

# Transforming Higher Education Assessment to Meet Learning and Stakeholder Needs. A Case of Chinhoyi University of Technology

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**Abstract**— Institutions of higher learning have since departed from testing students performances to assessment of students learning. Testing had been seen losing touch, relevance and practicality, where in the coming of assessment has introduced a lot of practicability, workability and the potential to show what students have learnt and later on the potential to learn further in life. Assessment plays an important role as in determining quality of students being produced in various respects. The main objectives of the study included taking stock of current assessment methods and procedures; identifying where specific methods are applicable and their effectiveness as assessment methods of cognitive, skills, attitude and research competencies; establishing the relevance of assessment in education and educational management and productive sectors; and then designing ways of assessing students' work that yields into the productive sectors. The study used 85 students and 36 staff members from Chinhoyi University of Technology. A mixed methodology approach was used on an open and closed ended questionnaire. The established numerous assessment modes were seen to measure, though variably, competences in terms of knowledge, skills, attitude and research; and it can be noted that each assessment mode can be modified to test these competences equally and at different levels. To add on, assessment was seen to be an area that can be used to enhance or improve issues of education, educational management and instilling productive capabilities. The main recommendation was to ensure that assessment should be relevant, dynamic and using any framework for transforming assessment in higher education there should be adequate stakeholders' engagement and consultation for their input.

**Keywords**— Transforming, Summative, Formative, Stakeholder, Higher education, Assessment.

## I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Wainer and Braun (1988) identified that the major problem with the dominant assessment perspective and methods is that it constructs students as mostly passive learners than active. This presents students as having no other important role rather than to simply subject themselves to the assessment actions of others, and to be measured therefore and classified or categorised. This constitute following step-by-step the rules and regulations set in order to satisfy the requirements of a certain assessment bureaucracy; that means the students present themselves at timetable set time for final exam over which they have less or none influence, at the same time they do assignments which are, by and large, determined with less or no input from those being assessed, this being necessary to support an apparently objective and fair process of classification.

Boud and Falchikov (2007) believes that the objectivity and fairness of these types of assessments is questionable, from the

basis of the examination or assignment proving a student has grasped the subject or passing or failing the module proving one cannot perform or can perform. The last average 3hours exam failed by a student cannot prove the whole semester or term accumulated learning processes, knowledge acquired or developed, similarly would a 3hours examination passed prove the capacity to perform as required. It is quite interesting that so many countries and higher institutions of learning have a policy that relates to just one form of assessment and heavily rely on that – the examination, as the major determiner of competences and capabilities (Torrance & Pryor, 1998). This though does not necessarily mean that other forms of assessments are not used but that what is considered the final examination is regarded as the supreme worthy at institutional and country level, therefore is of special importance, wherein Tremblay, Lalancette and Roseveare (2012) considers that some improvement in the other assessments processes to induce fairness, integrity of these assessment process, it is equally possible that any form of assessment can warranty final certification.

Wolf, Bixby, Glenn and Gardner (1991) assumes that in the recent perspectives of assessment, there appears to be a primary focus and a secondary one, where the primary looks at concepts such as 'outcomes', 'measurement' and 'integrity' and the secondary focuses on issues such as 'feedback', 'improvement' and 'learning as a process'. University policies need to embrace effective triangulation on assessments touching on areas such as assessment for immediate learning (formative), assessment for certification (summative) and assessment for longer-term learning (sustainable). The considerable relative emphasis on these stated features is illustrated by drilling and getting deep down into the details of an institution's assessment framework and policy (Yorke, 2003)

Tina (2009) says that it appears broadly that the status quo in the institutions of higher learning; there is a great focus on the primary issues of assessment with many words being devoted to the procedures or systems related to the primary focus, accompanied with comprehensive discussions and deliberation of rules, regulations for examinations, ensuring the identity of students, mechanisms and systems for marking and moderating scores, avoidance of any form of cheating, plagiarism, and so on. This though has represented little or no discussion on how assessment would aid to learning, or how it can hinder learning or giving of guidelines for feedback and similar matters. The overriding discourse of assessment in many institutions of learning currently has remained related to

measurement and certification notwithstanding a perceived or actual need to acknowledge other purposes or aims (Shepard, 2000). Institutions spend a lot of time, effort and resources as staff marks assignments, and so on, to examinations that contribute final grades, where in some cases there is a problem of over-assessment, in some cases failing to identify exactly where students need help, all the effort and time being set is yet to be warranted whether it has been helpful or effective in measurement for productive performances and tendencies (Shizha, 2011)

#### *Statement of the problem*

Assessment of student performance in higher education is a thorny issue (Gerhardt, 2014; Hanover Research Institute, 2013; Tremblay et al., 2012; Shizha and Kariwo, 2011). The current methods of assessment appear to be leading to the regurgitation of information, little wonder the graduates do not perform well despite coming out with good grades (Garwe, 2014; Langa, 2015; Nherera, 2000). Employers and other stakeholders voiced the need to change not only the curriculum but also the way of assessing performance of student work at higher education institutions (Mushava, 2015; Nherera, 2000). The study intends to look at the ideal practices and processes that can transform andragogic learning and assessment in various fields at higher education institutions to foster quality standards and performance of students at cognitive, practical skills, attitude and so forth.

#### *Objectives*

1. To establish the relevance of assessment in education and long term educational management; and productive sectors
2. To design a way of assessing students' work that yields into the industry and commerce's expectations without diverting from the higher education institutions' assignment, ministry's mission and socio-economic growth objectives

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Assessment has been viewed as a value-loaded exercise from long time ago, though it has always been subjected to academic standards vis a vis productive sectors debates, on how this or that prepares students for employment, measuring quality and providing incentives (Arter, 1997). It appears that most summative examination systems are not flexible to change as they engross various socio-political ideologies about the main purpose of education (Hendel & Lewis, 2005). Assessment has been seen throughout the ages as that practice that involves strong feelings in students; students are engrossed with such elements as embarrassment, humiliation or motivation or encouraged by past experiences, this therefore calling for assessment to consider the social and cultural context of learning so much as the direct effects (Mohamedbhai, 2008). Mohamedbhai (2008) asserts that assessment should not be judged primarily on technical grounds but also on how it can influence learning in the long term span of a student outside the institutions of learning, in fact the major thrust is to rethink assessment in terms of fostering learning for the longer term. There should be a major reconstruction of what assessment

exists to do, how it is discussed and the language used to describe it.

