In responding on the transition from syllabi to unit standards, a respondent said that the situation is impossible because he does not see how they are going to manage the transition. (“Hoe gaan jy dit doen? Daar's nie 'n manier nie. Die situasie is onmoontlik, ek weet nie hoe kan jy dit regkry nie.”)

Other lecturers tried to be positive:

- The whole system can work because it can help many people who have never had the opportunity to learn. (“Die hele sisteem, né, kan werk, né, want dit help baie mense, veral mense wat nooit geleentheid gehad het nie.”)

- In order to make the system more effective, lecturers will have to be more open to change, attend courses to improve their knowledge and change a bad situation for the better. (“Om dit meer effektief te maak, dink ek sal ons meer oop wees vir aanvaarding en verandering en nie daarteen skop nie, maar kursusse bywoon en leer wat daar te lere is, te aanvaar en daarmee saam te leef. Ons moet die beste van ‘n slegte situasie maak.”)
- I do agree but I do not know of anyone who is against the change except the older people who are close to retirement. (“Nee, ek stem saam, maar ek dink nie daar is juis een wat skop daarteen nie, behalwe die ouer mense wat naby aan pensioen is nie.”)

It is clear that the lecturers had mixed feelings regarding outcomes-based assessment.

4.4 SYNTHESIS AND INTEGRATION

The college has embarked on the road towards the transformation of education and training and, consequently, assessment. It took various steps to ensure that the college as a whole was ready for this transformation process. The first step was to take responsibility for implementing the learnerships (DoE, 1998a). Learnerships provide an important vehicle to equip learners for the demands of the world of work (Gewer, 2001). The learnerships (Sport and Hair-care) had to be registered with the SETA but this process proved to be problematic because there were delays with the accreditation of these programmes (see Section 4.3.3.4).



With the assistance of the NQA and the EDTP SETA, the college also had to take responsibility for writing an assessment policy for the learnerships in order to direct the new assessment practices (see Appendix C) in accordance with the requirements of SAQA and the Department of Education. The policy addresses the role and responsibility of the assessor, the assessment process (appeal and reassessment), the moderation process and the recognition of prior learning. It is interesting to note that the moderation process was not mentioned by the focus groups. It is not clear whether the moderation process is in place yet.

The lecturers were informed on the different assessment policies through courses or information sessions. The lecturers gave the impression that they were not negative about the policies as such, but rather about the way in which the policies had been communicated to them. They felt that they had not been consulted in the transformation process, while they could have made valuable contributions. The lecturers involved with the N-courses also felt left in the dark regarding the

actual implementation date. The Department of Education only stated that it made provision for the gradual transformation of the N-courses. These courses, together with the national examinations, would prevail until the new curricula and assessment policies were in place for these courses (DoE, 1998a).

The second step was to register the lecturers as assessors. This was an important step because only registered assessors are allowed to assess a unit standard or qualification (RSA, 2001:14). While the results from the questionnaire indicated that most of the lecturers had received assessor training and had attended additional workshops related to OBE and outcomes-based assessment, the focus group discussions shed light on the actual process of assessor registration. Registering the lecturers as assessors was a proactive step because not all the lecturers had initially been involved in the learnerships. Yet, it was unfortunate that this proactive attitude had not been rewarded by prompt actions on the part of the SETA. The delays in terms of registration meant delays in the assessment processes of the learnerships at the college. The lecturers had been forced to conduct the assessments although the college policy stated that only registered assessors were allowed to do assessments (see Appendix C). Furthermore, many lecturers were frustrated because they could not implement what they were trained for.

Although the training was bound to be met with resistance (Pretorius, 1998:v), the lecturers were not negative towards the idea of being trained as assessors. They were more concerned about the relevance of their training for future reference and the type of training that they received. Torrance (1995:150) warns that the training that lecturers receive should be appropriate and relevant otherwise lecturers might become negative and feel incompetent to assess the learners. This was evident in the discussion of one focus group on the generic training that they had received (see Section 4.3.1). SAQA (2001a:6) explains that assessor training should consist of a generic part that focuses on the expertise, knowledge and experience in assessment. Yet, assessors should also be able to prove that they are able to assess a particular unit standard or qualification. It means that lecturers have to apply their assessment skills to their own subject matter.

The third step was to ensure that assessors apply the new assessment policies and methods in their classrooms. There are various factors that can hinder this process (see Section 1.4.3). The literature indicates factors such as a tendency towards known, tried and tested assessment approaches (Edwards & Knight, 1995:10), the interference of assessment with real teaching (McCallum *et al.*, 1995:63) and a lack of resources (Sutherland & Peckham, 1998:101). Although

the results of the questionnaire and the focus group interviews supported these factors, other aspects also surfaced during the focus group discussions and in the responses to the questionnaire.

During the focus group discussions the respondents indicated that the greatest obstacle was the fact that learnerships had not been implemented in most of the courses. According to them they could only implement outcomes-based assessment once learnerships were in place. As a result, they still felt compelled to use traditional assessment methods. The respondents indicated that they mainly used tests, homework and external examinations to assess the learners. Oral tests and practical tests were also mentioned while the lecturers who taught learnerships used portfolios of evidence. The respondents complained that the syllabi and external examinations were still prescriptive. Consequently, the results of the questionnaire indicated that, in general, the respondents still rewarded individual effort and specific content knowledge rather than team effort, outcomes, critical thinking and skills (see Section 4.2.2).

The results from the questionnaire shed more light on this subject. It showed that, on average, the respondents attempted various assessment methods and experienced the use of a variety of assessment methods at the college. Yet they did not mention the use of these methods in the focus group discussions (see Table 4.5). In the open-ended questions the respondents indicated that they preferred written assignments and tests to more alternative assessment methods. They were frank in their reasons for using the more traditional methods. Their reasons ranged from the best way to evaluate learners, an accurate means of determining the knowledge of the content that learners have, to the plain fact that it worked. Although Maki (2001:30) mentions that choosing appropriate assessment methods can be a challenge to lecturers, the respondents indicated that they seldom experienced a problem with finding the appropriate method. This might be due to the fact that they already viewed written tests and examinations as appropriate methods.

These lecturers might be criticised for the assessment methods that they applied, but most of them, including the lecturers who taught N-courses, used these methods in a formative way. The results from the questionnaire and the focus group discussions showed that lecturers assessed learners in order to assist them in their learning by giving feedback and diagnosing their learning problems. The aim of assessment was also to motivate and encourage the learners. They agreed that assessment should be more developmental than judgemental (See Fig. 4.3 and Tables 4.3 and 4.4). In the focus group discussions, the lecturers emphasised the fact that their learners continually wrote small tests. The aim of these tests was to obtain marks for the term mark as well as to

determine which learners needed help. Some respondents felt that regular tests help and motivate learners to work. Nearly all the focus groups discussed feedback as a means of determining which learners were competent. They even indicated that they chose the assessment methods that provided the best feedback.

These practices support the objective of the Green Paper and White Paper that assessment has to be developmental and formative (DoE, 1998b:46, DoE, 1998a). CASS is linked to formative assessment. The use of CASS emphasises the assistance of a learner throughout the learning process by using assessment as a tool for learning (Pretorius, 1998:83). CASS also necessitates feedback, but the feedback should not only be used for developmental and diagnostic purposes: it should inform further teaching and improve learning (Luckett & Sutherland, 2000). The lecturers made it clear that they did not implement CASS formally. Yet, their assessment practices contained traces of CASS. The lecturers frequently gave marks and feedback.

