Assessment strategy framework for the National Diploma: Fashion course at one Eastern Cape comprehensive university

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by

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Declaration

I declare that Assessment strategy framework for the National Diploma: Fashion course at an Eastern Cape comprehensive university is my own work and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Date:

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was born out of a perceived need to establish an assessment strategy framework for the fashion programme of one Eastern Cape comprehensive university. The study focused on one Eastern Cape comprehensive university. The programme, National Diploma: Fashion, is offered by the university at two campuses (120km apart). Although this programme is currently offered at both of the sites under the auspices of the university, disparity exists in many of the academic functions within the programme. The most challenging is assessment and the implications of a non-existent standard framework for assessment across both campuses. This research undertook to identify a framework that would best serve the Fashion programme of the researched university. Assessment in the context of this study referred to the process of both gathering evidence of student learning as well as assigning grades to that learning. The lack of an assessment framework affects the quality of assessment. Consistency in the assessment process across both campuses is important. At present assessment is not consistent as it is done independently on each campus. This lack of consistency could prove to favour students at the one campus while marginalizing students at the other campus and vice versa. Inconsistency arises from staff having no common assessment framework to refer to when assessment takes place. This study was a case study. Interviews were conducted with a sample of lecturers and students from both sites. A document analysis of relevant policies was done. The documents included the Higher Education Quality Committee document Criteria for Programme Accreditation, 2004, the South African Qualification Authority document Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment of NQF Registered Unit Standards and Qualifications, 2001, and the South African Qualification Authority document Guidelines for Integrated Assessment, 2005. University policy documents pertaining to assessment were also included in the research.The findings of this study lead to the conclusion that there is no clear assessment framework currently in place for the National Diploma: Fashion at one Eastern Cape comprehensive university. The assessment methods currently in use are not fully understood and comprehended by lecturers or students. The assessment types are limited with little or no variety as to how assessment is practiced. Although continuous assessment is advocated in the department, a lack of understanding by lecturers and students as to the true practice of continuous assessment is evident. Much of the assessment is done at the end of a teaching module, rather than embedded in the teaching module. This means that assessment is done of learning rather than for learning.

Key words: Assessment, formative, summative, feedback, continuous assessment, framework

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Acronyms and abbreviations

BEAR	Berkley Evaluation and Assessment Research centre
CHE	Council on Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
SAQA	South African Qualifications Framework

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

According to Malan (Malan, 1997) criteria for effective assessment are not described only in terms of what has to be assessed, but also on how assessment should take place. Importance needs to be placed on quality and consistency of assessment procedures, processes and tasks. Quality and consistency of assessment procedures, processes and tasks within the programme offering National Diploma: Fashion at one Eastern Cape comprehensive university was identified as a possible weakness within the fashion department. It was this need for quality and consistency of assessment procedures, processes and tasks which underpins this study.

1.2 Background

In 1995 the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act came into being. This Act had a direct bearing on assessment, moving away from the traditional examination-driven approach to a system that is seen to have greater educational value (Nair & Pillay, 2004). It was during this period of change in the Higher Education landscape that the two departments that will form the focus of this study were constituted. At the time the two departments formed part of two separate institutions of higher learning. As they were separate, both departments went through their own processes of developing strategies for assessment. By being combined through a merger in 2005 of three previously independent institutions of higher learning, the departments became one department. The merger included two previous technikons and one traditional university to become one comprehensive university. Attention was not given to merging the assessment strategies previously formulated by the individual departments before they became one. This has led to confusion and disparity with regard to quality and consistency of assessment procedures, processes and tasks within the merged department.

The study will focus on one Eastern Cape comprehensive university. The programme National Diploma: Fashion is offered by the university over two campuses (120km apart). Although this programme is currently offered at both of the former sites under the auspices of the university, disparity exists in many of the academic functions within the programme. The most challenging is assessment and the implications of a nonexistent standard framework for assessment across both campuses. Assessment in the context of this study refers to the process of both gathering evidence of student learning, as well as assigning grades to that learning. The lack of an assessment framework affects the quality of assessment. Consistency in the assessment process across both campuses is important. At present assessment is not consistent as it is done independently on each campus. This lack of consistency could prove to favour students at the one campus while marginalizing students at the other campus and vice versa. Inconsistency arises from staff having no common assessment framework to refer to when assessment takes place.

In the South African domain, seven of the twenty-three higher education institutions offer the programme National Diploma: Fashion. An internet search of these institutions shows that an assessment mix exists. Some institutions only assess on a continuous basis. Other universities make use of a mix of traditional pen and paper type exams for theory subjects, and continuous formative assessment for practical subjects. For example, Tshwane University of Technology assesses using both the pen and paper type exam for theory subjects and continuous assessment for practical subjects (Tshwane University of Technology, 2014).

In the assessment policy developed by the University of Kwa Zulu Natal, reference is made to a review of national and international assessment practices. The review states that it is a common thread across universities to have a separate assessment policy (University of Kwazulu Natal, 2008).

1.2.1 Current assessment processes at one Eastern Cape comprehensive university

Within the local context of the Fashion programme at one Eastern Cape comprehensive university, assessment is conducted on a continuous basis. This implies that the assessment procedure should be a continuous process. Each and every project/task done by the student in the process of ordinary class work should be assessed. Luckert and Sutherland describe continuous assessment as an approach in which the students are assessed on a regular basis during the teaching process. Each assessment session is then used as a building block in further teaching and construction of the next assessment (Luckett & Sutherland, 2000). At the beginning of a project/task, students are presented with a brief and a rubric. The brief gives the student the specific outcomes of the project/task, what materials will be used, how to present the project/task and the general marking criteria. The rubric is more specific in that it informs the student exactly what marking allocation has been put in place for each sub-section of the project/task. Marking should take place immediately after each project/task is completed. This should take the form of a class 'crit', where students, the subject lecturer and an additional lecturer are present. This would form a formative feedback session, after which the students should be given an opportunity to improve their work as per the crit. In the case of the Fashion course central to this study, this is not the case. Briefs and rubrics are sometimes verbal in their delivery. Crits generally do not take place.

At the end of each term, marks are collated for each subject. An average mark is then assigned to each subject. Moderation is a process that ensures that assessors assess in a consistent, accurate and well-designed manner (SAQA, 2001). A moderation procedure takes place at the end of each semester (June and November). The June moderation is conducted internally by staff. The November moderation is conducted externally by fashion lecturers who are invited from another institution. Currently the moderation cycle is three years. In each three year cycle the moderators bring with them their own institutions' experiences and procedures. As the Fashion course has no official moderation guidelines (assessment framework), this has proved to be confusing to both the teaching staff and moderating staff. With no guidelines, changes are implemented in each three year cycle to satisfy the needs and wants of the moderators. This continual change leads to inconsistency within the fashion programme assessment/moderation process.

1.3 Assessment: A global perspective

In the context of higher education and training, assessment practices operate within a global, national, and institutional space. Three international factors presently having an effect on higher education have been identified (Breier, 2001). These are:

- Globalisation: Students need to be able to participate in a global economy. To this end learners need to be taught generic skills and interdisciplinary knowledge.
- Massification: Higher education is experiencing a shift from elite to mass form. This includes the diversification of students backgrounds in terms of ethnicity, race, class and language groups entering higher education institutions.
- Internationalisation: Reference to international education and training entails the curriculum content, the movement of students involved in teaching and research, as well as similarities with teaching systems extending beyond national borders.

In terms of Globalisation, students need to be assessed in a way that will ensure international standardisation, meaning students need to be assessed in such a way that they will be able to demonstrate theoretical as well as practical knowledge. This demonstration of knowledge gained should empower students to engage in gainful employment in as many economic environments as possible. In Europe, the Bologna Declaration was signed in 1999 by 29 European education ministers. The process has become known as the Bologna Process (Voegtle, Knill, & Dobbins, 2010). The Bologna Process is a result of and a response to the pressures brought about by the globalization of the education landscape.

Since students come from many different backgrounds - class, race and ethnicity backgrounds - assessment must be planned to encompass all the different challenges presented by the demands of the student population. 'One size fits all' is not possible or relevant in a modern society.

Students are moving from one country to the next to extend their education and broaden their horizons. In order to set a comparable standard all stakeholders can refer to, assessment must be planned and practised according to common international standards.

Russell (2008) asserts that major changes with regard to assessment and learning have been implemented since the nineteen seventies and eighties. He ascribes this change to the questioning of the pedagogy of learning by people such as Marton & Saljo (1976), John Biggs (1979) and Entwistle & Ramsden (1983). A study of Australian university policy documents shows that most universities have a detailed policy on assessment guidelines. These are available to prospective and current students (Russel, 2008). Since these documents are available to students, it emphasises the important role stakeholder students are playing in the assessment of their own work.

The University of Technology, Sydney, has published an article “Assessment 2020 Seven propositions for assessment reform in higher education”. The article acknowledges that universities are facing a substantial change due to the rapidly changing global context in which they find themselves. A set of seven propositions has been proposed. This has been done as a possible solution to criticism of current practices. The focus is on increasing the quality of standards and setting directions for change to enhance and improve the quality of the learning experience (Boud & Associates, 2010).

In the United Kingdom (UK), there is a drive for higher education to become more “student centered”. Higher education assessment in the UK is based on explicit learning outcomes. The assessment outcomes are twofold, programme outcomes and outcomes of the elements which make up those outcomes (UK Quality Code for Higher Education, 2015).

The authors of “A marked improvement – Transforming assessment in higher education” attest to the premise that assessment of student learning is a fundamental function of higher education. It is further stated by the authors that recognition must be given to assessment in its role of expressing academic standards and the vital impact it has on student behaviour, their future lives, university reputations and staff time. It is written that most universities in the United Kingdom have not kept pace with assessment changes in the context, aims and structure of higher education (Ball et al., 2012).

The world has become a global village. Changes in fields such as education and assessment have a direct bearing on all stakeholders. As South Africa forms part of this global village it is important to explore what is happening in the context of education and assessment in this country.

1.4 Assessment: The South African scene

The assessment policy in South Africa is determined by Higher Education, South Africa (HESA), as well as by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). It requires that all courses be registered on the National Qualification Framework (NQF) (Bohlman, 2006).

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) developed a document, Criteria and guidelines for assessment of NQF registered unit standards and qualifications, in order to provide guidelines to the assessment of education and training qualifications. These guidelines talk to good assessment practice, the role of the assessor, the assessment process and the moderation of the assessment.

With the changes brought about in the education landscape by the introduction of new laws (the South African Qualifications Authority Act 1995 and the National Qualifications Framework Act 1995), institutions of higher learning were challenged to equip learners for professional vocational employment. The focus of education had to change to the competency of the learner Friedrich-Nel et al. in their study of assessment trends in higher education concluded that there is a trend of using a new approach to assessment methods to assess the performance of learners. It was found that, although educators were familiar with various assessment methods, the use of performance methods should be given more attention. Challenges in changing from the traditional approach to assessment requires an innovative attitude, time, energy, effort and patience from educators, faculty and learners (Friedrich-Nel, De Jager, Joubert, & Nel, 2003).

Existing within a global village, where changes and trends in assessment are apparent, it is necessary to examine current assessment practices of the National Diploma: Fashion at one Eastern Cape comprehensive university.

1.5 Motivation for the study

The motivation to conduct the study was born out of the oral feedback from various external moderators. Over a period of years the feedback regarding the conducting of assessment within the Department of Fashion was that it was lacking in structure and consistency. It was also apparent that the department was not assessing in a uniform manner, with each delivery site and each lecturer conducting assessment in an individual manner. These perceived flaws in assessment have a direct bearing on the quality of the National Diploma: Fashion. It was the ambiguity of assessment and the consequential effect on quality that motivated this study.

1.6 Research problem

There is a need for an assessment strategy framework to be developed and implemented to ensure quality and consistency in assessment procedures, processes and tasks. This is necessary due to current non formalized, haphazard assessment practices currently employed in the department. Operating outside a framework has a direct bearing on quality.

1.6.1 Research questions

The following research questions were formulated in order to best address the research topic:

1. What assessment strategy framework can be developed for Fashion courses?

2. How relevant and current are the assessment methods presently in use?

3. How can the assessment strategy framework be implemented to ensure quality and consistency?

1.7 The objective of the study

The objective of the study was to determine what assessment strategy framework would support and enhance the quality of the National Diploma: Fashion at one Eastern Cape comprehensive university.

1.8 Significance of the study

The university under study is currently constituted as the result of a merger of three institutions within the Eastern Cape. The programme, National Diploma: Fashion was offered at two of the previous institutions. This meant that the then current programme offerings of the previous institutions would have had to align themselves to each other in terms of curriculum offering and assessment practices. The National Diploma: Fashion is one of the programme offerings that was affected by the merger.

The findings of this study could make a significant contribution to the improvement in the quality of assessment, learning and teaching within the programme. The findings could be used to improve the practice of other programme offerings which show lack of quality in assessment.

The Council on Higher Education (Higher Education Quality Committee) in the Audit report on the university (October 2011) found the following to be of concern:

- Weaknesses in allowing faculties to decide the period of appointment of a moderator, as well as the procedures for the moderation of continuous assessment.
- Assessment practices within departments are rather inconsistent and serious cause for attention (Education, 2011).

The university could make use of the findings to inform future policy making on assessment and quality in teaching.

The findings of this study could also be useful to the Fashion Department of the university in terms of:

- Assuring quality in assessment.
- The development of consistent assessment practices across both campuses.
- Lecturers using the findings to assist in preparation for assessment.

- Lecturers using the findings in assessment practices.

Other universities and institutions of higher learning could also use the research findings and recommendations.

1.9 Delimitations

The study focused on assessment methods and procedures in use by lecturers of the National Diploma: Fashion at one Eastern Cape comprehensive university. It endeavoured only to suggest a possible assessment framework, but did not enforce the implementation thereof.

1.10 Definitions of terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms were used and understood to mean:

Assessment: Brown, Bull & Pendlebury (Luckett & Sutherland, 2000) define assessment as consisting essentially of taking a sample of what students do, making inferences and estimating the worth of their actions. The South African Qualification Authority views assessment as “A structured process for gathering evidence and making judgments about an individual’s performance in relation to registered national standards and qualifications” (*Criteria and Guidelines for Asessment of NQF Registered Unit standards and Qualifications*, 2001).

Framework: According to Malan (Malan, 1997), the term ‘framework’ is widely used to describe conceptual frames of reference. In the context of this study, the framework refers to the structure around which strategies leading to quality assessment are formed.

Assessment procedures: The policy document on Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment of NQF Registered Unit Standards and Qualifications describes assessment procedure as the planning of the assessment with the learner, the conducting of the assessment and, on completion of the assessment, the feedback to the learner (*Criteria and Guidelines for Asessment of NQF Registered Unit standards and Qualifications*, 2001).

Assessment tasks: Malan is of the view that assessment tasks and procedures should be planned as part of the instructional programme (Malan, 1997). The tasks are delivered in the form of a brief to the student. Assessment tasks should be designed by the assessor in order to promote applied competence in line with the specific subject being assessed as well as the overall purpose of the qualification.

Assessment validity: To align assessment methods and tasks to the desired outcomes the assessor needs to be clear about what is to be assessed through completion of the assessment task. The assessor also needs to ensure that the learners clearly understand what is expected of them in a task.

Assessment criteria: Assessment criteria refers to the intended learning outcomes for the work assessed, that is, the knowledge, understanding and skills markers a student is expected to display in the assessment task and which are taken into account in marking the work (Ulster University, 2013).

Assessment methods: Assessment methods, as described in the SAQA policy document on assessment, refer to the activities that an assessor engages in as he or she assesses a learner and the learner's work through observation, evaluation of a product and/or questioning (SAQA, 2001).

1.11 Methodology

The study focused on the assessment strategy of the Fashion Department within an Eastern Cape comprehensive university. The study was a qualitative study. The design and reasons for the choice of methodology follows below.

1.11.1 Research paradigm

The interpretivist paradigm is inclusive of many social perspectives, phenomenology being one (Burton & Bartlett, 2009). An interpretive qualitative approach is learning how individuals experience and interact with their social world and the meaning it has for them (Merriam, 2002). The research was conducted in the interpretivist paradigm. The phenomenologist is interested in showing how complex meanings are built out of simple units of direct experience (Merriam, 2002). Through this paradigm, the researcher interpreted the assessment practices, procedures and tasks at one higher education institution.

1.11.2 Research approach

The research approach used in this study was qualitative. qualitative research has been defined as a systematic approach to understanding qualities, or the essential nature of a phenomenon within a particular context (Brantlinger, Jiminez, Klinger, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005).

1.11.3 Research design

1.11.3.1 Case study

The research focus was on assessment as a phenomenon within the context of a programme offering on a multi delivery site. A single case study method was identified as a means which best informed this research. Yin (2009) states that a distinctive need for a case study arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena (Yin, 2009). Yin further elaborates that using a case study allows the investigator to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events – such as the programme assessment phenomenon within the context of the programme offering. The use of a case study when the research is to produce a solution to the issue in question (Burton & Bartlett, 2009).