Dochy, Segers and Sluijsmans (1999) suggests that a number of alternatives have received so much attention in the last five decades in the global village, where Shizha (2011) asserts that experts in higher education area have appropriated and supported the notion that testing era has changed to era of assessment. Wolf et al, (1991) affirms that the era of testing has been characterised by a complete separation of instruction and testing activities by and large a measurement that students would undergo passively, by measurements of knowledge of de-contextualised subject matter that was unrelated to the experiences a student has undergone, and by also measuring products solely in the form of a single total score. At the same time the dawn of an assessment era, according to Wolf et al, (1991) would bring in the integration of assessment and instruction, the student is an active person who shares responsibility of teaching, learning and assessment; reflects, collaborates and conducts a continuous interaction or dialogue with the teachers. Supporting this idea, Segers (1996) proclaims that assessment is then constituted of pluralistic approaches and the using of interesting real life (that is, authentic) tasks. Arter (1997) together with Dochy and McDowell (1997) pronounce that rather than testing, assessments tools do not act in the context of crediting students with certificates only but goes a long way a credible and valuable monitoring tools for student progress, direction tool to remedial learning activities if there is need for such, and that assessment can stand alone as a learning tool, therefore discarding the fact that assessment is supposed to occur at the end of the learning processes.

#### *Paradigm shift of higher education goals*

The main aim of assessment in higher education over a long period of time was to develop students that are knowledgeable in a certain domain, meaning that there was so much emphasis on building a basic knowledge store (Sambell & McDowell, 1997). The core issue in this era is being overtaken by events such as the ever increasing development of new scientific knowledge, the use of modern communication technology, the competences demand from the productive sectors and so on, which is prompting the use of newer methods that are in tandem to these developments (Dochy & McDowell, 1997). Newer and more practical assessment methods such as case-based, problem-based, portfolio management, project management and so on, have been introduced directed towards producing highly knowledgeable and practical individuals, with a look also on stressing problem-solving skills, professional skills, authentic learning, that is, learning in real-life contexts (Dochy et al., 1999). This was overemphasized in many respects by Birenbaum (1996) saying that; to be successful in functioning in this era it is calling for or demanding adaptable, thinking, autonomous persons, who can exist as a self-regulated learner, being very much capable of communicating and co-operating with colleagues. According to Sambell and McDowell (1997) the specific competencies that are required of such a person include; in the cognitive area there is need for inventing, critical thinking, problem solving, searching for relevant information, formulating questions, conducting observations, making

informed judgements, efficient use of information, investigations, and creating new things, the ability to present and analyse data, both oral and written expression; then in the meta-cognitive area includes issues of self-evaluation and self-reflection; then in the area of social competencies this includes interpersonal capabilities ranging from chairing discussions and conversations, making forms of persuasion, being co-operative with others, working in groups, etc. and then in the area of affection or the affective dispositions covering issues of human emotional, moods and attitudes status, for instance, being able to persevere, intrinsic motivation, responsibility and accountability, self-efficacy, being an independent persons, the ability to be flexible or even issues of coping with frustrating situations or stressing circumstances.

Assessment has to go further than the measuring of the reproduction of knowledge, and attainment of the latter stated goals will somehow completely change the current practices in assessment (Birenbaum & Dochy, 1996). There is great need to refocus assessment subject to many forces, which can emanate from two angles such as the rising pressure of the labour market on education or the drives towards change within higher education itself (Garwe, 2014). The major thrust of higher education therefore is to create pillars on students to develop into 'reflective practitioners' that can reflect analytically and critically on both their educational and professional practice.

Dochy et al., (1999) supports the new forces in assessment by underscoring that whenever students are released from institutions of learning and now assuming positions in modern organisations it requires that they should be able to analyse data and information, enhance aspects of problem solving and communication, and in these processes they will further on reflect on their own role, purpose and focus in the learning processes. As students acquire knowledge, they should also possess the ability to do so independently and to then use this accumulation of knowledge to solve unforeseen problems. As a natural consequence, various forms of higher education assessments should be framed in such a way that they contribute to the education of students as lifelong learners. Dochy et al, (1999) together with Sambell and McDowell (1997) assert that the 21<sup>st</sup> century has developed the quest for lifelong learning in modern society, that is, the notion that students learn through their entire life. In such an era, traditional testing methods practical will not fit well with such aims as lifelong learning, being critical, reflective thinking, problem-solving and the capacity to evaluate oneself.

Similarly, Baume and Yorke (2002) argues that if ever the basics of higher education have to be directed towards effective assessment and lifelong learning, then assessment strategies and approaches need to be aligned because research has shown that the nature of assessment tasks also greatly influences the approaches which students adopt to both current or future learning and motivation to learn. It would also suffice to say that traditional assessment approaches can have effects contrary to those desired in the current learning circumstances and its demands.

*Theorisation towards operationalisation of formative assessment*

Gipps (1994) recognised that many scholars appear not to acknowledge the need for theorisation of formative assessment, and with such a tone possibly that is why Gipps (1994) made less progress in the theorisation of assessment than the title of her published book would suggest. Torrance and Pryor (1998) observes that the theorisation issue was taken further up by Brown and Knight (1994) giving a list of assumptions that relates to students, assessment task, and trainers which forms the basis of formative assessment giving direction to the emergence of the theorisation process. In the same manner, the biggest challenge noted arose from the possible duality of the meaning of assessment, where an assessment can be considered as the outcome of an act of assessing giving the grade or comment attached to a student's work; then on the other hand it is a process that consist of the piece of work or behaviour in question, the assessor and the student; that is, formative assessment is prototypically process-oriented.

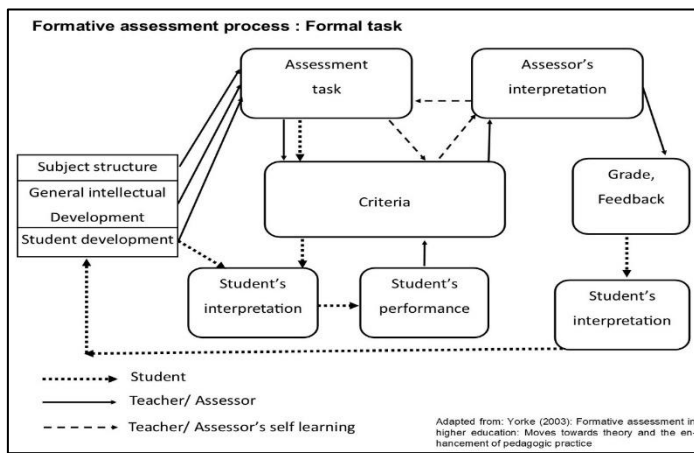
Black (1998) brought several ideas that were directed towards accepting to fully develop the theory of formative assessment, and suggested that to fully theorise formative assessment the following needs to be included;