Another aspect that hindered the successful implementation of the new assessment practices was the level of knowledge that the lecturers had regarding outcomes-based assessment. Continuing with the subject of CASS, the results from the questionnaire showed that the respondents understood CASS, but it is not certain if they knew how to use CASS correctly. Many lecturers mentioned *continual* tests during the focus group discussions. The literature states that when CASS is not used correctly it can contribute to the workload of the lecturers. This was one of the problem areas that the lecturers addressed in the questionnaire and the focus group discussions.

It seems that the lecturers were also not familiar with criterion-referenced assessment and authentic assessment. Apart from formative assessment and CASS, criterion-referenced assessment and integrated assessment also inform the new assessment system. Considering the discussion that a focus group had with respect to problems surrounding norm-referenced assessment it is not surprising that criterion-referenced assessment is preferred to norm-referenced assessment (see Section 4.3.3.3). Regarding integrated assessment, the requirements for the integration of knowledge and skills were successfully employed in the learnerships (see Section 4.3.2.4). Even the lecturers from the N-courses saw the importance of workplace training and assessment. However, the main problem with the work-based assessment was the lack of assessors in the workplace.

This additional work brought about by work-based assessment raised complaints among the lecturers involved with the learnerships. The role of an assessor has already been proved to be overwhelming. In addition to their heavy workloads, the lecturers complained about a lack of resources (see Section 4.3.3.2). This is consistent with the stated literature (Sutherland & Peckham, 1998:101; Wolf in Torrance, 1995:92; Ambler, 2001:13). The respondents complained about the amount of paperwork, which increased with an increase in the number of learners. The paperwork was time-consuming and the lecturers struggled to complete their assessments on time. Inadequately prepared learners also raised problems. Many learners had to be assessed more than once, increasing the number of assessments that had to be done.

The other lecturers who taught N-courses were also concerned about these workload-related problems while the results from the questionnaire supported the fact that problems regarding time constraints, workloads, paperwork and inadequately prepared learners were most frequently experienced by lecturers.

Despite these difficulties, there were lecturers who tried to provide solutions to the problems. A respondent suggested that there should be assessors who are only responsible for the assessment process. Another respondent mentioned that the assessment of team work could reduce the workload. However, he was opposed by the other respondents when he tried to explain how group work should function. The other responses to group work were interesting. Although the respondents did not give team work a high ranking in the questionnaire, they indicated later on that they had experienced the assessment of team effort at the college. Nobody mentioned team work in the focus groups except the one respondent.

Regardless of the unanswered questions that they had and the problems that they faced, the respondents felt positive towards outcomes-based assessment. Most of the respondents indicated in the questionnaire that they supported outcomes-based assessment. Only 50% of the respondents were confident to implement outcomes-based assessment. They were cautious about the new system. Initially, the atmosphere in the focus group discussions was positive but as the discussions progressed, the respondents were confronted with the realities of outcomes-based assessment. The result was that there were mixed feelings among the respondents. Some of the respondents, who were still teaching N-courses, were pessimistic towards the new system because they were not sure of how it was going to operate. Except for two respondents, who openly stated

that they were negative towards the new assessment system, the respondents were more frustrated by the problems than negative towards the new system.

The lecturers involved with the learnerships were realistic about outcomes-based assessment. Although they were aware of the problems that accompanied the learnerships and outcomes-based assessment, they also saw the potential of the new system and were prepared to work towards implementing it to full effect.

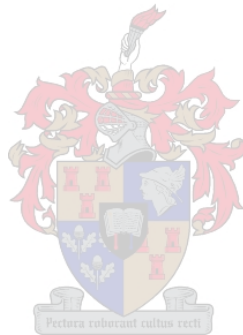
4.5 CONCLUSION

The current situation regarding the implementation of the new assessment policies at the college has been both complicated and demanding. On the one hand, the college offered N-courses that functioned according to the traditional system. This meant that summative assessment and norm-referenced assessment were still prominent while assessment practices were dictated by written tests and examinations. On the other hand, the college had to manage the changes to the new FET system. This involved the implementation of learnerships and outcomes-based assessment. Consequently there had to be a shift to criterion-referenced assessment, more formative assessment practices and integrated assessment.

The lecturers found themselves somewhere between these opposite ends. The lecturers who were lecturing N-courses had to make the gradual shift to the new FET system. They had to be trained as assessors and be prepared for the implementation of the learnerships in their courses while they still had to assess according to the traditional system. Some of them tried to implement the new assessment practices but had to face the restrictions of time-constraints and external examinations. This was both frustrating and a concern to the lecturers. They were worried about the problems that the new system would bring, such as an increase in the workload and the feasibility of the new assessment system.

The lecturers who had implemented the learnerships also encountered obstacles, which originated from the SETAs. The lecturers struggled to obtain accreditation for their courses and there were delays in the registration of assessors. This also caused frustration among the lecturers because there was no support from the SETAs. Furthermore, they complained about the paperwork and the increase in learner numbers.

This chapter has reported on the results of the questionnaire and the focus group interviews. The results have been presented, analysed and interpreted. It is clear that there is ample room for improving the implementation of the new assessment policies in the classroom. In the next chapter, conclusions will be drawn and recommendations will be made based on the conclusions.



CHAPTER 5

SYNTHESIS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The transformation of the FET institutions, and its assessment practices, has been directed by various policies and numerous stakeholders. The process has been gradual because of its complicated nature and many colleges are currently functioning on both the old and the new curriculum while the transformation process is in progress. The path of transformation has not been easy and many problems have been experienced or anticipated during the course of the transformation process.

In Chapter 2 the relevant policies and literature have been consulted to determine what the underlying principles of outcomes-based assessment are and how outcomes-based assessment should be implemented. In Chapter 4 the views and opinions of lecturers have been considered to obtain a view of the current situation of a college with regard to the transformation of its assessment practices to outcomes-based assessment.

The aim of this chapter is to compare the information from the literature review, the questionnaire and the focus group interviews in an attempt to find disparities between the current (2006) reality at the college and the policies. General problems are identified and recommendations are made to provide solutions to these problems.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH

This section provides an overview of the implementation process of outcomes-based assessment as seen from the different perspectives and points of view.

5.2.1 Literature review

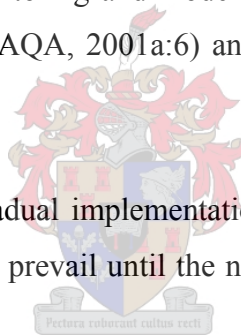
The policies on assessment are clear about the new role of assessment in outcomes-based education. SAQA (2001b) states that assessment practices should be aligned with the assessment practices of Outcomes-based Education and Training. The White Paper (DoE, 1998a) and the Green Paper (DoE, 1998c) are clear about what these assessment practices should entail. They

should focus on outcomes; be criterion-referenced, developmental and formative; adhere to the NQF principles for good assessment and provide reliable and valid information on learner achievement and competency.

The focus of assessment should be learner-centred. Holistically seen, it means that learners should be given the opportunity to receive recognition of prior learning and be assessed by various methods to accommodate their different learning styles. Assessment should assist in the process of equipping learners for the world of work by being authentic and by taking place in real-life situations. Learners should not only have the necessary content knowledge but should also show that they have the skills, attitudes and values to apply the knowledge in real-life situations.

To establish such an assessment system, the Department of Education (DoE) expects institutions to take responsibility for the transformation of assessment and the implementation of new assessment practices (DoE, 1998a). The validity and reliability of these assessment practices will be ensured by means of external monitoring and moderation. Assessors have to be trained and registered with the relevant SETA (SAQA, 2001a:6) and assume the roles as set out by SAQA (2001a:45).

The DoE makes provision for the gradual implementation of outcomes-based assessment. This means that external examinations will prevail until the new curriculum and learning programmes are in place.