1.11.3.2 Sampling

Sampling is the intentional choice of respondents by the researcher due to the qualities the respondents possess (Tongco, 2007). The researcher approaches people who can and are willing to provide the research with information by virtue of knowledge or experience (Bernard, 2002).

Sampling was used in the research study. The following were identified for interview purposes:

- Five lecturers from each delivery site. Lecturers were included because they have firsthand knowledge of the assessment challenges that currently exist.
- Five students from each delivery site. The students were included because their success and articulation within the programme are directly associated with assessment.

1.11.4 Methods

1.11.4.1 Interviews

Interviews were identified as a method which would provide this study with the necessary insights (Denscombe, 2004). Semi-structured interviews were used. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The written text together with the tape recordings constituted the material for the subsequent interpretation of meaning. Transcripts were analysed and themes identified based on the research questions of the study (Kvale, 1996).

Five lecturers per delivery site (two campuses) had in-depth, semi-structured interviews.

Five students per delivery site (two campuses) had in-depth, semi-structured interviews.

1.11.4.2 Document analysis

A documentary analysis was conducted. The documentation used for the purpose of this study was institutional assessment policies which were accessible to the researcher. Further documentation was South African Qualifications documentation on assessment and Higher Education Quality Council documentation. The documents are not of a secretive nature.

1.11.5. Researcher's bias

Self-awareness and "critical self-reflection" by the researcher on potential biases and predispositions which may affect the research process and conclusions were maintained (Johnson, 1997). The researcher was cognizant of researcher bias in this study. The researcher endeavoured to remain objective at all times during the research.

1.11.6 Phases of data collection

The document analysis was conducted as phase one. The information established from this phase of the research informed the type of interview questions and processes.

1.11.7 Validity and reliability

Validity was ensured by giving a full explanation of how data was gathered. Further validity was also ensured in the form of member checks. The research participants were given an opportunity to confirm their accounts and the recordings of their interviews to be accurate (Burton & Bartlett, 2009).

Reliability was be ensured by the researcher maintaining a chain of evidence (Yin, 2009). All documentation collected during the research was presented for final analysis with the research project.

1.12 Limitations of the study

The two campuses which form the focus of this study have a distance of 120km between them. The distance had financial, travel and time consequences.

The participants in the study, including the researcher, are full time employees. The lecturers had timetables to adhere to as did the students. Time to conduct the interviews was carefully arranged and managed.

1.13 Organization and structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of the following chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction and background

Chapter one provided an overview of the research report. The chapter included a short literature review of assessment covering both the international and national higher education landscape. This was followed by a brief overview of the problem statement, the significance of the study, methodology, limitations to the study, and finally the organisation of the research report.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter two presents an in-depth review of the literature pertaining to assessment in higher education. An international and a national perspective on assessment in higher education are discussed in depth. A theoretical framework is presented as a conclusion to chapter two.

Chapter 3: Research design

In chapter three the research methods used in the study are discussed. Reasons for the selection of a case study, sampling and interview methods are tabled. Advantages and disadvantages of the case study, and sampling and interview methods are deliberated. The issue of research ethics is also considered and discussed.

Chapter 4: Data presentation

Chapter four presents the data that was collected by the researcher. The biographical information of the participants is tabled. This is followed by the coding of the participants. The data on how the participants perceived assessment and how it is employed in the National Diploma: Fashion is discussed in detail.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In chapter five the data that was collected and tabled in chapter four is discussed. The data, collected from interviews as well as the documentary analysis on assessment, is used to underpin the discussion around the concept of developing an assessment framework for the National Diploma: Fashion at one Eastern Cape comprehensive university.

Chapter 6: Summary, conclusions and recommendations

Chapter six highlights the main notions of this study. This is followed by the conclusions drawn from the study, the potential contributions of the study and the researcher's recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Assessment is a process which, if used correctly, provides a means to document educational quality and institutional effectiveness. Assessment is also intended to foster institutional improvement and demonstrate accountability (Ronald, 2004).

This literature review aims to place assessment within the context of this study. It further explores trends in assessment practices, internationally and nationally. A study of the literature endeavours to unpack educational assessment in broad terms as well as on a micro level. The literature review informs the research as to the best assessment options (internationally and nationally) currently in use in higher education institutions. The researched literature informs and underpins the recommendations in a proposed formulation of an assessment strategy framework best suited for the course National Diploma: Fashion at one Eastern Cape comprehensive university.

The theoretical framework, Berkley Evaluation and Assessment Research system, underpinning the study is introduced and discussed at length and linked to the study.

2.2 Defining assessment

Since assessment is intended to improve institutions and their quest for accountability (Ronald, 2004), the term ‘assessment’ needs to be understood as defined by various researchers. Boud posits that assessment is about identifying suitable standards and criteria and making judgments about quality (Boud, 2000).

According to Malan, criteria for effective assessment are not described only in terms of what has to be assessed, but also on how assessment should take place. Importance needs to be placed on quality and consistency of assessment procedures, processes and tasks (Malan, 1997).

Rowntree describes assessment in education as the conscious interaction between two people, direct or indirect. It is the deliberate gathering and interpreting of information about the knowledge, understanding or abilities and attitudes of the person being assessed. Rowntree postulates assessment as a human encounter. Assessment should not only be seen to be obtained by means of formal tests and examinations, but also informally as in casual conversations (Rowntree, 1996).

Classroom assessment, as discussed by McMillan (McMillan, 2001), is the gathering, appraisal, and use of information in order to assist teachers make better decisions.

Broadfoot asserts that assessment is a central feature of social life. It is about judging people, things, ideas, and values. In doing so, it assists one to make sense of reality and our position in a given situation (Broadfoot, 1996).

The current practice in higher education institutions in South Africa can be linked to McMillan’s view (McMillan, 2001) of collecting evidence, evaluating the evidence (thus giving students marks) and, lastly, of lecturers reflecting on their practice and attaining of outcomes as evidenced by the mark profiles of students. Internationally assessment practices present a number of variations as discussed next.

2.3 International context

Assessment practices in the context of higher education and training operate in various forms, such as global, national, institutional and within specific disciplines. Breier has identified three international factors which are currently having an effect on higher education systems (Breier, 2001). Breier refers to these as the “big three”:

- Globalisation: On a global level, curricula need to be structured in order that students are able to participate in a global economy. In this respect, learners need to be taught generic skills and interdisciplinary knowledge.
- Massification: Diversification of students’ backgrounds, including their ethnicity, racial, class and language groups, has become a global concern within higher education and training systems. The demands made on a country’s HET multiply in proportion to the degree of diversity of the community.
- Internationalisation: Reference to international education and training entails the curriculum content, the movement of students involved in teaching and

research, as well as similarities with teaching systems extending beyond national borders.

Of the three factors mentioned, i.e. globalization, massification and internationalisation, globalisation speaks directly to assessment.

2.3.1 Globalisation

Globalisation of education in the 21^{st} century is faced with equipping students with new knowledge, skills and values essential to be competitive in a global market, as well as generating graduates to be responsible adults and good citizens of their country and of the world (Chinnammai, 2005).

2.3.2 Concept of globalisation

Altbach. Reisberg, & Rumbley (2009) describe globalisation of higher education as the product of a progressively inclusive world economy and new information and technology, together with the advent of an international knowledge network, the role of the English language and other influences beyond the control of academic institutions (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009).

Altbach et al. further says that universities and governments have responded to globalisation by changing policies and programmes (Altbach, 2009).

2.3.3 Influence on higher education

Altbach identifies five main global forces which influence higher education. These are:

- Massification of higher education. A move from higher education being available only to the elitists to becoming accessible to the masses.
- Higher education's central role in the establishment of a 'knowledge society'.
- Fundamental demographic trends.
- The fast pace at which information and communications technology is developing.
- The global socio-economic environment (Altbach, 2009).

2.3.4 Assessment adjustments to accommodate globalisation

Boud writes that because of the ever evolving phenomenon of globalisation new challenges are being brought to bear on assessment in higher education. To this end, Boud, engaging other academics, has developed the following seven propositions:

1. Assessment is used to engage students in learning.
2. Feedback is used to actively improve student learning.
3. Students and teachers become responsible partners in learning and assessment.
4. Students are inducted into the assessment practices and cultures of higher education.
5. Assessment for learning is placed at the centre of subject and program design.
6. Assessment for learning is a focus for staff and institutional development.
7. Assessment provides inclusive and trustworthy representation of student achievement (Boud & Associates, 2010).

All of the above propositions speak to practical applications of assessment practices. It is clear that these propositions are not country or system bound, but their nature allows them to be applied on a global scale, thus creating a generic framework that can be integrated into most curricula such as in countries like Australia and the United Kingdom.

2.3.4.1 Australia

The objectives of the Australian government's education agenda is to support a higher education system that:

- Is characterized by quality, diversity and equity of access;
- Contributes to the development of cultural and intellectual life in Australia;
- Is appropriate to meet Australia's social and economic needs for a highly educated and skilled population.

The above objectives echo how universities across the globe are positioning themselves in order to accommodate the phenomenon of globalisation. Quality assessment provides input into quality of institutions as well as providing a contribution to the development of a quality educated and skilled population.

According to Russel, most universities in Australia provide students with literature on the universities' assessment guidelines (Russel, 2008). Russell asserts that major changes with regard assessment and learning have been implemented since the nineteen seventies and eighties. He ascribes this change to the questioning of the pedagogy of learning by people such as Marton & Saljo (1976), Biggs (1979) and Entwistle & Ramsden (1983). A study of Australian university policy documents shows that most have a detailed policy on assessment guidelines. These are available to prospective and current students (Russel, 2008). James, McInnis and Devlin (2002) have recognised that assessment is treated as a tack on at the end of a teaching period. These authors are of the view that assessment should not be focusing on a judgmental role, but rather should be used to shape student development. It is stated that assessment should be embedded in teaching and learning and not just as a measure at the end of the teaching process (James, McInnis, & Devlin, 2002). This constitutes a move away from pure summative assessment to the more developmental approach of formative assessment in Australian universities.

The objectives as set out by the Australian government are in line with the quality criteria put forward by South African agencies such as SAQA, HEQC, etc. Quality, diversity and equity of access are referred to in many official documents authored by SAQA, HEQC and HESA. The South African government is also prioritizing the need to address the needs of unskilled and uneducated people in the country. The objectives identified by the Australian government seem to echo in South Africa as well, pointing to the three factors of globalisation, internationalisation and massification.

2.3.4.2 United Kingdom

Higher education assessment in the UK is based on explicit learning outcomes. The assessment outcomes are twofold, programme outcomes and outcomes of the elements which make up those outcomes (UK Quality Code for Higher Education 2015).

The authors of the publication A marked improvement – Transforming Assessment in Higher Education attest to the premise that assessment of student learning is a fundamental function of higher education. It is further stated by the authors that recognition must be given to assessment in its role of expressing academic standards and the vital impact it has on student behaviour, their future lives, university reputations and staff time. It is written that most universities in the United Kingdom have not kept pace with assessment changes in the context, aims and structure of higher education (Ball et al., 2012).

Boud and Falchikov describe how the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in the UK identified that assessment practices at universities in England and Northern Ireland was the teaching area most in need of improvement (Boud & Falchikov, 2006). The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education found that a small range of assessment methods were being practiced, with a large emphasis being placed on the traditional examination type assessment (Boud & Falchikov, 2006). The University of Bristol, however, favours the use of integrated assessment, which is the use of both summative and formative assessments. It is opined that an integrated system of assessment is met more favourably by students as they receive regular feedback to support their learning, whilst simultaneously amassing a mark for a summative assessment (Broadfoot, Timmis, Payton, Oldfield, & Sutherland, 2013).

The above reference to outcomes informed by different elements making up the elements, as well as the outcomes themselves, can be linked to assessment practices in South Africa. Many a higher education institution's assessment practices are informed by the outcomes envisaged in the curriculum since the introduction of an outcomes-based curriculum.

2.3.4.3 United States of America

The United States of America's higher education is heavily influenced by the structure of the British undergraduate college and the German research university. However, higher education in the United States of America is also characterized by three philosophical beliefs. The first of these is the Jefferson ideals of limited government and freedom of expression, which protect institutions against government interference. The second belief is that of capitalism. Competition exists amongst universities for students, faculty and funding. This competition in turn drives quality, as the higher the standard of the quality the higher the number of students and funding. The third belief is that of massification. There is a commitment by universities to engage with the concept of equal opportunities and social mobility of all individuals. The American Council on Education describe American higher education as being diverse and complex and having no standard practice.

The American constitution does not include education as a federal responsibility, and the United States of America does not enjoy an education ministry as found in many other countries. In order to counter the non-governmental interference in universities, accreditation organisations have been established. Their function is to set minimum standards that intuitions should comply with such as the curricula, faculty qualifications, student learning outcomes, and financial health. Although the accreditation organisation determines these minimum standards, they are not mandated as to how those standards are met (Eckel and King, 2004). It can be concluded that the American higher education system is constructed in such a way that universities enjoy autonomy and are thus not restricted in their teaching, learning and assessment practices (Eckel & King, 2004).

It is only in the past two decades that assessment has become an important topic in the policy making of education in the United States. In a study conducted by Fook and Sidhu (2013), an analysis of assessment practices among students and lecturers in an institute of higher learning was conducted. The study concluded that students were more satisfied with formative assessment as opposed to summative assessment of a final exam (Fook & Sidhu, 2013). Due to massification traditional methods of teaching and learning are increasingly under stress to adapt and change. Educators, business leaders and policymakers in the United States are in debate as to the current design of assessment systems focusing too keenly on the measurement of students' ability to recall facts using multiple choice and essay type exam questions rather than measuring the students' ability to engage in complex problem-solving tasks. Fook and Sidhu state that the current assessment practices tend to be assessments that only measure knowledge of core content areas. They opine that, in order to meet the demands of the current world we live in, there needs to be a shift in assessment strategies in order to be able to compete in the complex global environment (Fook & Sidhu, 2013).

The idea of social mobility and massification has also become part of the higher education conversation in South Africa, especially with regard to massification, since more and more young people demand higher education as their given right.

As far as autonomy is concerned, South African universities enjoy a certain degree of autonomy. This is realized in assessment practices, which differ from university to university. Universities are expected to function within a certain framework, which includes curriculum implementation. Curricula are approved by SAQA and HEQC, thus assessment practices must conform to certain prescribed criteria. Although the criteria are prescribed, universities do have the freedom to develop and apply their own assessment framework as long as it falls within the parameters of the prescribed policy.

2.3.4.4 China

Higher education in China is going through a slow transformation. The central government used to enjoy full responsibility for formulating higher education policies, allocating resources, exercising administrative controls, employing teaching and research staff, developing curricula, choosing textbooks, recruiting students, and assigning jobs to university graduates. The transformation has seen a shift from a government control model to a government supervised model (Li & Yang, 2014). As China's university governance has slowly become less centralized, the universities are enjoying more autonomy on financial and academic matters (Li & Yang, 2014).

An increase in national concern for the improvement of the quality of education and educational quality assessment was a topic of debate in China in 2010. Chinese nationals expressed discontent with the educational quality, this despite international observers' view that quality education was being delivered (Ross, Cen, & Zhou, 2011). In 2010, a document entitled Outline of China's National plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development 2010-2020 was published. This document was followed by an action plan from the State Council of the central government of the People's Republic of China which gave guidelines and set goals for all phases of education in China over the next ten years. In respect of higher education, the document Outline of China's National plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development 2010-2020 gives support to an undertaking to improve teaching quality, with particular reference to the significance of quality assessment (Ross et al., 2011). This undertaking is given due to significant concern from the public for quality assessment in response to a stifling environment of test score-equivalent-quality and outcomes centred assessments (Ross et al., 2011). According to Ross et al, the document further states that there must be an improvement in teaching evaluation with specific relevance to student-focused institutional reforms. This includes the importance of quality assessment which includes diverse assessment approaches that involve all stakeholders (Ross et al., 2011). Although there is intention to include stakeholders in the assessment practices, Ross et al. state that the student voice and experience are absent (Ross et al., 2011).

This is in stark contrast to the South African situation. In South Africa, the student voice and experience are of vital importance to the assessment policies as outlined in the SAQA document titled Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment of NQF Registered Unit Standards and Qualifications (SAQA, 2001).