1. There should be a general learning theory with a prominence on constructivism
2. To develop models for the epistemology of each module or subject and henceforth of the progress of learning
3. Development of theory of the cognitive acts of learning via feedback
4. A program of analyzing self- and peer- assessment using the particular learning processes and interactivity that these involve
5. A comprehension of the impact that various forms of feedback has on student's self-esteem, self-attribution and possible readiness to learn.
6. Pupil/ peer and teacher/ student interactions in the process of learning as a social dimension

Following such discoveries, Cowie and Bell (1999) further clarified the fact that there is planned and 'interactive' formative assessment which can be likened to various formal/informal formative assessment. Brown and Knight (1994) revealed that the planned formative assessment was biased toward teacher oriented requirements which included testing the whole class' basic level of understanding and 'getting through the curriculum' in mind. In that case people's consequential actions was given little or minimal attention; while Boud and Falchikov (2007) suggested a framework that goes beyond Cowie and Bell's (1999) framework pre-supposing that Cowie and Bell's (1999) framework could have been developed from an observational background or study and could therefore lack such theoretical constructs as the teacher/trainer's knowledge of the student's developmental stages and the epistemology of the subject matter, therefore the following points need to be included in the upgraded theory;

- a) Epistemological construction of the relevant fields of study
- b) Ontology of learners including psychopathology and development
- c) Theoretical underpinnings associated with learning and assessment

- d) Understanding the professional knowledge that the teacher has, which does not only cover knowledge of the discipline but student generic and specific development levels, even issues of assessment methodology, the psychology of giving and receiving feedback
- e) The theory that regulates communication and interpretation  
This supports Yorke's (2003) mapped framework of formative assessment process in the following illustration of the processes on a formal task;



The sequence shows events that have to take place when a submitted piece of exercise is going through a formal formative assessment. A formal assessment is initiated by the assessor, taking into consideration the structure and progressions of the subject discipline in context, and a great deal of appreciation of the steps of student intellectual and moral development. A student's knowledge development is further enhanced by specification of the assessment criteria. Therefore a student will react to a task in hand based on three angles; knowledge of the subject, level of intellectual development and assessment criteria. Student's work is interpreted against specified criteria, where feedback is provided using grades and/ or comments, where there is also great potential for dialogue to occur between the assessor and the student. Wolf et al, (1991) settles that the way a student will interpret the assessment, accompanied with psychological state and disposition vis-à-vis subsequent actions acts as key influences on how a student learns. The aspect of students receiving feedback cannot be over-emphasised, though individuals receive feedback differently, some are 'mastery-oriented' (have a positive and resilient orientation, believing that from feedback stems learning) and others are those 'helpless' (with a negative perspective on feedback, seeing feedback as a reflection of their 'perceived low' ability and can give up easily).

It is important to note that, according to Tina (2009), what a student is in pursuit of provides a framework of understanding how a student interprets and respond to feedback and subsequent events that occur. Failure type of feedback has been observed producing different effects, most importantly in the goal oriented students most feedback quickly has been negative to helpless, though with type 'A' undergraduates students, those that work hard, extremely competitive, aggressive and with the

right sense of time-urgency, it is when they face repeated failure that they tend to lapse into helplessness and give up responding (Torrance & Pryor, 1998). When students move up in their programme they tend to come across complex tasks, and developmentally they are expected to increasingly handle complicated situations, where due to the complexity of tasks anything can go wrong and the positive learner has to cope with disconfirming evidence which is possible negative feedback and move on.

*Is summative assessment a superlative against formative assessment?*

Most accreditations, qualifications and assessment systems puts more emphasis on the summative or final/ exit assessments, in that these can determine the passing or failing of a student (Garwe, 2014). According to Hanna and Dettmer (2004) the prescribed aim of summative assessment is to make frantic evaluations of students learning at the end of an instructional unit by comparing that level against some important standard, yardstick or benchmark. Therefore Gibbs (1999) considers summative assessments as often 'high stakes', conveying the meaning that they have a high or supreme point value, for example, what occurs with the end-term exams, final project, final paper, senior recital and so on. In some instances, summative assessment information can be used as formative especially when students or faculty utilize it for guiding their efforts, tasks and activities in the subsequent courses.

Formative assessment has the main goal of monitoring student learning in order to provide ongoing feedback which is useful to the student to improve learning and to the instructor to improve teaching (Hanover Research Institute, 2013). In this context the Hanover Research Institute (2013) believes that the students are assisted in the identification of their strengths, weaknesses and target areas in need of re-work or hard-work; then the faculty identifies the areas which students are struggling, the extent of the struggle and can address problems urgently on time. This makes formative assessment 'low stakes', which can be translated as to say formative assessment has low or no point value in telling the whole picture or conveying student final or complete learning.

Formative assessment in the current era is required to add up to the final mark or grade though with a 'low point value', but where to make it a 'no point value' examples would include; drawing a concept map in class to represent an understanding of topic or task, or giving one or two sentences that would show an understanding of the main points of a lecture, or turning in a research proposal for a little bit early feedback.

*Does summative assessment compliments formative assessment?*

Nherera (2000) assumes that it is fundamental that teaching and learning tends to compliment or overlap, so is formative and summative assessment, and these activities aim to benefit both the professional development of the instructor and the quality of student learning. The argument by Sambell and McDowell (1997) is that formative assessment alone is not sufficient due to the fact that the ultimate success of students is very much dependent upon the last hurdle, which sometimes tell the ultimate motivation and commitment to learn by

students. Rolfe and McPherson (1995) in the article ‘How I am doing’ assumed that formative assessment measures only the teaching behaviors and course activities, and is not sufficient in that the students will appreciate the qualities of the instructor which will not be optimally helpful in their learning and growth. Summative assessment done in tandem with subsequent terms’ or semesters’ teaching and learning leads to the instructor to improve and modify their teaching practices and therefore lead to higher standards in students’ learning and performance. Sambell and McDowell (1997) re-emphasizes the reason of carrying out summative assessment as the measurement of the degree of success or proficiency that has been accumulated at the completion of an instructional design unit, therefore leading to assignment of grades to final exams, critique of a senior recital, university faculty evaluation and so on.