The related literature supports the views of the policies regarding outcomes-based assessment. Where traditional assessment practices have mainly been used to assess knowledge, they should be used in conjunction with more integrative assessment practices to assess outcomes (Nelson & Futter, 1998:153). Integrative assessment implies that theory and practice should be combined into a more holistic view of learning (Gewer, 2001:14). It includes a combination of assessment methods to assess outcomes (Ambler, 2001:18). Apart from tests and examinations, portfolios, projects, case studies and simulations should be used. Consequently, formative and summative assessment should be used side by side to assess the competence of learners. While learners have to be assessed before they can progress to the next level (Workshop on OBE, 1999) they should also receive support in the learning process to be able to progress to the next level (Boud, 2000:155).

Although criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessment are not mutually exclusive (Luckett & Sutherland, 2000), criterion-referenced assessment is associated more with outcomes-based education. Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is also an important component of outcomes-based assessment and has been addressed in the literature. Simosko (1996) states that the recognition of prior learning has become widespread in a number of colleges in the UK. RPL has been implemented in a wide range of vocational programmes. Together with self-assessment, RPL has been seen as a tool to improve life-long learning. Self-assessment emphasises the learner-centred approach of assessment where learners have to share in the responsibility of assessment and become more active participants in the assessment process (McDowell & Sambell, 1999:111).

The view of outcomes-based assessment that is portrayed by the literature seems to be an ideal that is not easily attained. There are a number of obstacles in the way of attaining this ideal. Firstly, lecturers generally tend to follow the more traditional assessment practices. The literature shows that this trend is found at many colleges (Pretorius, 1998:v). Lecturers prefer more familiar assessment practices because these are the practices they have been taught and have used throughout their schooling. Secondly, lecturers feel that it will take too much effort to change their assessment practices and, consequently, they will neglect their teaching practices (McCallum *et al.*, 1995:63). Thirdly, lecturers are unsure about their new roles as assessors. They have not been trained as assessors as such. They feel that assessment is a separate area of study and that assessment should have its own experts (De la Harpe & Radloff, 2000:173). Lastly, the lack of resources to implement the new assessment practices has come under scrutiny. The implementation of these practices will result in an increase in the workload of lecturers while the various aspects of assessment will demand more time (Sutherland & Peckham, 1998:98).

It is clear that there are numerous advantages of outcomes-based assessment in terms of learning and preparing learners for the workforce. Yet there are many obstacles that need to be overcome before the application of outcomes-based assessment in the classroom can become a reality. The questionnaire and focus group discussions provide a view of the current realities at the college.

5.2.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire provided valuable information regarding the position of lecturers with reference to the implementation of outcomes-based assessment. This included assessor training, knowledge

of outcomes-based assessment, assessment methods employed in the classroom, problems with outcomes-based assessment and the views and attitudes concerning outcomes-based assessment.

Most of the lecturers had been trained as assessors and had received additional training as well. Yet, when the lecturers were asked to indicate whether they knew certain aspects and principles pertaining to outcomes-based assessment, some of them were unsure or had incorrect conceptions of what had been asked (see Figure 4.1, Section 4.2.1). This was particularly true for norm-referenced, criterion-referenced assessment and authentic assessment. Moreover, lecturers indicated in a later section of the questionnaire that they still had unanswered questions regarding outcomes-based assessment and were confused about certain aspects. As a result, they felt that they did not have sufficient knowledge regarding outcomes-based assessment and they were not overly confident to implement outcomes-based assessment (Section 4.2.4).

Lecturers tended to associate outcomes-based assessment mainly with CASS and RPL (Table 4.2). The lecturers were aware of the fact that outcomes should be the primary aspect that has to be assessed according to OBE. However, they still preferred to assess content knowledge, individual effort and the product of learning (Figure 4.2). Interestingly enough, they used the results of the assessments to gather information for competence, to assist in learning, to motivate learners, to diagnose learning problems and to provide feedback (Figure 4.3, Section 4.2.2). Although their objectives were in line with the requirements of OBE, they used the wrong means to reach their objectives. They were still using written assessment as their principal means of achieving their objectives.

In general, lecturers experienced assessment at the college as a process that takes place in real-life settings, helps learners to learn and is more developmental than judgemental. In some cases there were discrepancies between lecturers' individual approaches to assessment and their experiences of the assessment practices at the college. Lecturers agreed that a variety of assessment methods were used and that these methods made provision for the assessment of co-operative activities. They experienced this despite the fact that they preferred to assess individual effort by mainly using written assessments.

Regardless of the assessment practices of the lecturers, the most pressing problem was an increase in their workload. Administration and paperwork related to assessment and an increase in learner numbers without an increase in staff numbers add to the workload of lecturers. To a lesser extent,

problems related to learners were often experienced. Although lecturers experienced these problems, they felt positive and supportive towards the implementation of outcomes-based assessment (Section 4.2.4).

The focus group interviews provided a more in-depth view of the current practices at the college.

5.2.3 Focus group discussions

Where the questionnaire failed to do so, the results from the focus group interviews made a clear distinction between the two scenarios that featured at the college.

Except for the Sport course and the Hair-care course, the Business Studies department and the Engineering department still offered N-courses and, consequently, operated according to the traditional assessment system. This meant that lecturers were still using mainly summative assessment and norm-referenced assessment while written tests and examinations were generally being used to assess learners. Even with these traditional methods large learner numbers posed a problem.

Being trained as assessors, these lecturers tried to implement certain aspects of outcomes-based assessment, such as continuous assessment, formative assessment and feedback. However, they were restricted by factors such as the time constraint of a trimester and the requirements of external examinations. This meant that learners could not be assessed when they were ready and time-consuming assessment methods were being neglected. The fact that learners had to write an external examination increased the summative nature of the assessment practices that lecturers employed.

These lecturers complained about the way in which the changes had been conveyed to them. They were against a top-down management style and wanted to participate in the transformation process. Many felt that they could make a valuable contribution to the transformation process. The Department of Education also failed to stipulate the chain of events for the implementation of the learnerships. The lecturers wanted to know when the learnerships were going to be implemented and who was going to be responsible for the learning material of the learnerships.

Their concerns were not unfounded. The lecturers who were involved in the learnerships stated that they had to write the learning material, facilitate the learning material and assess it. Their workload was further increased by an increase in the learner numbers and the amount of paperwork that accompanied each assessment event to make the assessment process more transparent. Although these lecturers did not complain about the management style of the Department of Education, they had their own share of frustration with the SETAs. They struggled to be registered as assessors and to obtain accreditation for their courses.

The lecturers involved with the learnerships had to implement outcomes-based assessment. The college provided these lecturers with an assessment policy that was written to direct the lecturers. They had to assess the outcomes that were stipulated in the unit standards, they had to assess learners in the workplace and their assessment practices had to be more formative and diagnostic. Feedback was an integral part of their assessment practices. However, only tests, portfolios, self-tests and criterion-referenced tests were used to obtain these objectives.

Although the lecturers did not explicitly state that they were negative towards the new system, there were underlying feelings of negativity. The discussions of the lecturers who taught the learnerships were dominated by complaints about the amount of paperwork and the inability of the SETAs to provide support. The lecturers from the Training Centre were sceptical about the feasibility of the system and whether it would deliver better artisans. Some lecturers who taught N-courses were positive towards the new assessment system while others believed that the old system was more effective.