2.3.4.5 Namibia

The Namibian National Council for Higher Education acknowledges that quality assurance is of major importance within the international higher education context (NCHE, 2009). To this end a policy document has been authored Quality Assurance System for Higher Education in Namibia. The document gives content to the principles that underpin quality in higher education. One of the principles is that of assessment. Clear objectives for quality assessment are presented. These are:

- Intended learning outcomes and assessment: The use of effective assessment methods must accurately measure students’ progress and the achievements of the programmes’ intended learning outcomes.
- Marking, assessment and moderation, security and certification: The application of clear assessment criteria, internal assessment and internal moderation, and appropriateness of assessment methods are stipulated as crucial to quality assurance.
- Assessment of staff: Staff should be qualified and experienced and have a good understanding of the function of assessment.
- Information to students: It should be made clear to the students the intended learning outcomes for the subject and programme. Students should be informed as to which assessment methods will be used (NCHE, 2009).

The above objectives are exactly in line with the South African Quality Assurance guidelines for quality assessment as expressed in the 2001 SAQA document Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment of NQF Registered Unit standards and Qualifications (SAQA, 2001).

The Namibian document Quality Assurance System for Higher Education in Namibia, 2009 articulates quality assurance measures through which a common quest for quality assessment can be established in the global education system.

Assessment and factors influencing assessment have created a broad focus in a global world. Since South Africa is part of the global village, an awareness of the influence of globalisation on assessment is growing steadily.

2.4 South African Context

The assessment policy in South Africa is determined by Higher Education South Africa (HESA), as well as by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). It requires that all courses be registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (Bohlman, 2006).

2.4.1 South African Qualifications Authority

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) held the idea that any person who assessed student learning was to be trained in assessment and register as an assessor. This notion was challenged within the higher education community. In 2001 it was recommended by a study team (appointed to investigate the NQF) that if individuals were teaching in an accredited institution, they would be exempt from training and registering as an assessor (Sayigh, 2006). However, there is the view that assessment of learning is still carried out by lecturers in higher education institutions in the traditional outdated way of assessment of learning and not assessment for learning (Gravett, 1996). Gravett believes that assessment development is key in endorsing the aims of higher education. If assessment aims do not feature as high priority, any endeavour to reform higher education will fail (Gravett, 1996). Friedrich-Nel, De Jager, Joubert and Nel (2003) in their study of assessment trends in higher education, concluded that there is a trend of using a new approach to assessment methods to assess the performance of learners. It was found that, although educators were familiar with various assessment methods, the use of performance methods should be given more attention. Challenges in changing from the traditional approach of assessment requires an innovative attitude, time, energy, effort and patience from educators, faculty and learners What qualifies a lecturer as an assessor is not clearly defined. Newly appointed lecturers, no matter their qualifications, need to be oriented into the discipline of assessment. This orientation needs to be inclusive of national policies and institutional policies.

Not only is SAQA concerned with assessment in South African higher education, but the Council on Higher Education (CHE) also plays a major role.

2.4.2 Council on Higher Education

The Council on Higher Education plays a vital role in the Higher Education domain. In dealing with the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) criteria for programme accreditation, a document was authored by HEQC for CHE in which criteria of minimum standards for academic programmes were established (HEQC, 2004). The document serves as a guide for programmes to design and plan their assessment procedures effectively.

The criteria for programme input, outline and stress the need for new programmes to plan an effective assessment system. The document states that for a new programme to succeed it has to be underpinned by an assessment system which supports curriculum and competence of students. In the absence of a good assessment system, students will not acquire the intended learning outcomes of the programme. Further, it is stated that assessment has a major bearing on the quality of teaching and learning and as such can be used to promote change and improve education (HEQC, 2004).

Student assessment policies and procedures as stated in the document are as follows:

2.4.2.1 Internal assessment

Internal assessment as described in the SAQA document Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment of NQF Registered Unit Standards and Qualification' is assessment that is conducted by the provider of learning. Internal assessment refers to assessment that is carried out by the facilitator of a subject who develops or delivers the learning content and assesses that learning content (SAQA, 2001).

2.4.2.2 Internal and external moderation

Internal and/or external moderation refers to the internal and/or external corroboration that the assessment system is reliable and ethical. It also verifies that the assessments are fair, valid, reliable and practicable (SAQA, 2001).

2.4.2.3 Monitoring of student progress

Student performance and progress should at all times be monitored. By doing so the assessor is able to identify students who may be at risk. Remedial action can then be introduced, which may include initiating a strategy in order to improve the student's chances of success and/or the student may be referred to an academic development programme (HEQC, 2004).

2.4.2.4 Validity and reliability of assessment

Reliability speaks to the consistency of the measurement used to assess. Reliability of assessment is reliant on several factors. Firstly, is the assessor reliable? The assessor must be of one mind with other experts (moderators). Disagreement between assessor and other experts results in a low inter-observer reliability (Brown & Knight, 1998). Secondly, reliability relates to the use of different measuring devices. Even though different measuring devices are used, if they are used to measure the same thing, they must give the same reading. The third factor is that of test-retest reliability. This applies to a measure being consistent if it measures the same unchanged item on different occasions.

The national policy and criteria for designing and implementing assessment for NQF qualifications designations in South Africa describe reliability as that of measures which produce similar results under consistent conditions. Reliability is when comparable assessment-related findings are made across similar contexts in consistent ways (SAQA).

While reliability refers to the consistency of the measurement used to assess, validity refers to measuring what the assessment sets out to measure (Brown & Knight, 1998). Validity also speaks to procedures, methods, instruments and materials as being appropriate, useful and meaningful (SAQA, 2001). In order for assessment to show validity, there must be a common thread that runs through the content to be assessed, the learning outcomes and the purpose of the assessment (SAQA, 2001).

2.4.2.5 Recording of results

According to the SAQA document Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment of NQF Registered Unit Standards and Qualifications, it is the duty of the assessor to record the results of an assessment in a manner which conforms to the provider institution, the ETQA and SAQA (SAQA, 2001).

2.4.2.6 Security

It is required that all assessment data such as assessment instruments, records and materials must be stored in a secure place of safety (SAQA, 2001).

2.4.2.7 Recognition of prior learning

Recognition of prior learning is the process which involves the assessment of prior knowledge and skills of a person applying for access and admission to an academic programme (SAQA, 2001).

The policy expands on the above stipulating that in order for the programme to meet the minimum requirements it must show that policies and procedures are in place. These are:

- An internal assessment system of student learning. This should be the responsibility of the academic staff of a particular course or module within the programme. The system must include internal moderation.
- External moderation of students' learning achievements. Persons responsible for the external moderation should have relevant and appropriate qualifications. The appointment of moderators should follow explicit guidelines and procedures. They should also be given clear terms of reference in terms of their responsibilities.
- Continuous monitoring of student progress in the course of the programme.
- Assessment practices must be shown to be both reliable and valid.
- Assessment results must be recorded within a system which is both secure and reliable.

- A system must be put in place which facilitates the settling of student disputes regarding assessment results.
- The assessment system must be secure, in particular with regards to plagiarism and other misdemeanors.
- Staff must be trained in order to be competent in assessment (HEQC, 2004).

A programme needs to prove that it is incorporating at least the minimum in the following areas:

Assessment must be shown to be an integral part of the teaching and learning process. To this end it must be purposeful and systematic in generating data for the purpose of grading, ranking, selecting, predicting and for providing feedback. Feedback must be used as a tool to inform teaching and learning as well as to inform and improve the curriculum.

Internal assessment of learning achievements of learners by academic staff responsible for teaching a course/module within a system that includes internal moderation. These academics must be responsible for designing, implementing and marking both formative and summative student assessments for the purpose of recording results and for the purpose of feedback. Internal checks and balances are required when summative assessment takes place. This will ensure reliability of the assessment.

Students' learning achievements at the exit level of the qualification must be moderated by external moderators who are appropriately qualified and have been appointed by clear criteria and procedures and who follow the guidelines as set by the department/institution.

Assessment practices must be shown to be effective and reliable in measuring and recording student attainment of the intended learning outcomes. This includes assessment criteria which are in line with the level of the qualification requirements of SAQA. These must be made clear to both students and academic staff. Learning outcomes must be explicit at both programme and modular level. Learning activities and required assessment performances must be aligned to the learning outcomes. The link between learning outcomes of a programme/module and assessment criteria must be unambiguous and communicated to students. A range of appropriate assessment tasks must be shown to be effective in measuring student attainment of the intended learning outcomes. There must be a system in place which optimizes the accuracy, consistence and credibility of results. This includes the consistency of marking and concurrence between assessors and external examiners. Records of student assessment must be reliable and secure. The assessment data must be accessible to academic coordinators, administrators, academic staff and students (HEQC, 2004).

The HEQC document refers to the measures which must be included, such as reliability, rigour and the security of the assessment system. In order that these measures adequately conform to the minimum requirements as set by the document, it is vital that the assessment system is rigorous and secure. The assessment system must be inclusive of the following:

- Assessment policies (Institutional/faculty/professional), must be published and readily available to students and stakeholders.
- Evidence that the rules of assessment are being complied with must be provided.
- Should a breach of assessment regulations occur this must be dealt with timeously and effectively.
- Students must be duly informed and guided as to their responsibilities and rights regarding the assessment process. This would include, inter alia, definitions of and regulations on plagiarism, penalties, terms of appeal, and supplementary examinations.
- Procedures regarding student appeals must be explicit, fair and effective.
- Clear and consistent published guidelines/regulations must be available for marking and grading of results, aggregation of marks and grades, progression and final awards and lastly credit allocation and articulation (HEQC, 2004).

Most Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in South Africa are using a combination of summative and formative assessment. A closer analysis of these formats of assessment is needed.

2.5 Forms of assessment

2.5.1 Summative and formative assessment

Assessment and testing can be broken down broadly into two main categories, namely the summative and the formative (Black, 2005). Black describes summative assessment as that which serves to inform the overall judgment of achievement (Black, 2005).

2.5.1.1 Summative assessment

Irons describes summative assessment as an assessment activity for which a mark or grade is then used as a judgment of student performance. These judgments will then determine whether to award a pass or fail at the end of a course or programme (Irons, 2008).

Summative assessment, according to Taras, is a judgment in which all the evidence is encapsulated up to a particular point. The particular point is seen as the final point of judgment (Taras, 2005). Miller, Bradford and Cox (1998) define summative assessment as a measure of a student's performance or level of achievement at the end of a sequence of study (Miller, Bradford, & Cox, 1998).

2.5.1.2 Summative assessment as used in higher education (includes process of assessment)

There is a tendency in higher education for academics to treat assessment as summative. They are of the belief that the assessment purpose is about judgment (from external moderators, external examiners, peers, institutional quality) of their credibility as academics (Irons, 2008).

Irons (Irons, 2008) highlights that one of the fundamental purposes of summative assessment is that it can be used by academic staff as a measurement of success of learning and teaching. A further example by William (2000) suggests that an aspect of summative assessment is to provide information with which teachers, educational administrators and politicians can be held accountable to the wider public. This argument is supported by Pelligrino, Chudowsky and Glaser (2001), (Pelligrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2001) suggesting that assessments are vitally important in providing information to help students, parents, teachers, administrators and policy makers in future decision making.

Important criteria, as stipulated by Irons, are that summative assessment needs to be reliable, valid, and affordable and fit for purpose. Irons found that there were a number of functions of summative assessment:

- A measurement of student ability
- A means of feedback to students
- A means of feedback to academic staff
- A measure of accountability of academic staff
- A means to monitor standards (Irons, 2008).

Postareff, Virtanen, Katajavuori and Lindblom-Ylanne found that the more traditional approach to assessment, i.e. summative, can have a discouraging effect on students (Postareff, Virtanen, Katajavuori, & Lindblom-Ylanne, 2012). They ascribe this to the belief that students want to be successful in their studies and are therefore sensitive to assessment in terms of what will be assessed and how they will be assessed (Earl & Katz, 2006).

Summative assessment may also be referred to as 'assessment of learning'. Assessment of learning is that assessment result that is expressed in a statement or symbol form. These results have a direct bearing on the students' articulation to another level of learning (has a direct bearing on the students' future). Because of this important aspect, the underlying logic and measurement of the assessment of learning must be credible and defensible (Earl & Katz, 2006).

The consequences of assessment of learning have grave importance for the student. To this end teachers must be responsible for the accuracy of reporting and the fairness of the assessment. This can be based on teachers providing effective assessment of learning in the following ways:

- The reasons for conducting a specific assessment of learning at a specific time.
- Be clear on explaining what the intended learning will be.
- What processes will be used for students to demonstrate their competence levels and skills.

- Include different forms of assessment in order to assess the same outcomes.
- Reference points of judgment must be defensible in the public domain.
- Interpretation must be transparent.
- Assessment process must be describable.
- Clear strategies for recourse should there be disagreement about decisions made (Earl & Katz, 2006; McMillan, 2001).

Students should be encouraged to learn for understanding and not just for recall of facts. This is why assessment of learning tasks needs to be designed in order that students are given the opportunity to show their level of understanding. Within the assessment task, students should be able to show authenticity and consistency of their conceptualization, knowledge skills and attitudes (Earl & Katz, 2006). Methods of assessment of learning do not have to remain in the bounds of the traditional exam and/or test variety. Various methods that demonstrate learning include exhibitions, presentations portfolios, oral and visual methods as well as presentations, simulations and multimedia projects.

2.5.2.1 Formative assessment

2.5.2.2 Defining formative assessment

Irons posits that formative assessment takes place when a task or activity can generate either feedback or feedforward for students and by so doing inform the students of their learning. This formative assessment is not quantifiable by a grade such as used in a summative judgment (Irons, 2008).

In order for an assessment to be formative, Taras writes that the assessment must provide feedback. The feedback will indicate the difference between the level of work being assessed to the actual standard required (Taras, 2005). Popham writes that there is no single official universally accepted definition of formative assessment. He puts forward that educators have looked to Scriven, who in 1967 wrote an essay in which he stated that if the quality of an educational programme is assessed in the period where it is still in formation, and at a time where the programme can be improved due to the evaluation results, this would constitute formative evaluation (Popham, 2008).

As the improvement for formative assessment is further developed, and formative feedback is more widely used, there will be a resultant shift from summative assessment to formative. Irons is of the opinion that this shift will be the achieved through the reduction in the amount of summative assessment in universities by encouraging students to engage more in formative activities rather than being driven and motivated solely by summative activities (Irons, 2008).

There are some supporters of formative assessment who perceive this method as merely a means to assist educators to be better at teaching. They believe that Black and Williams' (1998) research pays much of its attention to the classroom dividends of formative assessment and does not heed enough attention to its ability to raise student test scores (Popham, 2008).

Assessment could be utilized in the higher education domain more effectively to promote student learning. Assessment can be in a framework that can be used to share educational objectives with students, as well as for managing their progress. It can be further utilized to generate feedback to students on their progress which in turn enhances the student learning and achievement (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2004). In using the feedback information, lecturers are able to modify their instruction and realign their lecturing in response to the students' needs. Assessment used in this way is formative assessment. Formative assessment can be further deconstructed into formal formative assessment and informal formative assessment.

Yorke explains formal formative assessment and informal formative assessment in the following ways:

Formal formative assessment: This type of assessment takes place within the boundaries of a specific curricular assessment framework. It engages directly with the assessment activity required by the student and the assessor. Formal formative assessment is usually, but not exclusively, done by academic staff. Others who may be involved in formal formative assessment also include supervisors (such as when students are placed in a collaborative organisation for the purpose of completing an assessment activity). Peer assessors also may perform formal formative assessments.

Informal formative assessments: This type of assessment takes place during the course of events. These events are not specific to the curriculum design. Examples are of instantaneous feedback to students during a learning activity. In contrast to formal formative assessment, informal formative assessment can be provided by any person outside the immediate higher education context (Yorke, 2003).

Nicol (2004) states that formative assessment should be incorporated in teaching and learning in higher education and that 'feedback' and 'feedforward' should be systematically integrated in curriculum practices.

Feedback information on student performance in assignments or class activities allows the students the opportunity to realign their understanding and or skills and thereby increase their knowledge and capabilities (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2004). Irons states that formative feedback is that interaction whereby information, process or activity which supports student learning is based on comments relating to either formative assessment or summative assessment (Irons, 2008).

In order for feedback to be useful, it is imperative that it is given in time. Besides being too late to assist the student in their learning, it may also be insufficient if given as a mark or grade (Yorke, 2003). Feedback should be given as the student is working through a task. This would support the view of assessment for learning. By merely tacking assessment onto the end of a task does not constitute feedback, as the student has not been afforded the opportunity to rework and improve on the task.

The phenomenon of lifelong learning means that assessment must not only inform the assessor, but should also belong to and inform the learner (Boud, 2000). Shepard is of the view that assessment of student learning is an important factor in the effectiveness and motivation of the learning experience of students, as cited in (Tillema, Leenknecht, & Segers, 2011).