With a different perspective on summative assessment, Hendel and Lewis (2005) says that summative assessment compliments formative assessment but the challenge is in most cases it carries the largest weight on the final grade or mark. Due to that it may affect learning by building up pressure (stress, fears, e.t.c.) on the exit points, which may even obscure the coming out of the correct degree of teaching and learning in students. Hendel and Lewis (2005) argued that summative assessment occurs after a large chunk of learning, with the results being primarily for teachers’ or schools’ use. There is of course time that lapses between doing the assessment task and when results are out to the student/ parent, where feedback to the students in most cases is limited to the marks or grades and the students does not have another opportunity to be assessed on the same issues again, therefore it can be assumed that summative assessment tends to have the least impact in improving understanding or performance rather than showing where the student is currently in terms of capacities level. Parents of the students can use the summative assessment results to see where the students’ overall performance lies where also instructors use this type of assessment to judge overall strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum and instruction, with improvements deemed to affect next term/ semester/ year’s students.

#### *Transforming assessment in higher education*

In the briefest understanding of assessment, it plays a vital role in higher education (Tina, 2009). Whereof Vaz, Avadhany and Rao (1996) acclaim that it is crucial in shaping and computing the extent of student learning. Therefore, assessment should be designed for both ways, and in such ways that propagates student learning, in the sense of learning the subject or professional domain or competencies, literacies and skills at a subject or broader level or any other intended means. Wolf et al., (1991) argued that there is need for attention to the means and methods of assessment and feedback, and there is also great need for the use of peer-assessment and self-assessment taken together with code of beliefs in enhancing fundamentals of learning.

Transformation of assessment is a necessary phase that involves a process that will need to include a number or range of concerned parties or stakeholders in a cycle of review, plan and action. It is important to note that taking this route, will

definitely change a lot of aspects, including the infrastructure of the institution, the required dialogue between students and staff concerning curriculum review and development, and assessment (Hanna & Dettmer, 2004). It is true that transforming assessment can yield favourable results towards student learning, satisfaction and helps to promote greater confidence in the academic standards.

#### *Who is this framework for?*

It is important to take note that an assessment framework is developed for the students and in the process incorporating the students (Cowie & Bell, 1999). Of course the framework will be relevant to many other stakeholders including the economic productive sectors such as the industry and commerce but by and large the framework should first be workable with the students and follows the instructors, or should be relevant to a range of staff working in higher education. A broad spectrum of concerned or required candidates to play in transforming assessment includes those who teach, those who are taught, those given the exercises of changing assessment policy and practice, and even those responsible for quality assurance and enhancement, in all subjects or centrally. At the level of higher institutions that can involve the pro-vice chancellors, the deans, the chairpersons of departments or subject or program leaders and the lecturers. Transforming assessment should be adopted at the level of the institution and then engrossed with various programs.

#### *Is transforming assessment that important?*

There are a number of factors, of course, that does not give room or permit assessment to be stagnant, and in fact assessment should be justifiably, reasonably and regularly looked at and changed, whenever not meeting the required or intended results (Dochy & McDowell, 1997). In higher education, teaching and learning is significantly improved whenever there is a transformation of assessment policy and practices. Transforming assessment practices and policies will possibly lead to;

1. Enhanced potential for student increased learning
2. Students tends to get highly satisfied
3. High value return for money spent
4. Matching of 21<sup>st</sup> century outcomes with assessment methods
5. Fair, excellent representation of achievement by students
6. Communities-wide greater appreciation and confidence of academic standards

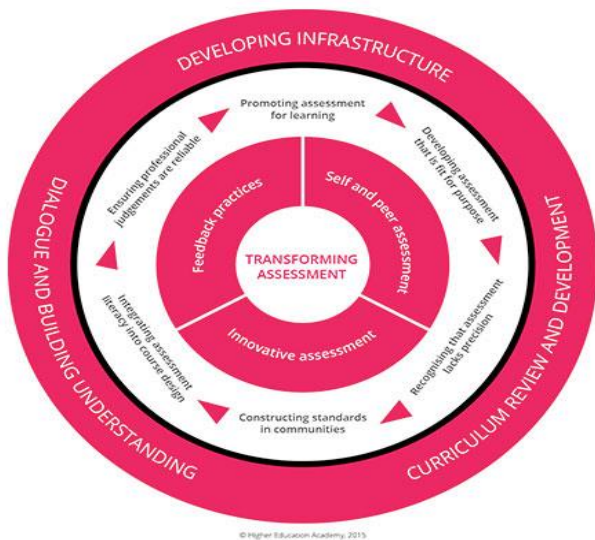
In the same vein of transforming assessment, there is valuable inferences promoting consideration of the following (Brown & Knight, 1994);

1. An ideal balance between the formative and summative assessment both at the module or program levels, with summative holding high regards in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, thoroughly integrated within the context and practice of teaching and learning
2. The utilization of a couple or numerous but diverse assessment methods testing various competences (knowledge, attitude and skills) to improve inclusivity, validity, and authenticity thus optimizing relevance and focus to students

3. An increased opportunity for high levels of peer-assessment and self-assessment within the teaching and learning for both the teacher and the student, to improve the students' comprehension and trust in assessment
4. The crafting and designing of methods and approaches that encourages student further development in academic literacies and a good understanding of academic practices

*Working on the assessment transformation structure*

The Higher Education Academic (2016) developed a working framework that offers a structure for transforming assessment in institutions of higher learning. At least three interrelated areas of focus can be used to transform assessment, which are buttressed and surrounded by a couple of tenets which can be derived from standards of assessments. The tenets too are interconnected and altogether with the major areas of focus will provide a stimulus for discussion to cultivate a shared understanding of the way assessment should be transformed. The outer component or circle of the structure underscores the institutional contexts or dilemmas where possibly change or transformation should be focused, such as, infrastructure, curriculum design, students and staff,



Framework for transforming assessment in higher education  
 Source: Higher Education Academy (2016): Framework for transforming assessment in higher education

The main areas of focus should include;  
*Innovative assessment*: which has to be challenging, at the same time being realistic and meaningful. Student learning is promoted through new procedures and approaches of assessment.

The areas of innovativeness may span from a subject, discipline or professional field, and can be considered as authentic or work appropriate involving employers or technocrats in through the assessment process. Innovation may come in the form of using technology-enhanced learning, engagement and participation of students and offering variety in assessment approaches.

*Feedback practices*: is a central and critical assessment component and also to a dialogic learning and teaching process.

Assessment practices should encourage and make feedback a compulsory element especially in formative assessments, increasing dialogue between students and staff, and amongst students. Effective systems of feedback ensure consistent practice in feedback and the ability of students to utilize feedback as an aiding component to learning.