The next section provides conclusions regarding the information that had been collected from the literature, as well as the results obtained from the questionnaire and focus group interviews on outcomes-based assessment at the Klerksdorp campus of Vuselela College.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

The policies on assessment and the realities of the assessment practices at educational institutions are interdependent. The policies advise the institutions on their assessment practices while the institutions have to put into practice what the policies have stated in theory. Yet the relationship between policies and practices is not always as simple as stated above. Some discrepancies have surfaced from the study, which have led to the following conclusions.

5.3.1 Discrepancy regarding support from the Department of Education

The first discrepancy concerns the involvement of the DoE in the transformation process of the assessment system. The Green Paper (DoE, 1998c) stated that public examinations will prevail at N3-level at colleges until the new curriculum, learning programmes and assessment policies are in place (DoE, 1998a). The White Paper (DoE, 1998a) aimed to support the development of outcomes as competencies and learner-centred education. Furthermore the Framework for Approval of Qualifications and Programmes for Level 2-4 (Institutions) was expected to be declared as policy in March 2003 (DoE, 2003). (See Section 2.2 for the review of the FET policies on assessment) Even though the DoE has been committed to the policies, there was a lack of progress in the implementation of the new curriculum and its unit standards.

There were various rumours that over a period of two years the N-courses were to be phased out. Yet, this process was postponed. Some lecturers speculated that there were problems with the writing of the unit standards, which the department could not solve. According to them, the DoE was supposed to be responsible for the writing of the unit standards. Another lecturer speculated that the DoE did not contemplate the amount of work that it was going to take to write the unit standards and therefore no one was prepared to take on the task. Consequently, the lecturers were concerned that, in the end, they would have to write the unit standards.



It can thus be concluded that the problem that caused the disparity between what the DoE put on paper and what happened in reality was the fact that the DoE did not foresee the complexities of the FET system or the process to integrate knowledge and skills.

5.3.2 Discrepancy regarding delays on the part of the Sector Education and Training Authorities

The second discrepancy between policy and practice also concerned a delay. Although the DoE was adamant that lecturers have to be registered as assessors and that programmes be accredited, the lecturers who were involved with the learnerships had numerous problems with the process to accredit their programmes. The SETAs provided no support with the accreditation process. Similarly, the lecturers who applied to be registered as assessors did not receive any support from

the SETA. They did not receive the proper documentation, while many lecturers had to repeat their training.

Regarding the training, the quality and relevance of the training that lecturers received to become assessors should be questioned. Although it was not part of the scope of this study, it should be mentioned that the training was not up to standard. Although the lecturers were knowledgeable regarding the procedures of assessment, they were unfamiliar with or confused about the underlying principles of outcomes-based assessment, such as criterion-referenced assessment, formative assessment and authentic assessment. As a result, many lecturers felt that they did not have sufficient information to implement outcomes-based assessment with confidence. In addition, many lecturers had unanswered questions about the new system.

It can be concluded that the problem that caused these delays was the fact that the DoE and the SETAs did not realise how much work it would require to accredit programmes and register assessors across the FET band. The different aspects of the training processes were also not considered.

5.3.3 Discrepancy regarding the implementation of the new assessment practices in N-courses

A third discrepancy that needs to be highlighted involves the implementation of the new assessment methods and practices. A problem was the conflicting requirements that the DoE expected of lecturers who taught N-courses. Although the lecturers had to be trained and registered as assessors according to the policies, in reality they were still expected to function according to the traditional assessment system. The DoE prescribed external examinations and lecturers had to submit a term mark for each learner. However, the lecturers were not restricted as to how they compiled the term mark, but the DoE took the liberty of changing the term marks if they were not compatible with a certain norm.

Another reason for the discrepancy was that the new curriculum was not in place yet and the DoE needed to have an alternative plan in place. The training of lecturers was regarded as the least disruptive to the current status of colleges and it was believed that lecturers could get used to the new assessment methods. Unfortunately it created some confusion. Some lecturers tried to make sense of the situation by using a hybrid of assessment approaches while other lecturers decided not

to attempt the new assessment practices that they had learned in training. Therefore the DoE is not solely to blame for the lack of using alternative assessment methods in the classroom. Although some lecturers stated that they were restricted by the time-frame of a trimester, they indicated that they preferred the traditional assessment methods because the methods were tried and tested and the best way to assess learners. It is clear that the lecturers who taught N-courses mainly functioned according to the left-hand column of Table 2.1 (see Section 2.3.1). They were still the sole authority as assessors who assessed content and individuals. The learners were assessed at the college and were passive in the whole assessment process. Summative assessment and norm-referenced assessment were also dominant. Although there were lecturers who felt that they were forced to assess from a traditional perspective there were lecturers who chose to assess in a traditional manner.

The conclusion that can be drawn here is that a lack of direction and order on the part of the DoE resulted in a situation where many lecturers did not feel compelled to implement the new assessment practices.

5.3.4 Discrepancy regarding the implementation of the new assessment practices in learnerships

Another problem arose with the implementation of outcomes-based assessment in the learnerships according to the policies. Table 2.1 gives an indication that there was a shift in the assessment practices of the lecturers to include the assessment of outcomes, as stated in the modules or unit standards, by using both summative and formative assessment. The lecturers have also experienced a change in their roles as assessors. Their roles have become more multifaceted and they have included writing, facilitating and assessing the learning material. Although they were not unsure about their new roles, as the literature expected them to be, they were more concerned about the problems that these new roles generated. They felt that it was impossible to handle the new workload with limited resources and time. These lecturers also made a shift to make the assessment process more transparent, which in turn increased the amount of administration and paperwork. According to the literature, it would take an effort to implement these new assessment practices. It should be mentioned that these problems were not confined to the learnerships. The lecturers who were still using traditional methods also complained that their assessment methods were time-consuming.

Despite their efforts to change their assessment practices, the lecturers involved with the learnerships neglected to empower the learners in the assessment process. Although the learners were assessed in the workplace they were still passive role-players in the assessment process. Although the lecturers mentioned on various occasions that learners should be assessed when they were ready to do so, the lecturers still controlled the assessment process. However, the Training Centre managed to allow learners to share in the responsibility of the assessment process. The learners at the Training Centre engaged in self-assessment and indicated when they were ready to be assessed. Although both the literature and the lecturers have expressed concern about cheating and plagiarism, self-assessment is an important step towards life-long learning.

In conclusion, it is clear that the lecturers struggled, for various reasons, to implement the new assessment practices successfully. They were faced with challenges that they could not control, as well as with obstacles within themselves. Although much progress has been made towards the transformation of assessment practices at the college, a great deal still has to be done on the part of both the college and the DoE to implement outcomes-based assessment successfully. The next section looks at recommendations to make the implementation process more effective.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear that improvements need to be made to ensure the effective transformation of the assessment practices at the college. This section aims to make recommendations based on the discrepancies and problems that were discussed in the previous section. Finally, aspects for further research are identified based on limitations that were experienced in this study.

5.4.1 Theory and Practice

The DoE plays an important role in the success of the transformation of assessment at FET institutions. If the DoE is serious about its endeavours, there is much room for improvement. The study has indicated that many of the problems that the lecturers experienced were related to the DoE and the SETAs. The DoE can still do much to assist and support the lecturers in the transformation of their assessment practices.

Regarding the first problem discussed in the previous section on the delays with the implementation of the policies, the DoE should have put more thought into the planning of the

implementation of the policies. It is recommended that the DoE set realistic target dates for the implementation of the policies against the backdrop of proper research into the feasibility of a new FET curriculum. To minimise confusion, implementation dates should not be postponed. All the stakeholders should be kept up to date with developments surrounding the implementation process. The DoE should be transparent and honest about problems that it experiences and warn lecturers in advance when obstacles arise. It is clear that proper communication and feedback in the form of circulars and information sessions are crucial.