Credit is given to researchers Black and Williams (1998) for their contribution to the worldwide interest in formative assessment (Popham, 2008). Research conducted by Black and Williams identified three main categories/shortfalls in the everyday practice of assessment in classrooms. These were identified as:

1. Effective learning: Tests encourage rote learning, assessment methods used are not critically assessed by the staff group, and emphasis is put on quantity of work rather than quality with regard to learning.
2. Negative impact: Mark and grade allocation are given too much emphasis, whilst advice and the learning function are neglected. Competition between pupils is by way of comparison of grades which has a negative connotation. This type of feedback to students with low grades is negative in that it implies that the students with low grades lack ability and are unable to learn.
3. Managerial role of assessment: Feedback from the teacher regarding assessment is often treated as a social and managerial function which transcends the function of learning. The learning needs of pupils and the analysis of previous assessment records of pupils are given no importance. Rather importance is given to the collection of marks in the record keeping process.

The above three shortfalls as identified by Black and Williams (1998)have been further emphasised by Gardner. Gardner is also of the opinion that formal standard testing is negative in that it portrays education to be a collection of individual elements of information. This information, once learned, is then tested in a decontextualised setting. Learners who pass these tests with sufficient knowledge are then deemed to be effective members of society (Gardner, 2005).

Students can be encouraged to focus on deep understanding and construction of knowledge by the use of formative, active and creative modes of assessment such as self-assessment and assessment of the learning process (Postareff et al., 2012).

Formative assessment and summative assessment are both processes. While it is possible for assessment to be uniquely summative, it is not possible for assessment to be uniquely formative. An element of summative assessment must exist (Taras, 2005).

Black (2005) has identified the following factors which may lead to tension in the assessment process:

- Formative and summative assessment purposes
- Teacher’s assessments and external assessments
- Frequent testing and end-of-course testing

- The competing requirements of reliability and validity

In order to address the tensions identified above, Black suggests that national policies on assessment be designed to resolve these tensions (Black, 2005).

Irons further cites the argument put forward by Black (1999:118) that results of assessments “may also be used for judging the achievement of individual teaches or of schools as a whole”.

2.6 The process of assessment

Taras describes the process of assessment as the steps taken in order to make a judgment. Points of comparison, such as standards and goals, are necessary because a judgment cannot be made in a vacuum (Taras, 2005). Taras further states that criteria are important in the assessment process, as they set parameters within which judgment can take place (Taras, 2005). Black and Williams are of the view that all assessment requires parameters, whether they be implicit or explicit (as cited inTaras, 2005).

The promotion of formative assessment through the work of Black and Williams (1998) has benefited those involved in the assessment of students in two ways. Firstly, it promotes the discussing and understanding of the criteria and, secondly, it promotes feedback on which reflection can take place (Taras, 2005).

Taras’s research led to the conclusion that summative assessment and formative assessment should be used in conjunction with each other. Assessors should accept that in any educational process both summative and formative assessment are necessary.

2.7 Accountability

A further category of assessment speaks to the role that assessment plays in the accountability of educational institutions and the education system through the publication and the comparison of results (Irons, 2008).

Anderson (Anderson, 2004) writes of the accountability that higher education has been subjected to in recent years. This can be attributed to increasing public expenditure, which in turn leads stakeholders to believe that they have the right to questions and expectations receiving high priority. This view is shared by Stull, Jansen, Varnum, Ducette, Schiller, & Bernacki. They state that assessment and accountability are no longer exclusive to the classroom but have entered the political domain. This phenomenon has brought with it broader generalizations around which policies on assessment are sought. Attention is focused on improving instructor practices and raising student achievements (Stull, Jansen Varnum, Ducette, Schiller, & Bernacki, 2011).

Broadfoot (Broadfoot, 1996) highlights a two-stage process involving the role assessment plays in accountability:

1. Identification of the performance of the education system in relation to its goals.
2. The response by educational institutions brought about through the mechanisms of system control in response to any perceived shortfall between performance and goals.

The accountability of the assessment system should ultimately speak to the quality of that system.

2.8 Quality

The assessment of learners' learning is an important and integral component in effective and motivating instruction (Tillema et al., 2011). Relevant criteria in order to determine the quality of assessment need to be determined (Tillema et al., 2011). In the quest for quality of assessment at higher education institutions both academics and students need to constantly be looking for ways to improve both teaching and learning experiences. This includes the quality of the learning experience and the way in which it is delivered and assessed (Edwards, 2005). SAQA states that assessment is critical to the judgment of the performance of the learner in education and training because it is this judgment that has a bearing on the ultimate awarding of a qualification (SAQA, 2001). Because assessment plays such an important role in the ultimate awarding of a qualification, it is imperative that such assessment is of a quality standard. SAQA attests that assessment is essential to the acknowledgement of achievement, and therefore quality assessment is pivotal to a credible certification (SAQA, 2001). SAQA posits four key principles that underpin quality assessment. These four principles are:

2.8.1 Fairness

Fairness with regard to assessment should not encumber nor advantage a learner. Further, the assessment process should be clear and transparent. Appeal mechanisms and re-assessments should be available to all learners.

2.8.2 Validity

In order for an assessment to be valid, it must measure what is says it is measuring. There must be a match between what is being assessed with the procedures, methods, instruments and materials.

2.8.3 Reliability

Reliability in assessment speaks to consistency. For an assessment to be consistent, it must produce the same or similar judgments each time a particular assessment for a specified intention is conducted.

2.8.4 Practicability

Assessments should be practical. The assessor should take cognizance of available resources, facilities equipment and time (SAQA, 2001).

SAQA list the four principles above as conduits to quality assessment. These four principles underpin the selection of the assessment methods.

2.9 Assessment methods

Assessment in the education arena is intentional and of the essence. According to Rowntree, the assessor must plan and evaluate the assessment methods he/she will use in relation to the purpose he/she is pursuing (Rowntree, 1996). Rowntree further states that it is important for the assessor to keep in mind what sort of knowledge he/she is looking for and who will benefit from this particular knowledge being known (Rowntree, 1996).

In choosing a particular method of assessment, the assessor must apply criteria of educational relevance. This means that it is important for the assessor to match the method of assessment with the content and style of the teaching and learning as experienced by the student (Rowntree, 1996). In order to match the assessment method with the objective of the teaching, Rowntree advises that two key questions need to be addressed:

- Which assessment methods relate to our objectives and assessment constructs?
- Which assessment methods will produce indications of the student abilities or qualities we are interested in? (Rowntree, 1996).

In order that one is able to answer the above questions, thereby making an appropriate choice of assessment method, some modes of assessment are described below.

2.10 Modes of assessment

2.10.1 Formal assessment

Rowntree describes formal assessment as that assessment which is organised by the educator/assessor. The intent of formal assessment is to present the educator/assessor with knowledge about the student. Formal assessments take the form of standardised tests and examinations (Rowntree, 1996). An assessment is formal when the student is aware that the task he/she is doing is for assessment purposes (McAlpine, 2002). The advantages of formal assessment lie in that students perceive this type of assessment to be fair. The criteria on which they will be assessed are explicit. Because students know they are being assessed, they will behave accordingly (McAlpine, 2002). The disadvantage of formal assessment is that it may cause students to become stressed which affects their ability to perform well. Some students may use the method of cram learning. This may lead to them attaining a high score, but they do not have a deep understanding of the subject (McAlpine, 2002).

2.10.2 Informal assessment

Informal assessment takes place as part of classroom activities. According to Rowntree, informal assessment takes the form of, for example, discussions, laboratory work and writing papers. Rowntree attests that informal assessment should be spontaneous and should not be foremost in the minds of the educator or students (Rowntree, 1996). McAlpine describes informal assessment as that assessment which is integrated with other tasks (McAlpine, 2002). The advantages of informal assessment, according to McAlpine, are that they reduce the stress levels of participating students, and may give a more valid observation of the student's abilities. However, the disadvantage of informal assessment may be that there are prejudices and stereotypes influencing the judgment of the assessor (McAlpine, 2002).

2.10.3 Continuous assessment

Continuous assessment practices generally have a formative function around the time that learning is taking place. This leads to a subsequent contribution to a summative assessment, used for certification purposes (Hernandez, 2012; Rowntree, 1996). Continuous assessment is a more contemporary form of assessment (McAlpine, 2002). The advantage associated with continuous assessment is that the student and lecturer are able to use the feedback gained to improve both the teaching and learning. A further advantage is that the final result is garnered on the evidence produced over the entire learning period (McAlpine, 2002). McAlpine balances the advantages with two disadvantages associated with continuous assessment. These are the increased workload to the lecturer, and the fact that students from various backgrounds (different courses) have to complete the same assessment tasks in the same way (McAlpine, 2002). Continuous assessment is an appropriate assessment method to use where student feedback is required and when information can be gathered to build a picture of the student abilities over a period of a course (McAlpine, 2002).

2.10.4 Terminal assessment

Terminal assessment is carried out at the end of a course or major unit thereof. Terminal assessment is usually a once off assessment which makes it summative by nature. The exception may be that the unit of study is made up of units which build upon each other, and assessment takes place at the end of each unit. In this case it may be formative by nature as well as summative (Sieborger & Macintosh, 2004). The advantage of this type of assessment is that it is generally simple to organise and packs the assessment process into a short period of time (McAlpine, 2002).

2.10.5 Course work

Rowntree says it is important for assessors not to confuse continuous assessment with course work (Rowntree, 1996). He defines course work in terms of process. It is that process which the student undergoes during the course of his studies in order to produce a product or knowledge (Rowntree, 1996).

2.10.6 Examinations

Mafa and Gudhlanga attest that examinations are important in an institution of education. The use of examinations as an assessment tool measures the understanding the students have of learned concepts and principles (Mafa & Gudhlanga, 2013). This attitude towards examinations is shared by Sedki (Sedki, 2011). Sedki further claims that examinations provide the assessor with feedback to indicate whether appropriate and effective use of teaching methodologies have been made in the classroom (Sedki, 2011).

2.10.7 Process assessment

Process assessment can be likened to an ‘experience’. According to Rowntree, process assessment presents some difficulty for the assessor as the assessment must take place in the moment (Rowntree, 1996). The experience cannot be preserved. In spite of technology, such as visual and audio recorders, not all elements of the processes being assessed can be captured.

2.10.8 Product assessment

Product assessment is the assessment of an end product. The product is easily assessed as it remains in its form, can be stored and be reassessed. By its nature of being a complete product (painting, essay, model), it is easy to pass onto other assessors (Rowntree, 1996).

2.10.9 Internal assessment

Rowntree states that internal assessment is that assessment done by the teacher as part of the teaching (Rowntree, 1996). The teacher has the information at hand that enables him to directly assist the student to develop to levels of competency.

2.10.10 External assessment

External assessment is used to ensure that quality of standards are met in institutions offering similar accreditation (Rowntree, 1996). This is achieved by the appointment of teachers from one institution fulfilling the role of external assessor for another institution.

2.10.11 Convergent assessment

Convergent assessment occurs when there exists clearly defined tasks which have only a single answer (Rowntree, 1996). Torrance and Pryor describe convergent assessment as an assessment used to ascertain if the learner can do a predetermined task, has knowledge and understands. These researchers are of the view that convergent assessment is not conducive to formative assessment, but is more suited to summative or continuous assessment (Torrance & Pryor, 2001).

2.10.12 Divergent assessment

Divergent assessment occurs when the task is open-ended, with many options for an answer. Divergent assessment encourages students to be creative (Rowntree, 1996). This is an assessment type that will show the knowledge, the understanding and what the learner can do. This type of assessment is linked to the more contemporary theories of learning and that of formative assessment (Torrance & Pryor, 2001). Divergent assessment tasks are designed in such a manner so as to demonstrate the individuality and diversity of the student (Race, Brown, & Smith, 2005).

2.10.13 Peer assessment

Peer assessment as defined by Falkichov describes peer assessment as that process through which groups of individuals rate their peers (!!! INVALID CITATION !!!; Falchikov, 1995)(!!! INVALID CITATION !!!; Falchikov, 1995)(Falchikov, 1995). Somerviel suggests that peer assessment can be both formative and summative. On the one hand, peer assessment may include feedback of a qualitative nature or, on the other hand, it may include the students actually involved in the marking process (Somervell, 1993). In terms of validity, peer assessment research has shown that peers have a tendency to produce mark scores based on uniformity, race and friendship.

The studies of peer assessment have resulted in findings such that students find peer assessment more interesting than the traditional assessment methods (Conway, Kember, Sivan, & Wu, 1993). It has been found that students believe that innovative assessments, such as peer assessment, are a fairer method of assessing because they encompass consistent application and hard work. This is in contrast to the more traditional method which includes last minute bursts of effort and sheer good luck (Sambel & McDowell, 1997) .

Studies conducted by Fry (1990) and Rushden et al. (1996) show that peer assessment can be accurate. The studies conducted by these two independent experts showed that the marks awarded by peers were significantly close to those awarded by the lecturer.

2.11 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework on which this research is based is the Berkley Evaluation and Assessment Research (BEAR) system.

The BEAR assessment system is, as noted, by Wilson and Scalise, an embedded assessment system (Wilson & Scalise, 2006). They explain further that the system is comprehensive and integrated for assessing, interpreting, monitoring and responding to student performance. BEAR has been designed with a set of tools with which to enable both teacher and learner to:

- Confidently assess performance on key elements and skills in the curriculum.
- Set standards for performance.
- Provide a valid track record of annual progression on the key elements.
- Provide the mechanisms for feedback and follow up (Wilson & Scalise, 2006).

In using an embedded approach to assessment, BEAR opens up the opportunity for assessment to take place during the time frame of an instruction module. It enables both the student and the teacher an opportunity to assesses at what level the students' knowledge and skills are at any specific point in the instruction process (Wilson & Sloan, 2000).

When Wilson and Sloan designed the BEAR assessment system, they used four principles, or building blocks to underpin their design. The building blocks form a foundation of a technically sound, curriculum embedded, classroom based system of student assessment (Wilson & Sloan, 2000).

The four building blocks within the BEAR assessment system to construct quality assessments are:

- Construct maps: This building block is grounded in the principle that assessments are to be designed with a developmental view of student learning. The developmental approach is designed to focus on the process of learning with the emphasis on the individual's progress through this process. Students must be given a comprehensible and unambiguous framework of what they are expected to learn, as well as how that learning will take place. This is a key element as it validates the scores obtained from the assessment system (Wilson & Sloan, 2000).
- Item design: The building block is a framework for designing assessment tasks which will show evidence of the students' learning. Assessment will take place during the process of completing the task, not tacked on the end. Much of the motivation for alternative assessment is to better pair desired instructional goals with actual assessment (Wilson & Sloan, 2000). It also reflects the current trend for assessment to be part of the teaching and

learning process. Because assessment becomes part of the learning event, assessment tasks can be increased without impacting on instruction and/or teaching time (Wilson & Sloan, 2000). The underlying importance of this building block principle is that the assessment must be curriculum dependent. Wilson and Sloan stress that the assessment should not drive the curriculum, but rather that the two, assessment and instruction, should be in harmony, that they drive one another (Wilson & Sloan, 2000).

- The outcome space: This building block attests that teachers are to be the primary managers of assessment in the classroom. The collection of data informs the teacher of the student knowledge at a given point in the task. Two issues pertaining to the teacher management and responsibility roles are, firstly, that teachers will utilize assessment reports to gain information which will serve as a guide in their teaching and learning process. Secondly, Tucker (1991), states that teacher professionalism and accountability are key to the collection and interpretation of student progress and performance (as cited in Wilson & Sloan, 2000).

- Measurement model: The principle underpinning this building block is good quality classroom assessment. The principle helps to ensure that information gained from classroom assessment is meaningful. Measurement models connect the evidence to inferences about what the students know (Kennedy, 2005). Wilson and Sloan devised this particular principle building block with the intention of giving classroom assessment integrity within the assessment community (Wilson & Sloan, 2000). In order for the integrity of classroom assessment to be upheld, Wilson and Sloan stress that assessments must be held to standards of fairness in terms of quality control (Wilson & Sloan, 2000). An advantage of classroom based assessment is that it can be designed within the constructs of a specific curriculum, and can be made adaptable to suite the teachers' needs (Wilson & Sloan, 2000). It is, however, important that the evidence gained through the assessment process is suitable for purposes of individual assessment, for purposes of evaluating student performance and also for programme effectiveness (Wilson & Sloan, 2000).