*Self- and peer-assessment*: there are numerous ways to utilize this such as part of the process of learning and teaching, whether this occurs in class-based activities, or group work or with the advent of ICTs through online forums. Students naturally grow and develop to become an autonomous learner, heavily equipped with reflective and evaluative skills, and highest levels of capabilities for collaborative working. Students fully appreciate what is required of them, at the same time develop assessment literacy, building up confidence as they are involved in their assessment and the giving of feedback to others. The approach develops in students even life-long employable capabilities, whether self-employed or formally employed such as self-reflection and communication.

*Transforming assessment is enabled through*: Dialogue and building understanding among staff and students, particularly with regard to the assessment tenets and the implications of these for assessment policy and practice; Curriculum review and development so that enhanced assessment practices can be effectively integrated in institutional processes and Developing infrastructure to support change, which includes institutional assessment regulations, and the use of technologies to enhance assessment practice, improve feedback and streamline assessment management (e.g. e-submission, e-feedback).

*How can the proposed framework be used?*

The framework provides a structure for those working in higher education to engage with the process of transforming assessment. How this process is undertaken and realised can depend on institutional context and priorities, but it is likely to entail:

- reviewing and evaluating existing policy and practice;
- identifying priorities for change;
- developing action plans.

As part of this process, the framework can be used as a guide in:

- determining priority areas of development;
- engaging staff and students in dialogue about this framework and assessment processes and practices more broadly, so that a shared understanding can be developed;
- integrating enhanced assessment practices within curriculum design, review and validation;
- designing programme level (rather than module level) assessment.

It can be most effective if adopted at an institutional level, as well as at the programme level

Promoting assessment for learning, that is, learning and assessment should be integrated and fully aligned in the following respects;

Developing assessment that is fit for purpose: the assessment of learning should focus on the demonstrable achievement of intended program outcomes.

*Recognizing that assessment lacks precision:* learning extends beyond what is amenable to precise specification of standards or to objective assessment. Thus not all learning or assessment outcomes can be specified.

*Constructing standards in communities:* given that assessment standards are socially constructed, staff and students need to engage in dialogue about standards to understand what is required from, and entailed in, the assessment process.

*Integrating assessment literacy into course design:* programs, modules and assessments should be designed in ways that help students understand the recognized standards.

*Ensuring professional judgements are reliable:* assessment is dependent upon professional judgement; confidence in which depends on forums for developing and sharing standards within and between academic, disciplinary and professional communities.

Overall, there is an overwhelming fact that can never be swept under the carpet that the need for continued appraisal or review of any form of assessment can never be underrated in this and the coming centuries.

### III. METHODOLOGY

An exploratory research design, non-experimental and descriptive in nature was shortly used first to help generate insights into assessment issues of higher education that assisted in defining and further developing the problem situation. Exploratory research brought out the fundamental assessment issues such as themes which included types of formative and summative assessment being used at Chinhoyi University of Technology, objectives of both the formative and summative assessment types, the teaching and learning methods or strategies, and the procedures or processes involved in assessments.

The general population used under study was Chinhoyi University of Technology (CUT) community, which had over 7 500 students and over 200 staff involved with students' assessments such as academic and administrative or supportive staff members. The academic population comprised of permanent full time, contract full time and any form of part time lecturers, teaching assistants, demonstrators, and so forth, as used by the university in the teaching, learning and assessment processes. The study used around 7 to 10 students conveniently picked from the 9 schools that Chinhoyi University of Technology has, regardless of the student's level in the various programs, in terms of year and semester. The researcher administered questionnaires (which had both open- and closed-ended questions) to the identified students and members of staff from both academic and administrative or supportive staff.

### IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This first part looks at respondents with respect to various assessments modes they have encountered or know of, forms in which they have encountered these ranging from written, oral, practical, problem based, performance, work placement, etc. and whether individual, group, class work, etc. and that the

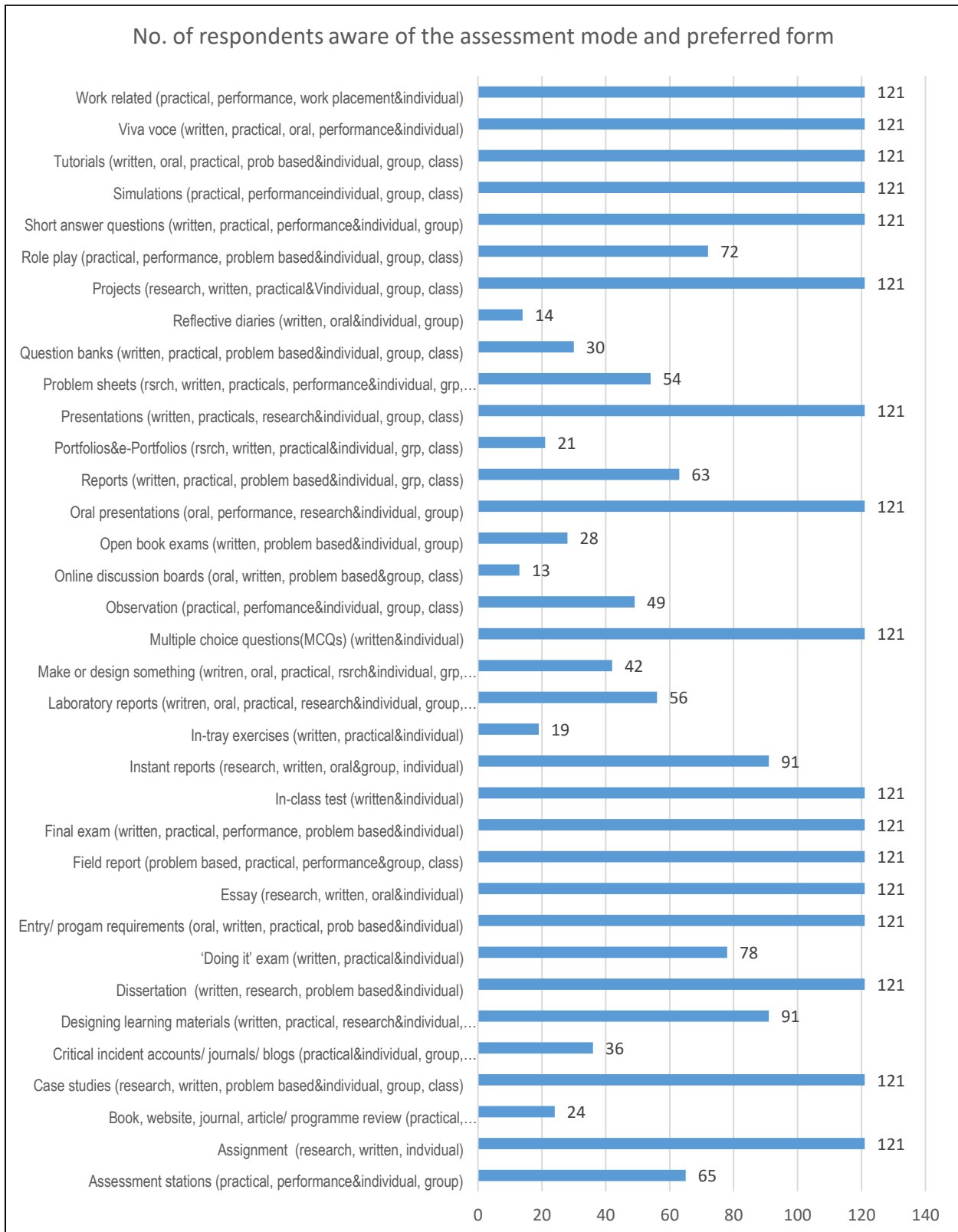
assessment measures knowledge, skills, attitude and research competences.