It is also recommended that the DoE change their top-down management and collaborate with the lecturers in an attempt to keep up with its deadlines. The DoE could have consulted the lecturers during the planning phase by setting up brainstorming sessions to identify obstacles and challenges at an early stage. Lecturers have years of experience regarding assessment in the classroom and could provide practical solutions. The expertise of the lecturers could also be utilised to write the unit standards for the learnerships and, in doing so, speed up the implementation process.

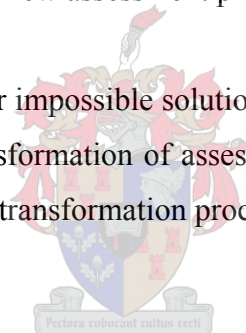
In an attempt to overcome the second problem discussed in the previous section regarding the malfunctioning of the SETAs, it is recommended that the DoE structure the relevant SETAs so that they function more effectively. In return, the SETAs need to be proactive and react swiftly to the demands that they make on the colleges. This could be done by increasing the manpower to deal with the mass registration of lecturers and accreditation of programmes. Better assessor training should be provided from the start so that time is not wasted on irrelevant training that is not accepted for assessor registration. Policies should be dealt with in detail while any confusion about the new curriculum and its assessment practices should be eliminated. Training should be specific and practical and additional training should be available (but not compulsory) for lecturers who need extra support with the implementation of outcomes-based assessment. Lecturers should feel confident and empowered by the knowledge that they obtained during training to engage in the implementation process.

The third and fourth discrepancies, concerned with the assessment practices in the classroom, can be overcome by motivating lecturers to implement the new assessment practices in their classrooms. It is recommended that incentives be given to encourage lecturers to implement the new assessment practices. These incentives could take various forms. Lecturers could receive recognition for the effective and innovative use of alternative practices by publishing or presenting

papers in order to share their knowledge. Another incentive could be to provide the lecturers with assistants that can help with the workload. Colleges could even consider using external assessors or compensate the lecturers for the extra work that they have to do as assessors. These recommendations should apply to the lecturers who teach the learnerships as well as to those who teach the N-courses.

In general, colleges should be more proactive and supportive towards the implementation of the assessment policies. Although the DoE is usually very prescriptive regarding its policies, the policies clearly state that FET institutions should take responsibility for the transformation of their own assessment practices. The college will have to address problems such as the workload of lecturers (see previous paragraph) and the increase in learner numbers. Classes also have to be smaller. Although the college wrote an assessment policy, which has been used to guide the assessment practices of the learnerships (see Appendix C) it failed to provide guidance for the N-courses. Although these courses still fall under the authority of the DoE, the college could have directed the lecturers to implement the new assessment practices in their N-courses.

These recommendations do not call for impossible solutions. With ingenuity, both the college and the DoE can ensure the effective transformation of assessment. Both parties need to realise that the lecturers are the key players in the transformation process.



5.4.2 Further research

The study has been significant in the sense that it has provided a clearer picture of the transformation of assessment from the perspective of the lecturers at the Klerksdorp campus of the Vuselela College. The results mainly indicated a communication gap between the college, the DoE and the SETAs. The discrepancies between the policies and the practices have not been as extensive as has been expected.

It is suggested that a further study could focus on an investigation of the transformation of assessment from the perspective of the DoE. It might shed light on problems and frustrations that the DoE has with FET colleges in general. The relevance of the assessor training also begs investigation. Before lecturers can be assisted in the transformation process it is necessary to determine whether their training was in accordance with the requirements of the policies and SAQA.

It would be interesting to conduct a similar study at other colleges and FET institutions to determine whether they experience the same situation and problems as this particular college. It would be enlightening to learn how other institutions deal with their own situations. In this case, a more quantitative study, using questionnaires, might be more useful.

Finally, the transformation process of assessment should constantly be monitored to determine whether outcomes-based assessment is effectively implemented. It is also important to determine where processes have to be adjusted or where support needs to be provided. Further research should also focus on more feasible solutions to the problems that both the colleges and the Department of Education experience.

5.5 CONCLUSION

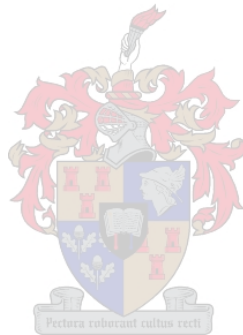
The transformation of the assessment practices at the Klerksdorp campus of the Vuselela College has proved to be problematic and challenging. Although the policies are in place, communication among the Department of Education, the SETAs and the college regarding implementation strategies is seldom effective. Moreover, these strategies are not always clear and transparent. The college is still experiencing a lack of support while lecturers try to cope with the new assessment system, often with very little success. These efforts on the part of the lecturers do not always prove to be effective. These lecturers still face many obstacles which are exacerbated and accompanied by numerous uncertainties.

The research problem stated that lecturers struggle to bring their assessment practices in line with the new assessment policies. Being true to the aims that were stated in chapter 1, this study first consulted the FET policy documents and related literature to determine what is expected of FET educators regarding the new assessment practices and how they should go about implementing the new assessment practices. Secondly, focus group discussions and questionnaires were used to determine the current assessment practices of lecturers at the college. A comparison has then been made between the policies and practices to determine the disparities that cause the problems between the current realities of assessment practices at the college and the requirements of the assessment policies. These problems were stated explicitly and recommendations were made to solve these problems.

A transformation process is always a complex and dynamic process. As a result, the FET institutions are constantly subjected to change in order to accommodate the new assessment system. It is not possible to put a new system into an old framework. One cannot always predict the outcome of a transformation process and similarly it is not always possible to align policies and practices. That is why a lecturer made the following comment:

“Kan ek jou iets vra? Kom oor vier jaar weer terug met dieselfde onderwerp na hierdie tafel toe en dan praat ons weer.”

(“Can I ask you something? Come back to this table with the same matter in four years’ time and then we’ll see how much has changed.”)



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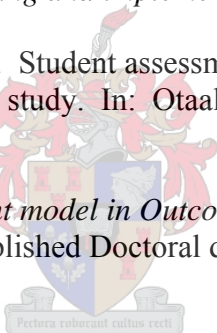
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APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE



Table A1: Questionnaire**QUESTIONNAIRE ON OUTCOMES-BASED ASSESSMENT AT A TECHNICAL COLLEGE**

Dear Lecturer

I am currently doing research for my MPhil degree at the University of Stellenbosch. The focus of my research is the implementation of outcomes-based assessment at a technical college against the backdrop of the Further Education and Training (FET) policies on assessment. In order to obtain information on the subject, the following questionnaire will be used. The aim of the questionnaire is to determine the extent to which you are implementing these policies in your classroom, as well as your level of knowledge regarding the terminology and statements made in the policies.

Major changes have occurred in the field of education with the shift to Outcomes-based Education (OBE), while the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) has necessitated a shift to an outcomes-based approach to assessment (outcomes-based assessment). As a result, lecturers have to change their views on assessment. Although institutions have done much to implement outcomes-based assessment, they have come across many obstacles. There are discrepancies between the Further Education and Training (FET) policies on assessment and the practical implementation of these policies at institutions. These discrepancies will be investigated during the study in an attempt to generate solutions to close the gap between policies and practices.

The questionnaire should not take more than 20 minutes to complete. The information from the questionnaire will be kept strictly confidential and therefore frank and honest answers will be appreciated. Please do not to reveal your name anywhere on the questionnaire. The information from the questionnaire will only be used for research purposes and will not be made publicly available.

Thank you for taking the time and effort to complete the questionnaire. Your co-operation is appreciated. Please return the questionnaire to your Head of Department.