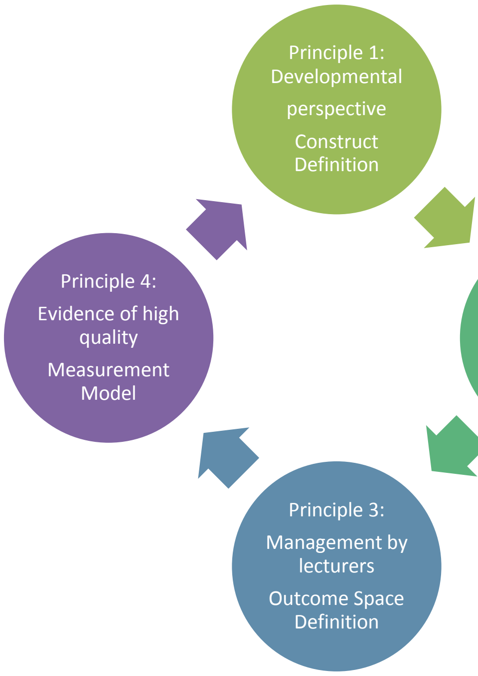


Figure 2.1: The principles and building blocks of BEAR (Black & Williams, 1998)

The framework explains that assessment starts with a developmental perspective. It means that construct maps developed by the lecturer must take into account the development of the student, with emphasis on the process of learning the student will go through. Students must be made aware of the content and how learning will take place. Boud's 'Seven propositions for assessment reform in higher education' supports the idea of assessment being instrumental in student learning. The first of the seven propositions is specific to the use of assessment in engaging students in learning (Boud & Associates, 2010).

The design of tasks students have to fulfil will speak to matching teaching and assessment. The assessment tasks must be designed in such a way that they become an integral part of the teaching activities. Clear links must be shown in the design between assessment and curriculum content. The second step shows a follow up of the first step, from development and knowledge of content to actual assessing the teaching and learning. Ensuring constructive alignment between curriculum content and what is actually assessed is paramount to this second principle and building block.

The third principle, management by teachers which supports building block 3: outcomes space, relates to the set of outcomes into which student performances are categorized. This is the building block where scoring guides for student assessment tasks are set. The lecturer is able, with the use of good scoring guides, to manage the student through the assessment task. Scoring guides must be explicit and clear in terms of the performance criteria of the assessment task. The principle: management by teachers allows the teacher to keep records of student progress. At the same time, the transparency advocated by this building block allows the students to understand the assessment process and what is being assessed before they embark on the task itself.

The second to the sixth of Boud's seven propositions for assessment support the third building block of the BEAR assessment model. The second and third propositions state that:

- Feedback is used to actively improve student learning.
- Students and teachers become responsible partners in learning and assessment.
- Students are inducted into the assessment practices and cultures of higher education.
- Assessment for learning is placed at the centre of subject and program design.
- Assessment for learning is a focus for staff and institutional development (Boud & Associates, 2010).

Principle 4: Evidence of high quality. The building block within this principle is that of a measurement model. The measurement model used must ensure reliability and validity, fairness and consistency. In this building block, the teacher is to have a framework through which the progress of the student can readily be tracked on an individual level as well as compared to other students.

Proposition 7 of Boud’s seven propositions for assessment reform supports the building block 4. It states that assessment provides inclusive and trustworthy representation of student achievement (Boud & Associates, 2010).

2.12 Conclusion

Based on the international review of literature, it is apparent that there is a shift from the traditional assessing of learning to the more student centred assessing for learning. In the South African context, SAQA is attempting to implement assessment for learning at HEI’s. This is being achieved through documentary guide-lines as authored by HEQC (2004) and SAQA (2001, 2005).

In order to establish an assessment framework for practical implementation at higher education institutions in South Africa, the methodology as discussed in chapter three were applied to gather data on the current assessment practices in place at an Eastern Cape comprehensive university. Chapter three to follow.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The study focused on the assessment strategy of a Fashion Department within one Eastern Cape comprehensive university. Its aim was to explore assessment strategies that could be structured within an assessment framework. The intention of the proposed framework was that it be formulated in such a way as to enhance quality and consistency of assessment between two campus sites within the same institution offering the same programme.

The literature review conducted by the researcher explored various assessment procedures, processes and tasks. A framework, BEAR (Berkley Evaluation and Assessment Research), was identified in the literature review. This framework, if used within the Fashion Department, could assist with increasing quality and consistency in assessment.

Chapter three will explain how a qualitative study was designed as well as the methodology used in order to provide valid and reliable answers to the research questions.

3.2 Research orientation

Two research approaches exist, namely qualitative and quantitative. Aliaga and Gunderson define quantitative research as that which explains a phenomena by collecting numerical data that is analysed using mathematically based methods. (Aliaga & Gunderson, 2000). The research was not based on numerical data, but rather on the lived experiences of the participants involved in the programme. Thus the quantitative methodology was deemed inappropriate for this study.

The research orientation chosen for this study was qualitative. Brantlinger et al. define qualitative research as a systematic approach to understanding qualities, or the essential nature of a phenomenon within a particular context (Brantlinger, Jiminez, Klinger, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005). A qualitative approach was taken as the aim of the research was to explore assessment methods and identify a framework that could be used within the fashion department context. This was to be done by seeking out the lived experiences of those participants directly involved in the day-to-day environment where assessment takes place.

How the research questions are posed also has a bearing on which research approach is appropriate. The qualitative research approach is distinctive in the way research questions are asked. The questions, in most part, start with the words ‘how’, ‘why’ or ‘what’ (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). As the research questions in this study are of this nature, the qualitative approach was deemed correct.

Within the qualitative approach, the paradigm best suited to the study was Interpretivist. The interpretivist paradigm was chosen because its aim is to understand how humans experience the world (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The interpretivist researcher recognises that his/her own lived experiences will have a bearing on the research. So, too, did this researcher rely on the participants’ views of the situation being studied (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

Hess-Bieber and Leavy postulate that the interpretive approach to research is grounded in the understanding of interactions and the social meaning that people assign to their interactions (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

An interpretive qualitative approach is learning how individuals experience and interact with their social world and the meaning it has for them (Merriam, 2002). In this way the researcher is able to interact with lecturers and students who are at the core of the assessment procedure. Lecturers and students’ experiences with assessment and their perceptions thereof were conveyed to the researcher through semi-structured interviews. Their everyday experiences with assessment informed the study. It was due to the researcher’s quest to uncover a deep understanding of the phenomenon of assessment by the active participants (lecturers and students) that further convinced the researcher that the qualitative interpretative approach was the correct research approach for this study.

3.3 Research design: Case study

The research focus is on assessment as a phenomenon within the context of a programme offering of a multi delivery site. Yin advocates the use of a case study as a method of research when one is using a situation to contribute to the knowledge (Yin, 2009). Yin also states that by using the case study method the researcher is able to use the situation holistically, thereby making use of everyday cycles and events that may have an impact on the research (Yin, 2009). Hess-Beiber et al. share Yin's view. They support Yin by saying that, by using a case study approach, the researcher is able to garner a holistic understanding of the phenomenon being investigated (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Burton and Bartlett propose the use of a case study when the research is to produce a solution to the issue in question (Burton & Bartlett, 2009). By choosing to use a case study, the researcher was able to work within the confines of a particular space, the Fashion programme, and interview the participants directly involved with the phenomenon of assessment.

3.4 Selection of case

A single typical case study method was identified as the best type of case study with which to conduct this research.

Denscombe suggests that when choosing a case study the researcher should be aware of practical problems or theoretical problems within the research subject. Denscombe also suggests that when choosing a case study the researcher needs to be congnisant of the way in which the case study is to be used (Denscombe, 2010).

The phenomenon of assessment within a multi delivery site Fashion programme was the focus of this research. Because other institutions offering a Fashion programme, not necessarily a multi-site one, could benefit from this research, the researcher decided to use a single case study in a typical instance. Yin states that when using a representative or typical case, the aim is to work within the everyday circumstances and conditions of a situation (Yin, 2009). Denscombe suggests that when using a case study in a typical instance it must be comparable in crucial respects with the others that might have been chosen (Denscombe, 2010). The literature review contained in chapter two revealed that Fashion programmes at other national institutions had similar or near similar subject courses within their programmes. The chapter two literature review also showed that most institutions offering Fashion chose to assess students' work on a continuous basis. Assessing on a continuous basis implies that assessment takes place through the task and is not merely tacked on at the end of the task. This assumption that the research should be generalized to other institutions offering a Fashion programme is advocated by Yin. He states that what is revealed by the research can supposedly be of use to the average person or institution (Yin, 2009).

Practical considerations were taken into account when deciding to follow a case study route for this research. The first of these was the matter of convenience. By using a Fashion programme within a local institution, the researcher was able to minimize the costs relating to travel. Access to the programme did not pose a problem, as the researcher was a staff member. Denscombe warns researchers that one should not select a case purely for convenience sake, as this would imply poor social research (Denscombe, 2010). However, the researcher is able to defend this aspect, as the assessment within this particular Fashion programme was in need of intervention.

3.5 Case description

Baxter and Jack state that the qualitative case study allows the researcher to explore a phenomenon contextually (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The research study needed to look at the assessment phenomenon within the programme in its entirety in order to understand the current mechanisms the programme has in place. From this understanding, the assessment framework could be constructed.

Yin states that a distinctive need for a case study arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena (Yin, 2009). Yin further elaborates that using a case study allows the investigator to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events – such as the programme assessment phenomenon within the context of the programme offering.

Denscombe proposes that the researcher should establish clear parameters for the case which is being studied. The researcher should also provide an explicit account of what these boundaries are (Denscombe, 2010). In this particular research case, the boundaries are that current assessment practices and procedures have informed the study. The research took place within the confines of the Fashion programme offering at two delivery sites within one Eastern Cape comprehensive university.

Only participants with direct knowledge of assessment within the programme were included in the research.

3.6 Selection of participants within the case

The research question identified the selection of participants within the case. As per the question, the site was a Fashion programme at one Eastern Cape university. The participants in the study were those who had knowledge of the Fashion programme and the assessment processes and procedures practiced.

3.6.1 Sampling of research site

The sampling of the research site poses an important decision for the researcher as it frames the decisions that follow (Marshall & Bossman, 1995).

The research undertaken was to study a Fashion programme's assessment strategy with the aim of building a framework which would increase quality and consistency of assessment over two delivery sites.

Marshall and Bossman state that when choosing an ideal site the researcher should keep the following in mind:

- It must be possible for the researcher to gain entry. As the researcher is a staff member within the study site, entry was possible.
- The structure of interest must be present, as well as a mix of people and interactions. Assessment is the interest of this study and is a phenomenon which presents itself within the chosen site. So too is there a mix of participants (lecturers and students as well as documentation) that will assist the research.
- The researcher should have a relationship of trust. The relationship of trust is one that the researcher, as a lecturer, has with fellow colleagues and students.
- The data collected must be of good quality, and be credible (Marshall & Bossman, 1995).

3.6.2 Sampling of participants

Qualitative research has as its core the concern for in-depth understanding, typically working with small samples (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). The population of the research site is relatively small with a lecturer component of 16 lecturers and approximately 190 students over two delivery sites. The participants selected were invited to partake in the study because of their institutional knowledge, knowledge of the programme and the assessment strategies currently in place. To this end, purposive sampling was deemed to be the sampling method best suited to this study.

Purposive sampling is the intentional choice of respondents by the researcher, due to the qualities the respondents possess (Tongco, 2007). The researcher approaches people who can and are willing to provide the research with information by virtue of knowledge or experience (Bernard, 2002). Denscombe describes purposive sampling as that of hand-picking the participants for the topic (Denscombe, 2010).

Denscombe states that purposive sampling can be used in order for the researcher to gain the best information through the selection of participants. Best information is garnered through participants who have valuable insights into the research topic (Denscombe, 2010).

Purposive sampling was used in the research study. Five lecturers, and five students from each site were identified for interview purposes.

3.7 Advantages and disadvantages of the case study approach

3.7.1 Advantages of case study

Denscombe states that one of the advantages of conducting a case study research is that the research can be done on a small scale. The researcher is then able to focus his/her energy on one locale (Denscombe, 2010). A case study can also include multiple viewpoints. This is achieved by including a selection of participants. In this study, the selection of participants was lecturers and students (Denscombe, 2010; Moriarty, 2011).

A strength of the case study is that it is able to deal with a variety of evidence such as interviews, documents, observations and artifacts (Yin, 2009). Both Denscombe and Moriaty state that an advantage of the case study is that it enables the researcher to gather information and thus compare data from various sources. This method, known as triangulation, is a way of promoting validity in qualitative research (Denscombe, 2010; Moriarty, 2011).

Moriaty states that a further advantage of using the case study method is that it can give “richness” to the research. This is through gaining insights into the participants’ lived experiences (Moriarty, 2011).

3.7.2 Disadvantages of case study

Yin, Moriaty and Denscombe agree that a disadvantage of the case study lies in the assertion that it is not possible for the researcher to generalize from a single case (Denscombe, 2010; Moriarty, 2011; Yin, 2009). A further disadvantage is producing soft data and therefore lacking in rigour (Denscombe, 2004; Yin, 2009).

The boundaries of the case need to be clearly defined in terms of types of data to be included in the case study. The boundaries are sometimes difficult to set, causing confusion as to the type of data to include (Denscombe, 2004).

It can prove difficult for researchers to gain permission in order access a study situation. Ethical dilemmas may arise in the access to study sites, people and documents (Denscombe, 2004).

The observer effect also comes into play as a disadvantage of the case study. This effect is borne out of the participants in the research behaving different to normal whilst they are aware of being observed by the researcher (Denscombe, 2004).Case studies have been also been flagged as a method that takes time to conduct (Yin, 2009).

3.8 Methods of data collection

Yin identifies six common sources from which a researcher is able to gain evidence within the use of a case study. These are documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation and physical artifacts (Yin, 2009).

This study made use of interviews (semi-structured) and documentation.

3.8.1 Document analysis

A document analysis was conducted. When choosing to use documents as a research tool, the researcher should be congnisant of the validity of the documents chosen to assist the study (Denscombe, 2010). Denscombe advises that when using documentation the documents should be authentic (as in the genuine article), representative (typical of its type), have meaning (clear and unambiguous), and be credible (accurate and free from errors) (Denscombe, 2010). The documents in this analysis included the HEQC document Criteria for Programme Accreditation", the SAQA document Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment of NQF Registered Unit Standards and Qualifications, the SAQA document Guidelines for Integrated Assessment, and the SAQA document Registered Qualification National Diploma: Fashion. The policy document Assessment and Examinations of the researched university also informed the research.

3.8.1.1 Advantages of documentary research

The documents included in this study are Higher Education Quality Committee documents, South African Quality Assurance documents and the researched university policy document on assessment. The Higher Education Committee documents and South African Quality Assurance documents are in the public domain and were easily accessible. The research university policy document on assessment was available to the researcher. These documents informed the research by giving guidelines on current assessment requirements in South African higher education institutions.

The advantages of document research were identified as the following:

Access to data: An immense amount of information can be gleaned from documents (Denscombe, 2010).

Permanence of data: Documents are an existing entity and can thus be revisited as the study progresses (Yin, 2009). Denscombe suggests that because documents provide a permanent source of information, this data can be checked by others (Denscombe, 2010). The documents used in the study were accessible.

Broad coverage: Yin includes as an advantage of using documents as a research tool the fact that documents may cover a long span of time, and cover many areas of interest to the research, as well as many settings (Yin, 2009).

Whilst documentation may have benefits that assist the researcher, disadvantages of using documentation as a tool must be borne in mind.

3.8.1.2 Disadvantages of documentary research

Disadvantages of documentary research have been identified by Denscombe and Yin as being the credibility of the source, secondary data, bias of reporting, retrievability and interpretation of documents (Denscombe, 2010; Yin, 2009).

Credibility of the source: Denscombe reminds researchers that the information they use must be authoritative and credible. Credibility comes from the original data used to produce the document (Denscombe, 2010).

Secondary data: Documentation when used in research is by nature secondary data. Denscombe warns researchers to be mindful of using data which was not foremost produced for the purposes of the study (Denscombe, 2010).

Bias of reporting: Social constructions of documents can prove disadvantages as they may be the product of the authors' interpretation of events rather than actual events (Denscombe, 2010). Yin ascribes this to reporting bias (of the author) (Yin, 2009).

Retrievability and access: These are a further disadvantage listed by Yin. He warns that documents may be difficult to find and access deliberately denied (Yin, 2009).

3.8.2. Semi-structured interviews

The interview is a significant source of case study evidence. Yin states that in using the interview as source of evidence the researcher should use it in the form of a guided conversation (Yin, 2009). Kvale describes the qualitative interview process as a construction site of knowledge and an exchange of conversational views between two persons around a subject of mutual interest (Kvale, 1996).

The interview, as a method of evidence collection, allows the researcher to delve deeper into participants' opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences (Denscombe, 2010).

The type of interview chosen for this research study is that of the semi-structured type. The semi-structured interview allows the researcher a relative amount of flexibility to change the order of the interview topics. This allows the interviewee to relate more broadly on the research subject (Denscombe, 2010).

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The written text together with the tape recordings constituted the material for the subsequent interpretation of meaning as recommended by Kvale (Kvale, 1996). Transcripts were analysed and themes identified based on the research questions of the study.

Five lecturers per delivery site (two campuses) had in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Five students per delivery site (two campuses) had in-depth, semi-structured interviews.