This second part confirms measures of various competences that are imparted in higher education, the study looked at the three common areas of competences which include knowledge, skills and attitudes; and for the sake of the required 21<sup>st</sup> century skills the study also looked at the propensity of the students to be able to conduct further researches in their fields of study.

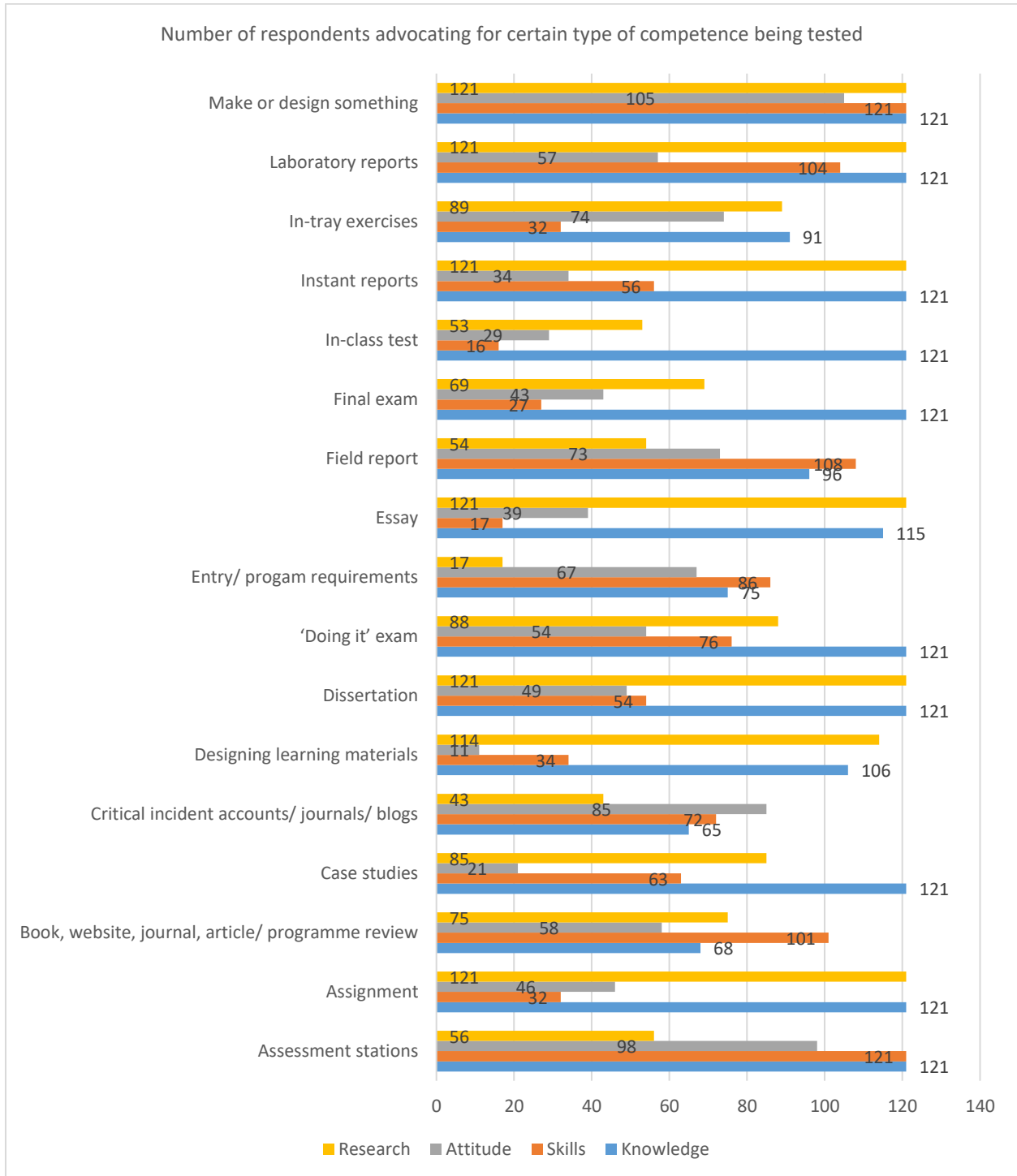
On the cognitive or knowledge level and retention measurement, which follows, it shows that a greater percentage of the staff and students respondents believe in the fact that assessments helps student to discern their level of knowledge; that some forms of assessment may not reflect student learning in that issues being assessed may not be exactly what the student knows; then the fact that assessment may cause students to strategically learn, memorise, spot and pass; and that instructors may need to engage students in the teaching, learning and assessment practices and processes creation or development.