Regards

René Basson

QUESTIONNAIRE**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS:**

- Please read all the questions and statements carefully.
- Kindly respond honestly to all the questions and statements.
- Respond by marking with an **X** where response categories are given. Give a response that most accurately reflects your experience/ point of view.
- A2 and A3 require a number of years. Please write the correct number in the block provided.
- With the open-ended questions, supply a brief comment, reason or problem.

A. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1. Gender

Male	M
Female	F

2. Age in years

3. Years of experience at Vuselela College (Klerksdorp Campus)

4. Highest qualification

Grade 12	1
Certificate	2
Diploma	3
Bachelors degree	4
Honours degree	5
Masters degree	6
PhD	7
Others (Please state):	

5. Professional (education) qualification

Higher Education Diploma	1
4-year Bachelors degree in Education	2
4-year education diploma	3
NGOS	4
Others (Please state):	

6. Department

Engineering studies	1
Business studies	2
General studies	3
Others (Please state):	

7. Teaching subject(s)

Subject	Yes	No
English		
Afrikaans		
Sotho		
Tswana		
Communication		
Engineering Science		
Mathematics		
Entrepreneurship		
Electrical		
Drawing office practice		
Mechanical		
Secretarial		
Hair-dressing		
Business Economics		
Economics		
Marketing Management		
Financial Management		
Business Management		
Accountancy		
Others (Please state):		

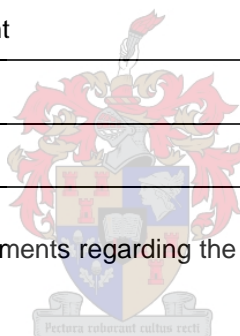
B. KNOWLEDGE ABOUT OUTCOMES-BASED ASSESSMENT

Knowledge about outcomes-based assessment is crucial when one has to implement outcomes-based assessment successfully. It is therefore important to determine the level of understanding at which you are assessing the learners' progress.

1. Indicate how you obtained the information and/or knowledge for implementing new assessment practices. You may indicate more than one response.

No	Type of training	Yes	No
1.	Workshop presented by the Department of Education on OBE		
2.	Workshop presented by the Department of Education on assessment		
3.	Assessor training with the relevant SETA (Sector Education and Training Authority)		
4.	Workshop presented by the college on OBE		
5.	Workshop presented by the college on assessment		
6.	Booklets or circulars on assessment		
7.	None		
8.	Other (Please state):		

2. Indicate whether the following statements regarding the different approaches to assessment are true or false. Ignore if unsure.



No	Statement	True	False
1.	Continuous assessment implies the use of the same techniques of examining learners repeatedly at short intervals.		
2.	Recognition of prior learning (RPL) credits any learning that has taken place regardless of when, where and how learning has taken place.		
3.	Authentic assessment is intended to be accomplished in highly practical simulations.		
4.	Continuous assessment means assessing learners' work all the time to check whether they understand the work.		
5.	Summative assessment indicates the readiness of a learner to progress to a next level.		
6.	With norm-referenced assessment a learner will be ranked the same in any group.		

No	Statement	True	False
7.	The assessment for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) has different criteria and requirements than the assessment of full-time courses.		
8.	Formative assessment diagnoses problems that learners experience in their learning.		
9.	Summative assessment informs lecturers what has been learned during a learning/ teaching process.		
10.	Criterion-referenced assessment compares the criteria obtained by an individual learner with the criteria obtained by the group.		
11.	When a piece of coursework is done by learners halfway through a module and the lecturer marks the work and returns it to the learners, formative assessment has taken place.		
12.	Norm-referenced assessment compares the performance of an individual learner with the performance of the group.		
13.	Criterion-referenced assessment is used to determine whether a learner has met the requirements set out in the criteria.		
14.	Authentic assessment implies using creative means and a variety of new ways to assess learners' knowledge.		

3. Give the assessment terms that most appropriately describe the approach to outcomes-based assessment.



Continuous assessment	1
Recognition of prior learning (RPL)	2
Authentic assessment	3
Summative assessment	4
Norm-referenced assessment	5
Formative assessment	6
Criterion-referenced assessment	7
Others (Please state):	

C. IMPLEMENTATION OF OUTCOMES-BASED ASSESSMENT

The White Paper on Further Education and Training (FET) (1998) states that outcomes-based assessment has to be implemented in FET institutions. This section focuses on the degree to which you are implementing outcomes-based assessment in your classroom.

1. Indicate the aspect(s) of learning that you have assessed in your classroom since the implementation of OBE.

No	Aspects of learning	Yes	No
1.	Product of learning		
2.	Outcomes		
3.	Specific content knowledge		
4.	Skills		
5.	Team effort/ group work		
6.	Knowledge that learners already have		
7.	Application of knowledge		
8.	Process of learning		
9.	Critical thinking		
10.	Values and attitudes		
11.	Individual effort		
12.	Others (Please state):		

2. Indicate the aspect(s) of learning that has (have) to be assessed according to OBE.

Product of learning	1
Outcomes	2
Specific content knowledge	3
Skills	4
Team effort / group work	5
Knowledge that learners already have	6
Application of knowledge	7
Process of learning	8
Critical thinking	9
Values and attitudes	10
Individual effort	11
Others (Please state):	

3. Indicate your objective(s) for assessing learner learning.

No	Objectives for assessment	Yes	No
1.	To obtain marks or grades at an endpoint		
2.	To give feedback to learners		
3.	To provide statistics for the course		
4.	To gather evidence for competence		
5.	To adjust and improve programmes		
6.	To motivate and encourage learners		
7.	To assist in learning		
8.	To diagnose learning problems		
9.	To involve learners in the assessment process		
10.	To help learners to assess themselves		
11.	Others (Please state):		

4. Indicate the objective(s) for assessment that are compliant with the aims of Outcomes-based Education.

to obtain marks or grades at an endpoint.	1
to give feedback to learners.	2
to provide statistics for the course.	3
to gather evidence for competence.	4
to adjust and improve programmes.	5
to motivate and encourage learners.	6
to assist in learning.	7
to diagnose learning problems.	8
to involve learners in the assessment process.	9
to help learners to assess themselves.	10
Others (Please state):	

5. Which of the following assessment methods have you applied/ attempted in your classroom?

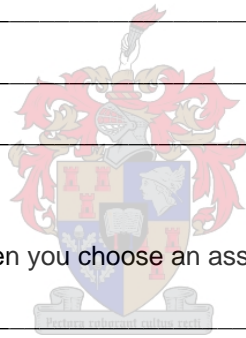
No	Methods	Never	Seldom	Often	Regularly
		1	2	3	4
1.	Essays				
2.	Written tests				
3.	Rubrics				
4.	Formal examinations				
5.	Portfolios				
6.	Self-assessment				
7.	Written assignments/worksheets				
8.	Case studies				
9.	Problems				
10.	Group or peer assessment				
11.	Orals / interviews				
12.	Learning journals				
13.	Multiple choice questions				
14.	Computer-assisted assessment				
15.	Projects				
16.	Presentations				
17.	Reports				
18.	Practical assignments				
19.	Other (Please state):				

6. In answering the following open-ended questions on assessment methods, you may select from the list of assessment methods on the previous page.

6.1 Which applied / attempted method(s) have you successfully applied in your classroom?

6.2 Which assessment method(s) do you prefer?

6.3 Why do you prefer these assessment methods?



6.4 Which aspects do you consider when you choose an assessment method?

6.5 What do you think is the most appropriate assessment method for the subject(s) that you teach?

6.6 Why?

D. PROBLEMS WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF OUTCOMES-BASED ASSESSMENT

Implementing outcomes-based assessment is not without its problems. However, it is important to identify problems that occur with the implementation of outcomes-based assessment.