3.8.2.1 Advantages of semi-structured interviews

Denscombe lists the following as advantages of interviews:

- Depth of information: The interview can deal with the research topic in depth and in detail. The interviewee can be probed for further information.
- Insights: The interviewee is able to share his/her insights into the research problem. This is especially true if the interviewee has been selected due to his/her knowledge and experiences of the research phenomenon.
- Informants' priorities: The interview process allows the interviewee to express his/her priorities, opinions and ideas.

- Flexibility: The interviewer is able to develop his/her line of inquiry as the interview progresses.
- High response rate: Because the interview is, in most cases, a pre-booked arrangement between the interviewer and interviewee, the likelihood that it will occur is high. The interviews for this research were booked in advance, and all took place at the allotted times.
- Validity: Data collected from the interview can be verified for accuracy and relevance at the point of interview.
- Therapeutic: The interviewee is able to share his/her ideas to someone who is listening and noting the ideas without being critical (Denscombe, 2010).

The above is relevant to the study. Participants in the interviews were lecturers and students. Both of these groups of participants have knowledge and insight of the current assessment system of the National Diploma: Fashion at one Eastern Cape comprehensive university. Through the interview process lecturers and students are able to express their opinions and ideas on the assessment system. These opinions and ideas may be taken into account when developing an assessment strategy framework National Diploma: Fashion at one Eastern Cape comprehensive university.

3.8.2.2 Disadvantages of semi-structured interviews

The choice of using the interview process as a method of data collection should not be made without studying the disadvantages.

The researcher is warned of the disadvantages of the interview process, as put forward by Denscombe. The disadvantages to be aware of are:

- Time-consuming: The conducting and preparation of interviews takes time. It may prove difficult to arrange a time that is suitable to both interviewer and interviewee.
- Data analysis: The transcribing and analysing of the data takes time and effort from the researcher.
- Reliability: Consistency and objectivity may prove difficult to achieve. The collected data may be affected by the context and the individuals involved.

- Interview effect: Statements from interviewees may be affected by the identity of the interviewer.
- Inhibitions: When conducting face to face interview, using a recorder may inhibit the interviewee.
- Invasion of privacy: The interviewer should be mindful that interviews can be invasive of the privacy of the interviewee and may even have an upsetting element.
- Resources: Face to face interviews may prove costly and time consuming to the interviewer as respondents may be geographically displaced. (Denscombe, 2010).

A further disadvantage of the semi-structured interview is that it can be time consuming when it comes to analysing the data.

The researcher took cognizance of the above disadvantages when conducting the semi-structured interviews with participants. Because interviews are time consuming, the researcher made sure that enough time was booked with each participant. Testing of recording equipment was carried out before each interview in order to check the reliability of the equipment. Care was taken before each interview to explain the research topic and to put the participants at ease.

3.9 The interview process

The researcher followed the interview guidelines as set out in Kvale's book Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing (Kvale, 1996).

The guidelines are as follows:

- Informed consent: The subjects interviewed were given information pertaining to the background of the study and the purpose of the interview. A written agreement between the interviewer and each interviewee was signed.
- Confidentiality: Names of interviewees were kept confidential.
- Consequences: The consequences for the interviewees' post interviews were taken into account by the researcher. It was made clear to the interviewees that their views would be taken into account when final recommendations were made.

Necessary and mandatory applications were made to the target university requesting permission to facilitate the study within the university bounds.

3.10 Data analysis

Marshall and Rossman describe data analysis as the practice of ordering structuring, and giving meaning to the collected data (Marshall & Bossman, 1995). In Denscombe’s view, the aim of analysis is to examine the research data with the view to either describing its elements, describing how it works or understanding what it means (Denscombe, 2010).

The analysis of qualitative data can be conducted in many ways (Denscombe, 2010). Hess-Biber et al. suggest that there is no right or wrong way to conduct qualitative analysis (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). The type of analysis depends on the type of data collected and its specific purpose in the study (Denscombe, 2010).

The object of data analysis in this research study was to break down the information gained through document analysis and semi-structured interviews. This data information was then structured so as to enlighten the researcher as to the relationship between the documents, the interview participants and how they informed the research questions.

3.10.1 Data handling and management

Denscombe warns that qualitative data, by its nature, can be difficult to analyse in its raw state. The researcher needs to compare data and identify themes which assist the research. For this purpose Denscombe proposes the researcher apply managing protocols which will assist in the data being open for the analysis process (Denscombe, 2010). The management protocols include the protection of the raw data as well as the formal cataloging and indexing thereof.

In protecting the raw data, the researcher made copies of all original materials such as documents and interview recordings (Denscombe, 2010). The originals were stored in a safe and isolated environment removed from that of the copies. Only copies were used in the process of analysis.

Further to copies being made of original data, all data (both original and copies) was catalogued and indexed. Denscombe purports that an adequate reference system should be assigned to the raw data. The system should allow the researcher to better navigate the data, thereby identifying which data is important/common and should be recorded (Denscombe, 2010).

3.10.2 Analysis of data and interpretation

Qualitative data analysis usually begins with the researcher giving a “thick description” of the research situation/question (Denscombe, 2010).

In the case of this research situation, the research was conducted within the confines of one Eastern Cape university offering Fashion as a programme. The Fashion programme is delivered on two sites. Because of the separation of the sites, the assessment procedure and processes have become blurred with both sites tending towards following separate processes and procedures when conducting assessment. It is the intent of the research project to identify the problems within the assessment activities and thereafter to recommend a theoretical framework on which to build a more sound assessment structure.

The types of data used in the study were generated from semi-structured interviews and a document analysis. The interviews and documents needed analysing in order to inform the researcher as to how they inform the research problem.

3.11 Research quality

3.11.1 Validity

Denscombe views the idea of validity as that of accuracy, honesty and being objective in the use of research data and in the methods for obtaining data (Denscombe, 2004).

Validity was ensured by giving a full explanation of how data was gathered. Further validity was also ensured in the form of member checks. The research participants were given an opportunity to confirm their accounts and recordings of their interviews to have been accurate (Burton & Bartlett, 2009).

3.11.2 Reliability

Reliability was ensured by the researcher maintaining a chain of evidence (Yin, 2009). All documentation collected during the research was presented for final analysis with the research project. Denscombe states that a thorough detailed audit trail needs be kept by the researcher (Denscombe, 2004).

Denscombe posits that, by the nature of qualitative research, it is the researcher him/herself who is the research instrument (Denscombe, 2004). Reliability therefore is proven if the conclusion would be the same should the research have been conducted by someone else (Denscombe, 2004). Denscombe further states that because there is no absolute way of knowing this, there are some ways to prove reliability as best as possible. The researcher needs to provide unambiguous explanations of:

- The aim of the research and its basic theory;
- How the research was undertaken;
- The reasons for certain major decisions such as the type of sampling used (Denscombe, 2004).

3.11.4 Confirmability

Confirmability or objectivity, as described by Denscombe, relates to the researcher's influence over the reporting of findings regarding the research (Denscombe, 2010). Interpretation plays a major role in qualitative research, and thus the researcher needs to remain objective in the interpretation of data. Denscombe proposes that during the interpretation process the researcher must be mindful of the following: the involvement of the researcher's self in the interpretation of data, and the researcher should be open minded and consider alternative and competing elucidations of the data (Denscombe, 2010).

In terms of the researcher's self, the researcher needs to function in a detached manner. Care should be taken not to cloud the investigation with personal prejudices. Denscombe suggests that the researcher should declare, at the beginning of the research project, his/her own identity, values and beliefs which may have an influence over the research interpretation (Denscombe, 2010).

Objectivity is important when analysing data. The researcher can demonstrate objectivity by proving within the interpretation that knowledge production has been paramount in the research and reporting on data which may actually prove the researcher’s possible preconceived ideas wrong (Denscombe, 2010).

3.12 Ethical considerations

Ethics when applied to social research is concerned with the creation of a trusting relationship between those who are researched and the researcher. To ensure that trust is established it is essential that communication is carefully planned and managed, that risks are minimized and benefits are maximized.

In developing a trusting relationship, researchers adhere to a number of ethical principles which they apply to their work – namely, non-maleficence, beneficence and justice.

3.12.1 Non-maleficence

The principle of non-maleficence places an obligation on researchers not to harm others or expose people to unnecessary risks. Harm can come in many forms, from blows to self-esteem to ‘looking bad’ to others, to loss of funding or earnings, to boredom, frustration, or time wasting. It is good practice to assume that every research project will involve some form of harm and to consider in advance how best to deal with it (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001).

3.12.2 Beneficence

Beneficence in research has been described as doing good for others and preventing harm (Orb et al., 2001).

In “doing good” the research should bring some benefit to the participants and to the researched case. In this instance, research of a framework for assessment was undertaken. This framework was to enhance quality and consistency within the Fashion programme at one Eastern Cape university. It was envisaged that the programme, staff and students would benefit from the research.

In the study the researcher further practiced beneficence by giving the participants of the interview process pseudonyms. This was done irrespective of the fact that the pool from which the student participants was drawn was large, increasing the likelihood anonymity. The staff pool was smaller and therefore proved to be more of a challenge. Protection of these participants was also implemented by assigning pseudonyms to each person.

3.12.3 Justice

The justice principle in qualitative research implies that all participants in the research are treated fairly and equally. In qualitative research the researcher ensures justice to the participants by giving credit to their contribution to the study (Orb et al., 2001).

The Belmont report states that during the participant selection process the researcher needs to be cognizant of the following:

- The selected participants are selected because they will inform the research and not because they can be easily manipulated, are in a compromised position, and/or are easily available.
- If the research is being funded, the researcher needs to ensure that the research does not unfairly advantage the funding agent (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subject of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979)

3.13 Summary

Chapter three set out to describe the research methodology and design that were used in this study. The research design is essentially a map or blueprint of how the research took shape. The chapter explains the choice of data collection methods and analysis thereof. Chapter four will provide a more in-depth explanation of the data analysis and the final interpretation of its analysis.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

Chapter three discussed how a qualitative study was designed together with the methodology used in order to provide valid and reliable answers to the research questions. The use of interviews in conjunction with document analysis was instrumental in the collection of data for this study.

Chapter four will include an analysis of interviews conducted, as well as an analysis of relevant documents. Quotations from the interviews will be used to address questions relating to the primary research question, namely what assessment strategy framework can be developed for the National Diploma: Fashion course at one Eastern Cape comprehensive university? The analysis further focuses on data obtained from the interviews and relevant documents to best answer the following secondary questions:

- What assessment strategy framework can be developed for Fashion courses?
- How can the assessment strategy framework be implemented to ensure quality and consistency?
- What are the perceptions regarding quality and consistency in the implementation of an assessment strategy framework?

Permission was obtained from the researched university to conduct interviews with relevant staff and students. Requests for staff and students to avail themselves for interviews were made via email. The interviews were conducted and audio taped in a conducive environment, after which each interview was transcribed verbatim. The researcher did not encounter any audio or technical problems in audio taping the interviews. In order to better understand the landscape of the researched department and university, relevant documents were analysed. The researcher also used national documents.

A document analysis was conducted of relevant documentation and literature in conjunction with the interviews. According to Denscombe, when choosing to use documents as a research tool, the researcher should be cognisant of the validity of the documents chosen to assist the study (Denscombe, 2010). Documents used in the research are representative, clear and unambiguous, as well as credible (Denscombe, 2010). The documents the researcher referred to included:

- HEQC – Criteria for Programme Accreditation 2004
- SAQA – National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment
- SAQA – Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment of NFQ Registered Unit Standards and Qualifications 2001
- SAQA – Guidelines for Integrated Assessment 2005
- SAQA – Registered Qualification National Diploma: Fashion
- Researched university policy document – Examinations and Assessment

4.2 Demographic characteristics of participants

National Diploma: Fashion is delivered on two sites of the researched university. Five academic members of staff from each delivery site were interviewed. Table 4.1 reflects the demographics of the academic staff at each site.

TABLE 4.1 Distribution of academic staff participants' experience and formal assessment qualifications

Delivery site	Years' experience **<5**	**>5**	**>10**	Total	Assessment course completed **Yes**	Assessment course completed **No**	Total
1	0	3	2	5	3	2	5
2	1	2	2	5	4	1	5

Table 4.1 depicts that all the academic staff participants interviewed have experience ranging from less than five years to more than ten years within the institution. It is also evident from the table that a total of seven academics out of the total of 10 have participated in a formalised assessment course.

TABLE 4.2 Distribution of student participants

Delivery site	Current academic year: Fashion programme **Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	Total	Number of students with previous study experience		Total
					No study experience	**Yes, have previous study experience**	
1			5	5	4	1	5
2			5	5	2	3	5

Table 4.2 depicts that all academic student participants interviewed were third year students. These students have knowledge and experience of the current assessment system. Students were asked if they had any previous study experiences. The table above shows that of the ten students interviewed four had experience of studying for another diploma/degree before embarking on their current study of fashion.

4.2.1 Coding and analysing the content of the interviews

Interviews were transcribed and the transcriptions read through thoroughly several times. A matrix was developed using large sheets of paper. On these sheets of paper the matrix structure was designed. This was done using the research questions as headings. Sub-sections were created under each research question. Interview responses pertinent to a research question were then posted below the relevant question. From these postings themes began to develop.

Codes were assigned to each group of participants as to their site location, as site 1 and site 2. Academic staff were assigned a number which denoted the order in which they were interviewed at each site, e.g. S1L1 would be linked to academic lecturing staff participant 1 from site 1. S1S1 would be linked to student 1 at site 1.

The evidence collected from interviews conducted with lecturers and students yielded information that was used in the formation of an assessment framework for National Diploma: Fashion. In support of the analysis, documents were analysed. Documents such as HEQC, SAQA and university policy documents were perused.

4.3 Documents

The theoretical framework supporting this study is the BEAR assessment system. Documents were perused and content analysed with the theoretical framework in mind. Links between the content of the documents and the BEAR assessment system were analysed.

A documentary analysis was conducted in order to give background and support to the interviews. The researcher was congnisant of the validity of the documents chosen to assist the study, as prescribed by Denscombe (Denscombe, 2010). The researcher used documentation that was authentic (genuine article), representative (typical of its type), meaning (clear and unambiguous), and credible (accurate and free from errors) (Denscombe, 2010). The documents in the analysis included the following: HEQC - Criteria for Programme Accreditation 2004, SAQA – Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment of NQF Registered Unit Standards and Qualifications 2001, SAQA - Guidelines for Integrated Assessment 2005, SAQA – registered qualifications National Diploma: Fashion and the researched university policy documents on assessment.

4.3.1 HEQC – Criteria for programme accreditation 2004

The Higher Education Quality Committee authored a document, Criteria for Programme Accreditation 2004, which serves as a guide for programmes to design and plan their assessment procedures effectively. The document states that for a programme to succeed it has to be underpinned by an assessment system which supports curriculum and competence of students. It is further stated that assessment has a major bearing on the quality of teaching and learning and as such can be used to promote change and improve education (HEQC, 2004).

The researcher studied the HEQC document with the BEAR assessment system in mind. The researcher found that by using the BEAR assessment system and the four building blocks as a framework, the requirements of the HEQC in terms of curriculum support, competence of students as well as quality of teaching and learning would fit well within the parameters of the four building blocks.

Building block one states that assessment should be based on the developmental perspective of student learning. This building block encourages an assessment system that develops the competency of students, as called for in the HEQC document. Competency of students is addressed through a process that will build the student from a low level to a higher level of understanding (Kennedy, 2005).

Building block two is designed to assist the assessor to clearly align that which is taught and that which is assessed. This building block encourages an assessment system that is aligned to and supportive of the curriculum. HEQC requires that the curriculum be supported by assessment (HEQC, 2004).

Building blocks three and four support the HEQC requirements for quality teaching, learning and assessment. Building block three states that teachers must be the managers and users of assessment data. Building block four states that sound standards of validity and reliability must be upheld in classroom assessment.

The HEQC document is supported by SAQA policy documents which will be discussed below: Criteria & Guidelines for Assessment of NQF Registered Unit Standards and Qualifications (SAQA, 2001), Guidelines for Integrated Assessment (SAQA, 2005) and the SAQA Registered Qualification National Diploma: Fashion document (SAQA, 2015).

4.3.2 SAQA documents

The SAQA documents which support the HEQC are:

- SAQA policy document Criteria & Guidelines for Assessment of NQF Registered Unit Standards and Qualifications (SAQA, 2001).
- SAQA policy document Guidelines for Integrated Assessment (SAQA, 2005).
- SAQA document regarding registered qualification National Diploma: Fashion deals with the specifics of a fashion programme (SAQA, 2015).

The first two policy documents are of a generic nature, whilst the third document is specific to the National Diploma: Fashion qualification.

The documents were studied and found to have content which the researcher was able to align to building blocks that make the BEAR assessment system.