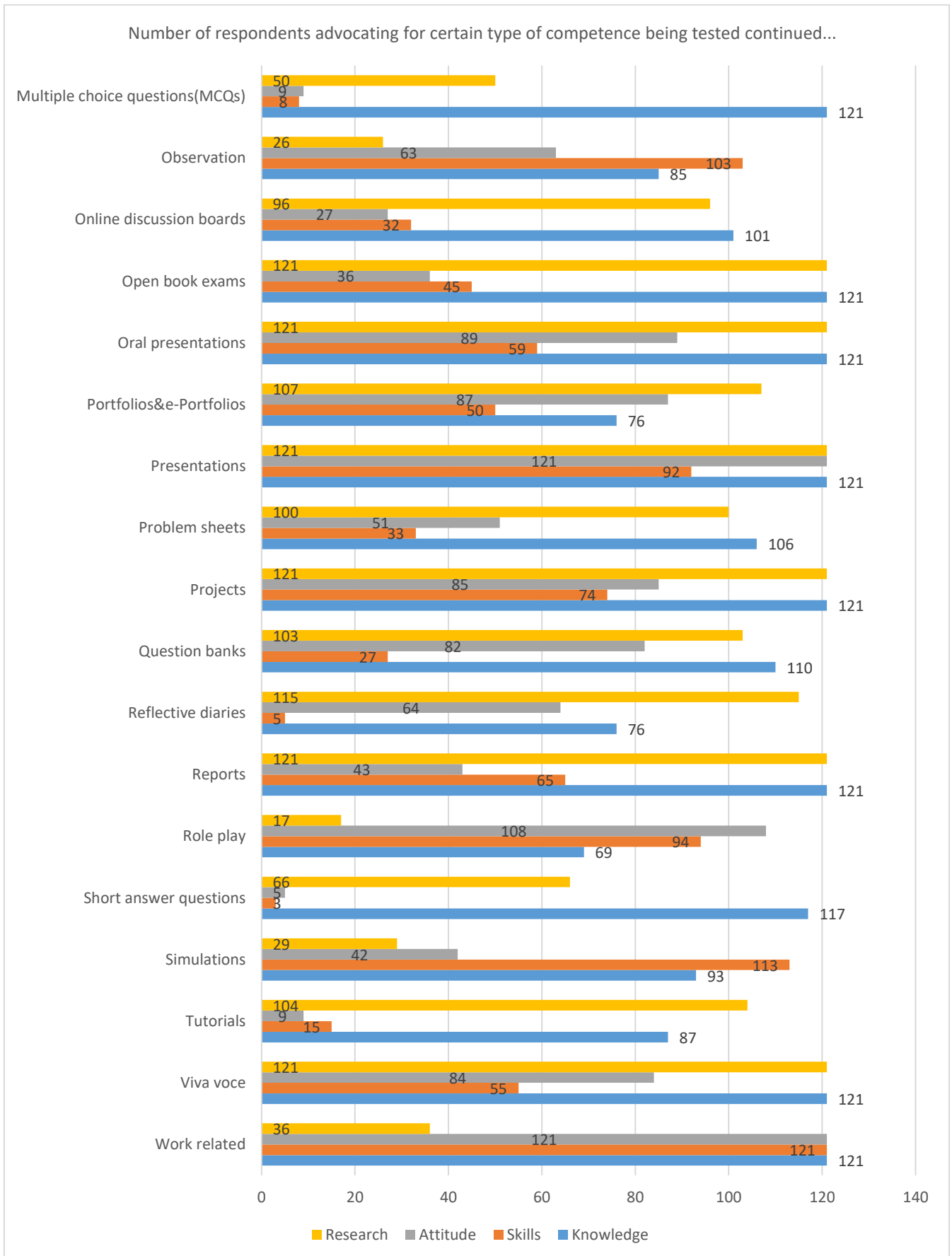
On the skills capabilities level measurement, a greater number of respondents agree positively to the fact that assessment can be used to communicate skills levels and at the same time that assessment can be used to closely tie students performances with expected skills; the same table shows that there is a lot that needs to be done with skills vis-à-vis assessments. Respondents are agreeing that assessments methods needs to be re-looked at in order to achieve required skills level testing, then there is urgent need of the alignment of productive expectations with institutions skills objectives or outcomes (being seen by a widespread unsure and balanced answers by the respondents as to whether skills outcomes are in tandem to productive or industries expectations) and then the respondents are of the opinion that current assessment modes may not be reliable to measure the skills attained by the students.

On the affective/ emotional/ attitude level depicting the measurement of the affective component of assessment and how it spills to the industry or off-campus situations, shows that there is a challenge in relating assessment with the formation and development of the correct or appropriate attitudes. The net cumulative weighting of 60% shows that respondents do not agree or are somewhat not sure to the fact that assessment can cause stress, depression, demotivates, pulls down, may not prepare one for required industry attitudes, conduct, professionalism and may not be a good indicator of how much or how far one goes in life with learning or a correct attitude on learning. Similarly, if the same results are taken on a different note, almost 43% (19%+16%+8%), which is a significant percentage agree to the fact that assessment can cause stress, depression, demotivates, pulls down, may not prepare one for required industry attitudes, conduct, professionalism and may not be a good indicator of how much or how far one goes in life with learning or a correct attitude on learning.









Cognitive or knowledge level and retention measurement	strongly disagree	disagree	somewhat disagree	neutral	somewhat agree	agree	strongly agree
Assessment assist student to know how much they have learnt							
Assessment does not exactly show student knowledge levels							
Assessment may look at different areas than what students know							
Assessment causes strategically studying, memorising and spotting							
Instructors need to consult students concerning assessment issues							
<b>Cumulative frequency</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>Net weighting cumulative percentage</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>27%</b>

Skills capabilities level measurement	strongly disagree	disagree	somewhat disagree	neutral	somewhat agree	agree	strongly agree
Assessments can articulate students skills required in the industry							
Assessment can link closely expected/ trained/ desired skills							
There is need to change assessments in use to match tasks and required outcomes							
Skills learning outcomes do not exactly match productivity expectations							
Current assessment procedures are not reliable to measure skills attained							
<b>Cumulative frequency</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>219</b>
<b>Net weighting cumulative percentage</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>36%</b>

Affective/ emotional/ attitude level	strongly disagree	disagree	somewhat disagree	neutral	somewhat agree	agree	strongly agree
Assessment causes stress, pressure and impacts on performance							
Assessment demotivates and makes one less proud of what has been achieved							
Assessment causes depression, and may pull down students							
Assessment does not prepare for industry expected attitude, conduct							
Assessment does not enhance or show chances of lifelong attitude for learning							
<b>Cumulative frequency</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Net weighting cumulative percentage</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>8%</b>

Research activities propensity	strongly disagree	disagree	somewhat disagree	neutral	somewhat agree	agree	strongly agree
Effective and timeous feedback in assessment enhances further research							
Portfolio, essays, presentations, dissertation tends to increase level of research activities							
In-class tests, final examination, multiple choice does not encourage looking for further information apart from lecturer's notes and presentations							
Students read further when there is an assessment that follows a module or instruction							
Research project/ dissertation equips students to identify, develop and solve practical problems							
<b>Cumulative frequency</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>276</b>
<b>Net weighting cumulative percentage</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>46%</b>