1. Indicate the problem(s) that you have experienced while implementing outcomes-based assessment methods.

No	Problem	Never	Seldom	Often	Always
		1	2	3	4
1.	Workload because of the amount of assessed work				
2.	Cheating and plagiarism related to self and peer assessment				
3.	The recognition of prior learning				
4.	Providing feedback				
5.	Administration/ paperwork				
6.	Having to state assessment criteria explicitly				
7.	Finding an appropriate assessment method				
8.	Increasing learner numbers and limited resources				
9.	Inadequately prepared learners				
10.	Confusion among lecturers because of constant change				
11.	Lecturers lack assessment skills				
12.	No support from the department/ institution				
13.	Time constraints				
14.	Difficulty of assessing practical skills				
15.	Other (Please state):				

E. VIEWS ON ASSESSMENT

In the case of each of the following statements indicate the response category that most accurately reflects your experience or point of view.

1. What are your views on assessment?

No	I view assessment as...	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		1	2	3	4
1.	an addition to teaching.				
2.	an essential part of teaching.				
3.	helping learners to learn.				
4.	helping lecturers to improve their teaching.				
5.	a way of making decisions about teaching.				
6.	being primarily about the allocation of marks and grades.				
7.	a means of reporting on learner progress.				

2. How are you currently experiencing assessment practices at your institution?

No	Experience	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		1	2	3	4
1.	Assessment tests memorisation rather than understanding.				
2.	Learners are assessed in real-life situations.				
3.	Assessment methods promote co-operative activities (group work).				
4.	Assessment helps learners to learn.				
5.	There are time constraints on assessment tasks.				
6.	Lecturers are the authoritative assessor of achievement.				

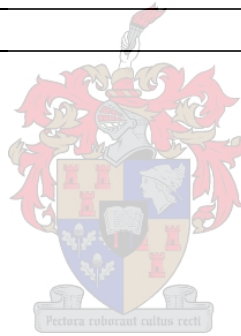
No	Experience	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		1	2	3	4
7.	A variety of assessment methods are being used.				
8.	Assessment is more developmental than judgemental.				
9.	The focus of assessment is more on the learning process than on the content.				

3. Which of the following statement(s) describe(s) your attitude towards outcomes-based assessment?

No	Attitude	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1.	I feel confident to implement outcomes-based assessment.				
2.	I am aware of what the Department of Education expects of me regarding outcomes-based assessment.				
3.	I support outcomes-based assessment.				
4.	I feel positive about implementing outcomes-based assessment.				
5.	I still have unanswered questions about outcomes-based assessment.				

Table A2: Biographical information

	Number of respondents	Years
Gender		
Male	3	
Female	8	
Average age		41
Average years experience		7
Highest qualification		
Certificate	1	
Diploma	3	
Bachelor's Degree	4	
Honours degree	3	
Professional qualification		
None	3	
Higher Education Diploma	8	
Department		
Engineering	4	
Business Studies	7	
General Studies	0	
Subjects		
Communication	2	
Sales management	1	
Information processing	2	
Computer practice	3	
Marketing management	2	
Public administration	1	
Entrepreneurship	2	
Hair-dressing	1	
Mathematics	1	
Electrical	2	
English	1	
Engineering science	1	
Mechanical	1	



APPENDIX B
FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

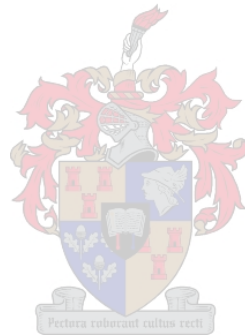


Table B1: Focus group interview schedule**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE****A. OPENING QUESTION**

Please state your name and the subject(s) that you are lecturing.

B. INTRODUCTORY QUESTION: Assessorship

1. Are you registered as an assessor with the relevant Education and Training Quality Assurance body?

If yes:

- ❖ Did you receive assessor training?
- ❖ Did you receive recognition of prior learning (RPL)?
- ❖ Did you receive on-the-job training?

If no:

- ❖ Do you have to register as an assessor in the future?
- ❖ Are you allowed to assess unit standards?
- ❖ Are you being restricted in your assessment of learner learning? In what way?

C. KEY QUESTIONS:**The current situation in your department regarding**

1. **The FET policies on assessment**

- ❖ Do you know what is stated in the FET policies regarding assessment?
- ❖ Do you know what SAQA requires regarding assessment practices?
- ❖ To what degree are you implementing the FET policies on assessment?
- ❖ What actions does your institution take to implement new assessment policies?

2. **Continuous assessment (CASS)**

- ❖ Are you implementing CASS at your institution? Is it compulsory? In what courses does CASS have to be implemented (School-based subjects, N-subjects, learnerships)?
- ❖ What does the process of CASS entail?

3. **The recognition of prior learning (RPL)**

- ❖ Do you apply the recognition of prior learning in your courses?
- ❖ If so, how do you implement RPL and the assessment thereof?
- ❖ If so, do the assessment of RPL and the assessment of full-time courses differ?

4. **Learnerships and unit standards**

- ❖ Does your course allow for the integration of knowledge and skills?

- ❖ Do you still have traditional apprenticeships or have you incorporated learnerships and unit standards in your course?
- ❖ How is learning in the workplace accredited? Do you implement on-the-job assessment?

5. **Assessment practices**

- ❖ Have you changed your assessment methods to accommodate the changes in assessment?
- ❖ How many times do you assess during a course?
- ❖ Do you assess specific and critical outcomes?
- ❖ Do you give feedback to your learners regarding their progress?
- ❖ What are your views on different assessment methods?

Views on the changes that are taking place in assessment

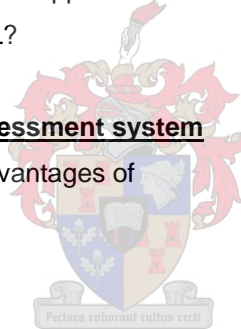
1. How do you experience the changes in assessment/ prospect of changes in assessment?
2. What is your opinion or perspective regarding the policy statements on assessment?
 - ❖ Are the policies practical?
3. How do you feel about the changes that are taking place in assessment?
4. What are your views regarding an integrated approach to assessment?
 - ❖ Do you know what an integrated approach to assessment is?
5. What are your feelings towards RPL?

Limitations and strengths of a new assessment system

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of
 - ❖ CASS?
 - ❖ assessment in RPL?
 - ❖ work-based accreditation?
 - ❖ assessment in learnerships?
2. What are the challenges that you face with regard to the changes to assessment?
3. What are your concerns regarding the changes that are taking place in assessment (the prospect of change)?

D. FINAL QUESTION: Suggestions

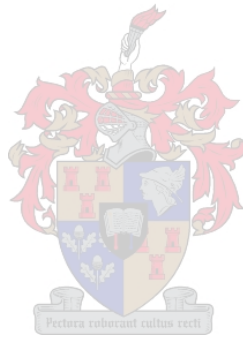
1. From a critical point of view, what can be done to
 - ❖ improve the implementation of the new assessment policies?
 - ❖ implement the changes in assessment more effectively?
2. What role can you play in making the transition to a new assessment system more effective?



APPENDIX C
ASSESSMENT POLICY



Table C1: Assessment policy of college



Policy

Assessment must be done by registered assessors according to SAQA requirements and the set assessment policy.

Procedures

- Assessment must meet the requirements as set out by SAQA.
- The assessment policy serves as guideline to assessment procedures and processes.
- All lecturers involved in the offering of SAQA-courses must be registered.
- Assessors, moderators, internal and external verifiers must be appointed.