Within the content of the SAQA policy document Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment of NQF Registered Unit Standards and Qualifications, it is stated that assessments must follow the same basic procedure:

- Planning of the assessment
- Conducting of the assessment
- Feedback to the learner

Planning of the assessment, conducting the assessment and the feedback to the learner are the basic requirements of an assessment. These three requirements and their relative building blocks within the BEAR assessment system are discussed below.

Building blocks one, two and three of the BEAR assessment system relate to these requirements respectively.

4.3.2.1 Planning of assessment

It is stated in the SAQA document of Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment that before an assessment takes place the assessor must plan, design and prepare the assessments (SAQA, 2001).

Building block one (construct map) is the block in which the assessor must plan the construct map. It is in this block that the assessor plans what to assess and how to assess within the context of a particular curriculum. The construct map will define what is to be assessed in a manner that is wide-ranging enough to be interpretable within a curriculum but, at the same time, adequately explicit to drive the development of the other components. The building block one also speaks to the SAQA registration document. This document clearly sets the parameters for the qualification rules regarding exit level outcomes, specified outcomes and critical outcomes (SAQA, 2015). It is this document that will assist the assessor, when building the construct map.

4.3.2.2 Conducting of assessment

A framework of specified and critical outcomes for the curriculum National Diploma: Fashion is clearly stated in the SAQA registration document (SAQA, 2015). The specified outcomes encompass the four main learning areas that underpin the Fashion curriculum. The critical outcomes relate to a broader scope and are aimed at developing the student holistically.

Building block two (items design) speaks to the conducting of assessment and the actual assessment type. It is crucial that within this building block that the assessor matches the assessment task with instruction. This means that the assessor must use the specified outcomes together with the critical outcomes as a guide to conducting assessments that are in line with the curriculum.

4.3.2.3 Feedback to the learner

Nicole and MacFarlane-Dick believe that assessment could be utilized in the higher education domain more effectively to promote student learning. Assessment can be in a framework that can be used to share educational objectives with students, as well as for managing their progress. It can be further utilized to generate feedback to students on their progress which in turn enhances the student learning and achievement (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2004).

Building block three (the outcomes space) relates to management by assessors. This includes feedback to the student. The outcomes space constitutes the outcomes into which student performances are categorized. These are presented as scoring guides for student responses to assessment tasks (Wilson & Carstensen, 2007). The scoring guides must be designed to make the criteria for the assessments transparent and open. This building block relates directly to the SAQA registration document. The document states that in order for a qualification to be awarded, evidence of competence must be completed to the satisfaction of the assessors (SAQA, 2015).

4.3.3 University assessment policy document

HEQC and SAQA documents on assessment were perused. Guidelines within the literature of these documents identified with the research questions. The HEQC document Criteria for Programme Accreditation sets out clear guidelines within the section: Student Assessment Practices (HEQC, 2004). The SAQA documents Guidelines for Integrated Assessment (SAQA, 2005) and Criteria & Guidelines for Assessment of NQF Registered Unit Standards and Qualifications deal with assessment (SAQA, 2001) and speak broadly to the research question. The SAQA Registered Qualification National Diploma: Fashion document gives specific guidelines to inform the research question. The researched university policy document on assessment was also perused.

The university policy document on assessment proved to be vague, with much of the emphasis on summative examination type assessments. Only a paragraph consisting of four points is assigned to the more formative-friendly continuous assessment. It is continuous assessment that is used by the Fashion Department on which this study based. The four points on continuous assessment were more of an administrative nature rather than of an informative nature. The role of continuous assessment and how it should be implemented into a programme is therefore open to individual assessor interpretation. Because this policy document is so vague, none of the BEAR assessment system blocks could be assigned and/or discussed relevant to this document.

4.4 Developing an assessment strategy framework

The term ‘framework’ is widely used to describe conceptual frames of reference (Malan, 1997). The purpose of this study was to develop an assessment strategy framework that is conducive to the Fashion course, and which supports the construction of quality assessments. The theoretical framework informing this research is the BEAR assessment system.

The BEAR system is an embedded assessment system. It has been designed to be a comprehensive, integrated system for assessing, interpreting, monitoring and responding to student performance (Wilson & Scalise, 2006).

Using an embedded approach to assessment, BEAR opens up the opportunity for assessment to take place during the time frame of an instruction module (Wilson & Sloan, 2000). This process is in line with Hernandez and Rowntree's description of continuous assessment. Continuous assessment has a formative function around the time that learning is taking place (Hernandez, 2012; Rowntree, 1996).

4.4.1. Understanding of continuous assessment

Continuous assessment practices generally have a formative function around the time that learning is taking place. This leads to a subsequent contribution to a summative assessment used for certification purposes (Hernandez, 2012; Rowntree, 1996). McAlpine states that continuous assessment is an appropriate assessment method to use where student feedback is required and when information can be gathered to build a picture of the student abilities over a period of a course (McAlpine, 2002).

4.4.1.1 Staff understanding of continuous assessment

The Fashion programme of the researched university has an assessment policy which is currently that of continuous assessment. The assessment policy of the researched institution explains continuous assessment as a subject that does not have an examination. This definition leaves the understanding of continuous assessment open to different interpretations.

Continuous assessment lies at the heart of current assessment practices within the Fashion programme and thus to better understand how the staff and students perceive continuous assessment, the question "The Fashion programme makes use of continuous assessment. What is your understanding of continuous assessment?" was put to participants. The respondents responded as follows:

S1L4 said:

> *My understanding, I am not happy with it, because the continuous assessment allows our students not to commit. Because they know that they will be given the first and the second and a third chance. That is what makes them not to see value of what we are giving to them.*

S2L1 said:

> *….continuous assessment should be assessing for learning, not assessment of learning. Because by the virtue of its term, you want students' to develop and improve as they progress through the year. But now if you don't assess, so my view is that, that student remains on the same level right throughout the year, doesn't know what is wrong or what is right. There is no feedback. It's about assessing and giving feedback, and a second chance given to the students.*

From the quotes above it is clear that there are contradictions in the understanding of continuous assessment. Participant S1L4 intimates that students are assessed at the end of each task and not through the task. Should the student fail the completed task, he/she is given a further chance to rework the entire task.

The BEAR system in its building block 'item design' advocates that assessment should take place during the process of completing a task and not be tacked on the end (Wilson & Sloan, 2000). Respondent S1L4 shows a mind-set that has very little understanding of the concept of continuous assessment. Continuous assessment should not be seen as a tool to get students to commit or not to commit. It is a tool for development and improvement. S2L1 said that the student should be assessed throughout the year. The implication of this statement indicates that assessment is not done through the task, but only at set assessment times during the period of a year. The contrast between the two respondents is striking, pointing to a divided application of an assessment strategy. S1L4 sees assessment as a product whereas S2L1 sees assessment as a process.

Hernandez states that continuous assessment should be twofold. Firstly, it should encompass grading and reporting student achievements and, secondly, it must support students in their learning (Hernandez, 2012). SL2S1 said "*it's about assessing and feedback"*. This is in line with the first two building blocks of BEAR. Building block one, construct maps, of the BEAR assessment system advocates that assessment must be designed with a developmental perspective of student achievement and growth (Kennedy, 2005). Building block two, item design, also supports continuous assessment and promotes the matching of classroom instruction and assessment. It is critical in the item design that each assessment task and student response be matched to certain levels within at least one construct map

(Kennedy, 2005). Because students are identified as stakeholders in the assessment process, they were asked if they understood the concept of continuous assessment.

4.4.1.2 Students' understanding of continuous assessment

One of the key aspects of continuous assessment is that it supports student learning (Hernandez, 2012). The use of continuous assessment can have an encouraging effect on student learning (Trotter, 2006).

Students were asked how they understood the concept of continuous assessment. The responses were as follows:

S1S4 said:

> *My understanding of continuous assessment is that you are given a chance to do your marks. So I think that people that get below "50" are given a chance to get a "50". So ja, I think that is a good thing, because a lot of people improve, they don't fail because of that.*

This respondent says that this is a quantitative rather than a qualitative understanding of what continuous assessment is. It would seem from the quote above that no assessment takes place until the end of the assignment. This would indicate that formative and diagnostic assessment, as well as feedback, has not taken place. Only summative assessment has been used. The views of the two respondents S1S3 and S1S1 also indicate summative assessment.

S1S3 said:

> *Thinking continuous assessment is done in March, June and September, and December. I understand it that way. So it is continuing right throughout the year.*

S1S1 said:

> *I understand it in this way that we don't have, we don't actually say we are writing exams. It is continuous in this say that you get your marks on the first semester. Those marks can be changed at the end of the year, so it is continuous on that way.*

These respondents put the assessment activity into timeframes, such as semesters. This implies that assessment is carried out only after the task (product) has been completed, and not through the task. The implication of the above responses indicates that no formative assessment has been implemented. It has been stated by Pellegrino et al. that completing a task without any form of feedback produces little learning (Pelligrino et al., 2001).

The BEAR assessment system building block one, construct maps, allows the lecturer to design assessment tasks with a developmental view of student learning. The underlying purpose of this building block is that assessment must be designed in such a way as to determine how the student is progressing from less knowledge to more knowledge. Should this building block of the BEAR Assessment System be used correctly, it would eliminate assessment being tacked on after an assessment task is completed (Draney, 2009).

Regarding the response of S1S4, it is clear that no developmental view of student learning is applied as indicated by the BEAR assessment system, building block 1, construct maps.

A tension between the understandings of quantity versus quality seems to exist between the different role players. Students think quantity is quality, whilst staff put emphasis on the quality of the product.

Student S1S1 says that there is no formative aspect to assessment and that it is purely quantitative with no qualitative aspect. There seems to be a possible misunderstanding of 'quality versus quantity' in terms of assessment. It is evident that a quantitative mark is important to the student.

It is clear that from lecturers' viewpoints that there is focus on student and personal development. In contrast to this, students concentrate on highest possible marks. It is also evident that students (S1L4) are focused on the continuous assessment element of giving them repeated opportunities to improve their marks on a quantitative level as opposed to improving the quality of the product. Black and William have found through their research that when emphasis is put on quantity rather than quality, there could be a negative connotation. Students who score low marks perceive themselves to lack ability and are unable to learn (Popham, 2008).

These two viewpoints point to a dysfunction between the possible aims of the lecturer and the student of continuous assessment. Lecturers read quality into the assessment criteria, while for students quality will be measured in terms of the pass rate. There seems to be no meeting of minds between lecturer and student showing a gap between the stakeholders' understanding of continuous assessment. The BEAR assessment system allows for the inclusion of assessment tasks to be part of the learning experience (Wilson & Sloan, 2000). Building block one, construct maps, is grounded in the principle that assessments are to be planned in such a way that the student develops through learning.

From the respondents' views it can be concluded that the students have a very superficial understanding of continuous assessment. Therefore, it does not really form part of their learning experience.

The correct use of continuous assessment will be supported by a structured approach to assessment. A structured approach to assessment can be implemented by designing assessment in line with the BEAR assessment system.

4.4.2 Structured approach to assessment

The use of continuous assessment needs to be within the confines of a structured approach to assessment. The SAQA document Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment of NQF Registered Unit Standards and Qualifications states that assessment must be a structured process for gathering evidence and making judgements about an individual's performance in relation to registered national standards and qualifications (SAQA, 2001). A structured approach to assessment within the context of this research is an approach to assessment that has a framework which delivers sound, robust and quality assessment. The BEAR assessment system is a theoretical framework for assessment. Through the four building blocks on which the system is designed, lecturers are able to construct meaningful assessments which are aligned to curricular goals and instructional activities (Kennedy, 2005). The building blocks support the design of a structured approach to assessment. Assessors use building block one to structure and represent what knowledge they want the students to know as well as what skills the students should possess through numerous levels of difficulty. Building block two provides a framework for structuring assessment tasks that will produce evidence of student knowledge. The framework of building block two gives structure to assessment tasks in that these tasks must be designed within the scope of the instructional activities. By using building block two, assessors are able to clearly align assessment with what is being taught. By implementing building block two, assessors are also complying with SAQA requirements which state that assessment must follow a structured process for gathering evidence and making judgements about an individual's performance within the frame of a registered national and qualifications standard (SAQA, 2001).

From the interviews conducted it was evident that there was confusion as to the structured approach to assessment within the Fashion Department.

S1L4 said:

> *…..it is not like a formal structure per se. Yes, we do say this is how we assess, but I think it is left to each and every lecturer to interpret his or her own understanding, and then you realize people are doing whatever was done to them during their time of learning.*

It is clear from S1L4's response that his/her planning is supported and infused by his own learning and experience. This points to a staff member operating on his own and not being part of the collegial team of the department. This kind of input in the work environment clearly points to a lack of departmental guidance and structure as mentioned in his/her response. Taras describes the process of assessment as the steps taken in order to make a judgement. Points of comparison, such as standards and goals, are necessary because a judgement cannot be made in a vacuum (Taras, 2005).

The lack of an assessment structure is further evident from the response of S1L5, who said:

> *At the moment, not really. Because everybody, just kind of does what they think is right for their classes. And also we have studied from different institutions, so we have different methods of doing things.*

It is clear from S1L5's response that lecturers are very confused and not supported by departmental structures. S1L5 indicates through his/her response that a generic structure of assessment is being applied – saying in effect that he/she is applying the same generic assessment principles that he/she was assessed with at the institution of learning he/she attended. This highlights the fact that lecturers have been left to their own devices when planning and instituting assessment. The response from S1L5 further indicates that the respondent has not grown as a life-long learner. He has not taken on board input from the learning environment in which he is currently engaged in linking it to formal academic knowledge and applying it to benefit the students and process. S1L5 in his/her response indicates that he is only focused on what happened to him as a student in a specific environment. It is clear that he has not been exposed to or does not embrace the concepts of massification, globalization and internationalization.

On a positive note, lecturer S2L3 refers to fashion outcomes as a guiding structure on which to base the preparation, planning and assessment. The SAQA registered qualification National Diploma: Fashion document, provides a framework of outcomes, both specified and critical (SAQA, 2015). From this framework lecturers are able to match required outcomes with their assessment. This view is underpinned by the SAQA document Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment of NQF Registered Unit Standards and Qualifications which states that the assessor, when planning an assessment, must be cognizant to include more than one learning outcome (SAQA, 2001).

S2L3 said:

> *I would say it is structured in a way just because whatever we do, it is based on what our fashion outcomes say, or what our work plans say.*

Although S2L3 speaks of structure in the form of fashion outcomes and work plans, it is evident from the responses to the interviews that no formal structure for assessment purposes exists in the fashion department. A step to correct this malaise would be uniformity in the construction of assessment tasks.

4.4.3 Construction of assessment tasks

The construction of assessment tasks speaks to the knowledge of policy that governs what is required within the construction of the assessment. The initial document/policy that the assessor should consult when setting an assessment task is the SAQA document pertaining to the registered qualification National Diploma: Fashion (SAQA, 2015). This document sets the parameters of exit level outcomes, specified outcomes and critical outcomes. Guidelines for associated assessment criteria are also defined in the document. These parameters and guidelines form the basis on which the assessor will construct the assessment criteria for the assessment task.

In terms of construction of assessment tasks, S1L1 said:

> *I would base it on outcomes (project). So that the student and I are both aware of what they need to do and what I need to look for in assessing that task. So I would say that outcomes in the form of a brief, with their clear outcomes so that we have mutual understanding.*

The question that comes to mind is: Do the students know how to unpack the outcomes and translate them into practical terms? The respondent S1L1, acknowledges students as stakeholders in the assessment process and therefore they should be active participants in the construction of tasks.

S1L2 said:

> *I set them based on the SAQA documents. Subjects that I work with deals with design mostly, so through the SAQA document my subject responds to any of the critical outcomes that deal with design. Then I structure projects in a way that can prove those competencies. Can prove whether those competencies are there or not.*

Respondent S1L2 sees students not as stakeholders, but bases his/her construction on a theoretical SAQA document (SAQA, 2015). The SAQA document referred to by S1L2 is the registered qualification National Diploma: Fashion. This document is a framework which informs assessors of specified and critical outcomes relative to the course in which the assessor assesses.

He displays a theoretical knowledge of the document, but in practical terms could not explain how to construct an assessment task. He also only refers to the critical outcomes and does not make mention of the specified outcomes which form part of this document. It is clear that S1L2 is using the SAQA document structure to support his assessment structure, but it is not clear what the aim of the assessment is. Thus it becomes a theoretical task, not embedded in the practical reach and links to world of work students will ultimately engage in.

S2L5 said:

> *Even using the unit standards, it is still very vague. So the …module descriptor of what learning should take place, and then starting from there. Put it out what the purpose is. These are the objectives of what they must learn. And then structure the project around this…they choose those outcomes.*

Respondent S2L5 in referring to the following process in the construction of the assessment which speaks of the unit standard, module descriptor, purpose, structure of the project, and choosing of outcomes. This alludes to a confused and haphazard approach to assessment. According to Rowntree, the assessor must plan and evaluate the assessment methods he will use in relation to the purpose he is pursuing (Rowntree, 1996). Rowntree also emphasises the importance of the assessor to match the method of assessment with the content and style of the teaching and learning as experienced by the student. To this end, Rowntree advises that two key questions need to be addressed:

- Which assessment methods relate to our objectives and assessment constructs?
- Which assessment methods will produce indications of the student abilities or qualities we are interested in? (Rowntree, 1996).