Educational management and education effectiveness	strongly disagree	disagree	somewhat disagree	neutral	somewhat agree	agree	strongly agree
	Current assessment methods and approaches match the task and outcomes in the modules and programs	36	54	23	0	6	2
Students have a commendable understanding of the criteria employed in the assessment methods and what they are designed to assess	75	14	8	2	10	5	7
A student who has been passed at Chinhoyi University, their passing is a sure guarantee of performance in the industry	40	23	21	27	2	3	5
Students should only be assessed on the basis of theory and practical learnt at universities	38	17	11	6	15	25	9
Students leave the universities adequately trained in their area of studies	36	16	2	0	7	15	45
Universities are to blame for poor student performances in the productive sectors such as the industry	32	10	16	15	7	17	24
Universities moulds a student character enough, therefore standing to be blamed for students 'uncalled for' behaviour in the industry and commerce	32	12	6	0	12	32	27
There is no need to improve assessment procedures/ administration and infrastructure/ facilities/ resources in the universities for effective assessment and results	64	32	21	4	0	0	0
There is no need to include other courses and assessments to prepare students for a lifetime of learning and professional work	55	32	28	6	0	0	0
The assessment system does not have over-reliance on one or two modes of assessment such as formal unseen examinations, assignments and in-class tests	108	12	1	0	0	0	0
Overloading students does not lead to coping strategies such as 'surface' opposed to 'deep' learning, 'strategic' learning against 'real knowledge development', 'short cuts', etc.	106	9	6	0	0	0	0
Too large a class does not affect teaching, learning and assessment methods, processes, procedures, facilities and students results	92	15	14	0	0	0	0
There is no chance of wide variations in marking reliability between one assessment method and another; and between one marker and the other	89	11	12	8	1	0	0
If there is possible variations between one assessment method and another; and between one marker and the other it is not helpful or positive	10	15	33	42	21	0	0
Students may not be capable of learning new issues in their fields, their assessed current level of learning does not create good foundations for any future learning or complicated task	82	23	12	4	0	0	0
Feedback is not useful and need not to be quick, need not be complete-clear comments and need not be available on every assessment or exercise	78	32	11	0	0	0	0

On research activities propensity measurements, it shows that 85% of respondents (14% + 25% + 46%) fully agree to the notion that assessment enhances research in one way or the other. In the same instance, on measuring in-class tests, final examination, multiple choice there is a mix up as to whether this fully encourage research rather than depending on what the instructor has offered in teaching and learning processes.

On educational management and education effectiveness measurements, this has been used to underscore what assessment can bring in terms of changing the teaching and learning processes; reviewing of the assessment systems and processes; student engagement in critical learning issues; and even the improvement of infrastructure, facilities, resources and so forth for better teaching, learning and assessment. Respondents answered in a manner that assessment is a fundamental component of efficiencies in education and educational management, and national production improvement. Boud and Falchikov (2007) in the article ‘Rethinking assessment in higher education’, supports the respondents in that assessment helps in the improvement of infrastructure, resources, facilities, classroom management and managing lecturer-student ratio; curriculum design, development and review; aligning program outcomes with teaching, learning and most importantly productive sectors (such as agriculture, industry and commerce) expectations and requirements; the need to engage students in teaching, learning and assessments; and so forth. Through assessment processes and results, the instructor, student, stakeholders and institutions of higher learning will have to align, modify or transform certain processes in order to get the best out of the students.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

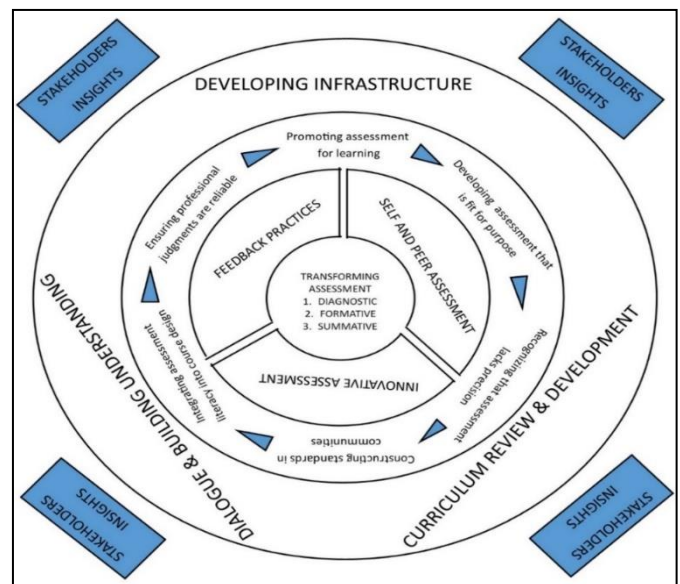
The study concludes that the current assessment methods are worthwhile but recommends that there is need to remove over-reliance on a few which includes mostly essays, assignments, tutorials, final exams, presentations. There is need to blend a number of assessment methods on a program to enable assessment to be exciting, less stressful, all-encompassing and helpful. It is the duty of the system and instructors to bring the assessment modes in various forms such as individual, group or class levels and at the same time in the various forms such as written, oral, problem based, work placement, performance and practical, where necessary.

As much as the findings have indicated that all assessments are capable of measuring the required competences, it is interesting to note that some have been labelled to test much or less of a certain competence. According to Wolf et al., (1991) assessment modes can be modelled to test almost any required competence but there is need to align the mode to such levels and nature. It is therefore possible that knowledge, skills, attitude and research capabilities can be tested highly with any assessment mode, and it is the duty of system or instructor to align assessment to achieve such competences.

Education and educational management effectiveness is the hope of every institution of learning, and it is the main thrust or expected goal by any other stakeholders, including the students. As much as assessment has been hoped to be the exit point or

measurement point, it engulfs much power in feed-forwarding processes, process-feed backing and output-feed backing the learning processes (Caroll, 1995). Assessment should be used as a yardstick to measure and improve on teaching and learning practices; assessment procedures and processes; even the institution infrastructure, resources and equipment; and the environmental components such as the economy, production, literacy, local and international quality in education, standards of living possible enhancement (Rolfe & McPherson, 1995). The study recommends that assessment should input into these aspects and at the same time measure the propensity of achieving these standards in students.

The study further proposes the continued use of the Higher Education Academy (2016): Framework for transforming assessment in higher education, to rejuvenate assessment modes and practices in higher education with an added emphasis of the various ‘stakeholder insights’. The bottom line exists on identifying the major assessment modes; which are diagnostic, formative and summative, and to take these from the grassroots development to where these touches the institution systems and the overall stakeholder perspectives. The current framework really needs to add on or underscore the stakeholder perspective and engagement as shown; in that stakeholders have a lot to say (or should have a lot to say) or influence and input in the assessment, teaching and learning processes. Assessment should never be stagnant over years but should be in check and balances against various factors, including stakeholders.



Stakeholder sensitive framework for transforming assessment in Higher education

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