1 - ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF ASSESSORS

1. Conduct assessment according to ASSMT 01

This includes to:

- Plan for assessment
- Prepare learner using the checklist (example attached)
- Conduct the assessment according to the assessment guide -(template attached at end of this document)
- Make and record the judgement on the assessment guide
- Give feedback verbally and written on the assessment guide
- Review assessment on the assessment guide

2. Assessment tools

- Assist in setting up of assessment tools in co-operation with moderator and other assessors
- Continuous assessment and development of assessment tools

3. Keep up to date with SAQA, NQF and ETQA requirements.

4. Provide assistance to learners throughout assessment process.

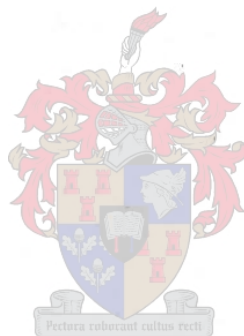
5. Assessors must be recognised subject matter experts (SME).

6. Advise learners on recognition of prior learning (RPL), appeals, re-assessment and moderation policies

7. Assist learners to develop portfolios of evidence (POE) and advise on evidence requirements.
8. Complete "declaration of competence" form and give to moderator for forwarding to the relevant ETQA.

Notes

- See Learner Preparation Checklist



Policy

The appeals policy and procedure must be adhered to.

Procedures

The following procedure needs to be followed when a candidate is assessed:

1. Inform the candidate about his right to appeal when preparing him/her for the assessment. Appeals procedure needs to be displayed prominently or be available to all prospective candidates for assessment.
2. When giving a candidate feedback after assessment, give him/her the opportunity to discuss the assessment.
3. If the candidate is not satisfied with the assessment decision it should be discussed with the assessor. The candidate and the assessor should try to work out a mutually satisfactory solution.
4. An unfair assessment could be based on the following:
 - Not valid
 - Not reliable
 - Impracticability
 - Inadequate expertise/experience of assessor
 - Unethical practices

If learner feels unable to approach the assessor directly (due to unethical practices, etc) he or she can complete the appeals form and hand it directly to the moderator.

5. If the candidate and the assessor could not reach a mutually satisfactory solution they must complete the appeals form (Attached) in writing and forward it to the next level of responsibility as indicated in the organogram below. This appeal must be lodged within five (5) working days after the feedback of assessment has been given.
6. Once an appeal has been filed, it must be dealt with within fourteen (14) working days. The moderator may decide on one of the following:
 - To uphold the assessor's decision
 - Ask the assessor to re-assess the candidate
 - Ask the assessor to re-assess the candidate in the presence of the moderator
 - Ask another assessor to re-assess the candidate.
7. The outcome of the appeals procedure must be recorded in writing, kept with the candidate's records and forwarded to the moderator
8. If the candidate is still not satisfied with the outcome of the appeal, the appeal will be referred to an Appeals Committee. The Appeals Committee will consist of the relevant HOD (Chairperson) and a minimum of one other HOD.

The Appeals Committee may:

- Uphold the appeal decision.
- Ask the assessor to re-assess the candidate
- Ask the assessor to re-assess the candidate in the presence of the moderator/relevant HOD.
- Ask another assessor to re-assess the candidate.

Once again, the outcome must be recorded in writing, kept with the candidate's records and forwarded to the moderator.

9. If no conclusion is reached the moderator may contact the relevant ETQA and request their assistance. The ETQA will follow their internal procedures.

Special Notes

- See appeal against the outcome of assessment.

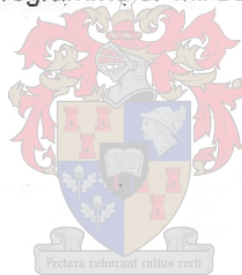


Policy

A learner has the right to be reassessed.

Procedures

1. A learner will be granted three (3) opportunities to be assessed. If the outcome of the first assessment is not yet competent (NYC) the learner will have two further opportunities to be re-assessed.
2. Assessment and re-assessment will be scheduled according to the training programme. If a learner does not attend a scheduled assessment or re-assessment without a valid excuse, this assessment will count as one of the three allowed under this policy.
 - o This includes cases where a learner declines to be assessed.
 - o The moderator will make the final decision.
3. Relevant coaching or training is to be provided by the programme facilitator/trainer after discussion with the assessor between assessments.
4. In the case where a learner is found NYC after three assessments, the learner will be advised to re-enroll on the programme or will be advised to consider an alternative stream of development.



Policy

The aim of the Moderation process is to ensure consistency of judgements and provide a quality control mechanism for assessment.

Procedures

1. Functions of the Moderation System

To:

- Verify that assessments are fair, valid and consistent
- Identify the need to re-design assessments, if required
- Provide an appeal procedure for dissatisfied learners (attached)
- Provide a procedure for the re-assessment of learners (attached)
- Evaluate the performance of assessors
- Provide a procedure for the counselling and assistance of unsatisfactory assessors
- Provide feedback to NSB's regarding weakness in design of unit standards

2. The function of the internal moderator will be to:

- Facilitate the gathering of appropriate assessment documents by establishing a network of SME's and assessors to compile tools and instruments for assessment
- Moderate assessors practices and ensure they comply with organisational and SAQA requirements
- Ensure that unit standards and related documents are appropriately used by assessors
- Manage the recording and retrieving of assessment information on a database
- Manage assessment processes and recommend future improvements to assessment practices
- Check results and decisions of Assessors for consistency
- Provide Assessors with accurate guidance, advice and support
- Give feedback to Assessors on methods, approach and use of evidence
- Liaise with other moderators, external moderator and the ETQA

3. Procedure

- The internal moderator will be the subject matter expert (SME) appointed by the Head of Department, who must be registered as a Moderator.
- Where an assessor conducts assessment on a Unit Standard for the first time 100% of the assessments must be moderated.
- The Internal Moderator will moderate at least 20% of summative assessments conducted, with a minimum of 5 assessments being moderated.
- External moderation will be conducted by the appropriate SETA

Notes

Policy

The RPL policy must be adhered to.

Procedures

1. Vuselela accepts RPL as a key feature of the NQF. The policy is based on the principle of compliance with the aims and objectives of the NQF
2. Prior learning in a formal environment (college, training provider etc.) will be recognised, as well as work and life experiences.
3. Evidence will be checked for validity, authenticity, sufficiency and currency
4. Detailed records of RPL learners will be kept on the learner database and in each learner's file. These will indicate credits given for RPL.
5. Appeals procedure for RPL shall be the same as for other learners or training.

Process

1. The learner must identify the learning he/she wants to be evaluated, complete the RPL Application Form (Attached) and submit to the Assessor.
2. This form must state the reason for requesting RPL, the evidence that can be produced and how this links to the specific outcomes of the unit standard/s to be assessed.
3. The Assessor will evaluate the claim as well as the potential evidence. The Assessor must decide whether it will be viable to continue with the RPL process.
4. If the Assessor decides to continue with the RPL process s/he must meet with the learner to discuss the evidence requirements in detail and an assessment plan must be agreed upon.
5. The learner collects a portfolio of evidence in line with the above, for submission to the Assessor.
6. The Assessor evaluates the evidence as well as the learner's competence. This can be done through practical assessment (observation), simulation and questioning.
7. The Assessor makes a judgment and recommendation about the amount of credit that should be given, based on his/her evaluation of the evidence produced and completes a report which is kept on the learner's file.
8. Based on the above, the Assessor will complete the "Declaration of Competence" which will be sent to the relevant ETQA.

9. The cost of RPL will not exceed the cost of a standard programme and assessment as determined by the Vuselela Council

Notes

See RPL Application document