There is a link between the two key questions that Rowntree puts to assessors and the opinion of S2L1:

S2L1 said:

> *Well I think you assess, you have an outcome. As you know at the end of the day, really it is what I want the student to know. Then from that outcome, you derive assessment criteria of what you want the student to do.*

Respondent S2L1 in contrast to S2L5 seems to have a straight forward, no nonsense approach to assessment which aligns with the HEQC perspective. The HEQC specify that learning outcomes must be explicit and clearly understood by both the assessor and the student. The learning activities and required assessment performances must be aligned to the learning outcomes. The link between learning outcomes and assessment criteria must be unambiguous and easily communicated to the student (HEQC, 2004).

It is clear that uniformity of assessment construction and strategies within the department is lacking. In order to address this problem an assessment strategy framework must be developed. This will support quality and consistency of assessment across the department.

4.4.4 Implementation of assessment strategy framework to ensure quality and consistency

The need of an assessment strategy framework for the Department of Fashion is clearly required in order to ensure quality and consistency of assessment. The BEAR assessment system is such a framework. It would benefit the department to develop assessments that are meaningful and that are aligned to the curricular goals and instructional activities. In order to better understand the current assessment practices in the department the researcher looked at the following:

- Types of assessment used
- Students' perceptions of assessment modes
- Embedded assessment in the activities of learning and teaching
- Ways to improve assessment practices
- Student involvement in assessment

The findings of the above assisted in the forming of an assessment strategy framework.

4.4.4.1 Types of assessment used

According to Rowntree, the assessor must plan and evaluate the assessment types he/she will use in relation to the purpose he/she is pursuing. He further states that it is important for the assessor to keep in mind what sort of knowledge he is looking for and who will benefit from the particular knowledge being known (Rowntree, 1996).

The BEAR assessment system supports assessment types that are designed to develop the students' learning (Wilson & Scalise, 2006). There are a number of types of assessment, some of which align themselves to the BEAR assessment system and some types that are in conflict with BEAR. Assessments that promote regurgitation of knowledge by students are not in line with the BEAR system.

Respondent S1L5 alludes to using straight regurgitation techniques. There is no application of critical and creative thinking evident. Understanding or conceptual knowledge is not tested. Critical and creative thinking are stipulated as important outcomes in the SAQA document of the registered National Diploma: Fashion (SAQA, 2015).

S1L5 said:

> *In theory I do tests, which is one way, but my questions are different. Like I would ask them to fill in the blanks, or I would ask them to true or false, or give them a direct question to give an answer to.*

Mafa and Gudhlanga attest that examinations are important in an institution of education. The use of examinations (tests) measures the understanding the students have of learned concepts and principles (Mafa & Gudhlanga, 2013). Conversely, Earl and Katz (2006) are of the opinion that students should be encouraged to learn for understanding and not just for recall of facts. They state that assessment tasks need to be designed in order that students are given the opportunity to show their level of understanding. Assessment tasks should be designed to allow students to show authenticity and consistency of their conceptualization, knowledge skills and attitudes. Methods of assessment of learning do not have to remain in the bounds of the traditional exam and/or tests variety. Various methods that demonstrate learning include exhibitions, presentations, portfolios, oral and visual methods as well as presentations, simulations and multimedia projects (Earl & Katz, 2006).

Lecturers were asked what types of assessment they employed. From the responses given, it would seem that there is little or no knowledge of the various types of assessment that could be used to gauge a student's understanding of a subject. S2L5 responded with the following:

S2L5

> *I would like to do more group work, so that there can be some peer assessment as well. Ja, I try, but I do it once and then there is such chaos that I don't do it again.*

One of the critical outcomes of the SAQA registered qualification National Diploma: Fashion is that students must work effectively with others as a member of a team or group (SAQA, 2015). S2L5 indicates awareness of this outcome, but does not know how to manage that type of assessment.

With the view of various modes of assessment S1L3 and S1L2 had this to say:

S1L3 said

> *I do use peer assessment. That's mostly one that I do.*

S1L2 said

> *We do peer assessment, we do presentations. So it works for me because sometimes you find the student is not good when it comes to writing. Like if you give them tests or assignments, they are not good at writing. So when you do presentation maybe this will be able to pass. So this is the way I do it when it comes to theory subjects. It makes the way that I am doing my assessment.*

S2L3 and S1L2 both stipulate only peer assessment. Of the ten academics interviewed, six stated that they use peer assessment. Peer assessment as defined by Falchikov describes it as that process through which groups of individuals rate their peers (Falchikov, 1995). Somervell suggests that peer assessment can be both formative and summative. On the one hand, peer assessment may include feedback of a qualitative nature, or on the other hand it may include the students actually being involved in the marking process. In terms of validity, peer assessment research has shown that peers have a tendency to produce mark scores based on uniformity, race and friendship (Somervell, 1993).

The studies of peer assessment have resulted in findings such that students find peer assessment more interesting than the traditional assessment methods (Conway et al., 1993). It has been found that students believe that innovative assessments, such as peer assessment, are a fairer method of assessing because they encompass consistent application and hard work. This is in contrast to the more traditional method which includes last minute bursts of effort and sheer good luck (Sambel & McDowell, 1997).

Studies conducted by Fry (1990) and Rushton, Ramsay, & Radak (1993) show that peer assessment can be accurate. The studies conducted by these independent experts showed that the marks awarded by peers were significantly close to those awarded by the lecturer. Although peer assessment has its place in the assessment domain, it is important that other types of assessment are implemented when assessing for learning (Fry, 1990; Rushton, Ramsey, & Radak, 1993). Rowntree states that it is important for the assessor to match the method of assessment with the content and style of the teaching and learning as experienced by the student. Rowntree advises assessors to keep in mind the following questions when deciding which assessment methods to use. These are:

- Which assessment methods relate to the objectives and assessment constructs?
- Which assessment methods will produce indications of the student abilities or qualities we are interested in? (Rowntree, 1996).

S1L3 said:

> *That is a difficult one. I know it is very important for our students. We still lack in how we do assessment, but then I would say for our programme, one needs to add, not just one method of assessment, make sure that there are various methods of assessment where during this process you include your students.*

In terms of using more than one method, it was evident from the responses of the lecturers that more than one method of assessment should be used. However, S1L3 highlighted the fact that there is a limited use of more than one assessment type.

Building block one (construct maps) of the BEAR assessment system encourages the assessor to develop assessments that have a developmental view of student learning (Wilson & Sloan, 2000). Building block two (item design) encourages the assessor to match classroom instruction and the various types of assessment (Wilson & Scalise, 2006). SAQA promotes the use of more than one type of assessment. By doing so the student is able to demonstrate not only achievement but also knowledge and understanding, as well as an ability to adapt to changing circumstances (SAQA, 2001). The HEQC postulates that learning outcomes must be linked to assessment criteria which are clearly stated and communicated to students. They further state that a range of assessment tasks leads to an effective measuring of student attainment of the intended learning outcomes (HEQC, 2004).

Although it is clear in the SAQA (2001) and HEQC (2004) documents that outcomes must be achieved through a range of assessment tasks, the university policy document provided no clarity in this regard.

Both SAQA (2001) and HEQC (2004) encourage discussion between lecturers and students about assessment. Both bodies state that students must be made aware of what is to be assessed, how it is to be assessed and when it is to be assessed (HEQC, 2004; SAQA, 2001). To this end, student perceptions of assessment need to be heard.

4.4.5 Students' perception of assessment types

Rowntree postulates that assessment is a human encounter and that it is a conscious interaction between two people, direct or indirect (Rowntree, 1996). These two people are the assessor and the student. The phenomenon of lifelong learning means that assessment must not only inform the assessor, but should also belong to and inform the learner (Boud, 2000). Students were asked whether they preferred a test/exam type assessment, or a more practical type of assessment. S1S4 had this to say about test type assessment.

S1S4 said:

> *I would study something, maybe three days at times, where I don't have time and have other assignments to do. Then I make sure that I know everything that is required. Not that I will…., I will probably forget it after the test, which doesn't help me anyway. I am just worried about the marks that I will be getting.*

S1S5 echoed S1S4's sentiments by stating:

S1S5:

> *You know what happens in the test? When we are supposed to write a test, we will be told that you will be assessed from page 1 to page 50. So you go and memorize that whole portion. That is the reality of it. But I don't think we are at a stage, where after a while, when you have been asked, when you have written the test and got your distinction, you are asked how you understand whatever it was you have been asked. And if you can still remember that?*

As mentioned in a previous section, the authors Earl and Katz, are opposed to the mode of assessment which tests only the recall of facts (Earl & Katz, 2006). As the response from S1S5 indicates, students learn, not to understand, but rather to regurgitate facts. Once the test or exam has been completed, the knowledge is no longer retained. A further negative of the more traditional assessments (tests and exams) is highlighted in the research paper Academics' Conceptions of Assessment and the Assessment Practices. It was found that the more traditional approach to assessment, such as summative, can have a discouraging effect on students. They ascribe this to the belief that students want to be successful in their studies and are therefore sensitive to assessment in terms of what will be assessed and how they will be assessed (Postareff et al., 2012).

Nicole & Macfarlane-Dick, take the stance that assessment could be utilized in the higher education domain more effectively to promote student learning. Assessment can be in a framework that can be used to share educational objectives with students, as well as for managing their progress (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2004). The SAQA document Guidelines for Integrated Assessment states that an assessment plan must be made accessible to stakeholders in order that they are familiar with the plan (SAQA, 2005). The use of the BEAR assessment system as a framework would encompass this objective. Building block one (construct map) promotes the sharing of educational objectives with students. This building block embodies the developmental perspective of assessment on student achievement and growth. The construct map informs both student and assessor the specific level of knowledge/skill the student is performing at. Building block three (outcomes space) is that part of the BEAR assessment system which enables the assessors to manage the scoring of student responses to assessment tasks.

S1S4 further went on to state that a more practical approach to assessment was a better option. S1S4 had this to say:

> *For practical, it is more helpful, because for practical you need to understand what you are doing. So it is something that you always need to know what you are doing.*

From the S1S4 and S1S5's statements, it is clear that students prefer the practical type of assessment. Assessment that is of a practical nature fits well with an embedded approach to assessment.

4.4.6 Assessment embedded in activities and teaching

An embedded approach to assessment is when assessment takes place during the time frame of an instruction module. It enables both the student and the teacher an opportunity to assesses at what level the students' knowledge and skills are at any specific point in the instruction process (Wilson & Sloan, 2000). When lecturers were asked whether they embed assessment in their activities and teaching, they had the following responses. S1L1 said:

> *I definitely embed my assessment, because, as we do, say the first step and do changes if they need to …. So it's not something I would just add on at the end.*

S2L5 said

> *I don't embed it, just because it is too difficult with the number of students to keep track of.*

From the two quotes above it is clear that there is non-uniformity of assessment between lecturers within the department and across both sites. The researcher's view is that the respondents have a very superficial understanding of the term 'embedded'. Wilson and Scalise, in their BEAR assessment model, champion the use of embedded assessment. Building block two (item design) is used to ascertain that assessment is embedded in instruction. An embedded approach to assessment and teaching affords the assessor the opportunity to track the students' progress through a task. It also encourages feedback to students on a regular basis (Wilson & Scalise, 2006).

4.4.7 Ways to improve the assessment practices

Lecturers responded to this interview question by giving a number of ways in which assessment practices can be improved. These were:

- Student involvement in assessment
- More time in which to carry out assessment
- Not enough modes of assessment used by staff

The BEAR assessment system's first two building blocks are designed to assist assessors to involve students in assessment, create more time for assessment, and encourage the use of more modes of assessment. Building block one, the construct map, is a cognitive theory of learning. This building block's principle aim is that assessment is designed with a developmental view of student learning. A developmental view of student learning means that assessment should be designed in order that a student is assessed on progression of learning (that is from less knowledge to more knowledge) in the area of interest. This is in contrast to limiting the use of assessment to measure proficiency after the learning activity has ended (Kennedy, 2005). By designing and using a construct map that guides the student from being less knowledge to more knowledge, the assessor and student will have more interaction in the form of feedback. A construct map allows both student and assessor to be cognisant of where the student fits in respect of the level of understanding (modest level to a high level of understanding).

From the responses of the lecturers on how they would improve assessment, time constraints and the limits of types of assessment were mentioned. The building block two of the BEAR assessment system is a framework in which tasks are planned to produce specific kinds of evidence about student knowledge, which are defined in the construct map. The guiding principle of the items design block is that assessment should be embedded in the day to day classroom activity. If the items design block is constructed correctly, it should alleviate some time constraints for the lecturers. This is achieved by having the assessment embedded in the classroom activities and not as a separate entity at the end. Embedding assessment into the classroom activities give the assessors more opportunity to be more creative in the use of assessment modes, rather than the traditional tack on at the end of the learning activity.

4.4.7.1 Student involvement in assessment including feedback

The phenomenon of lifelong learning means that assessment must not only inform the assessor, but should also belong to and inform the learner (Boud, 2000). Shepard is of the view that assessment of student learning is an important factor in the effectiveness and motivation of the learning experience of students, as cited in Tillema, Leenknecht and Segers (Tillema et al., 2011). When lecturers were asked how they involve students in assessment, the response from S1L1 was:

S1L1

> *So I would base it on an outcome. So that the student and I are both what they need to do and what I need to look for in assessing that task.*
>
> *To motivate us, and make us to grow. Because sometimes you are assessed and then maybe your works is not good, it's helping us to improve more. ….*

S1L1's response implies that there is a discussion that takes place between the lecturer and the students prior to the assessment task being completed. This is in line with Taras's view that discussing and understanding of the criteria must take place, which will further promote feedback and reflection (Taras, 2005). S1L1's approach is also supported by HEQC, who specify that learning outcomes must be explicit and clearly understood by both the assessor and the student. The link between learning outcomes and assessment criteria must be unambiguous and easily communicated to the student (HEQC, 2004). The student responses by S1S4 and S1S3 indicate that the feedback component regarding student involvement in assessment is important. S1S3 and S1S4 had this to say respectively:

S1S3 said:

> *… you fail, after assessment is when you say "Let me pick up my socks, let me work more". It helps you think more, more outside the box. The other side is motivating.*

S1S3 refers to the feedback aspect of assessment being that of motivation. This view is highlighted by Nicole & Macfarlane-Dick, who view feedback as a cognitive process of the way students feel about themselves, either positive or negative, as well as what and how they learn (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

S1S4 said:

> *I think for most students, including me, if we are given an assignment, it would be better if we do it and show our lecturer the progress, come back, fix do it, came back, fix, fix until we are at a point where the quality is what is required.*

Feedback, as indicated by the response of S1S4, is an important factor for including students in assessment. Nicole & Macfarlane-Dick (2004) are of the view that feedback during class activities gives the student the opportunity to realign their understanding and/or skills, thereby increasing their knowledge and capabilities (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2004).

Student involvement in assessment also took the form of peer assessment feedback. S1L2 includes students as stakeholders in assessment by having them do peer assessment before doing a final assessment. S1L2 explained this in the following way:

S1L2:

> *I don't know, try and get students to finish quicker in order for them to do peer assessments first, and then they rework, based on what their peers are saying. After that, that's when I would come in as a lecturer and mark.*

S1L2 involves students in the form of peer assessment feedback. He/she uses peers to assess and, based on this peer assessment feedback, students have a chance to rework before the final assessment by the lecturer. By involving the students in peer assessment S1L2 makes the assessment process more interesting to the students. This is supported by the findings of Sambel and McDowell who in their studies found that students not only wanted openness and clarity in assessment, but also wanted alternative assessments to make their learning interesting (Sambel & McDowell, 1997).

4.4.7.2 Assessment: time constraints

It is clear from the respondents that they are severely restricted by systemic time constraints. Staff said that time constraints were felt when assessment had to be done before feedback was given to students. In contrast, the student response was that the practical work element was so great that there was no time to study for the theoretical test type assessment. The responses were as follows:

S2L4

I think maybe I could mark on time. … So if you give them understanding on time on a particular brief, then you mark on time, then you give them feedback on time so that they can improve before you give them the second project.

S1L1

I think improvement of assessment practices needs more time to do the actual assessment or the project to be able to allow the assessment to be built in. … If we had more time so that we could get to see each student and improving and helping them and assessing them during classes, because it takes a lot of time to get through each and every student if you have a group of say thirty students. So time wise you need to lengthen the hours that you need to see the students.

S2S5

I prefer practical because here in fashion, we do not have time to study. Most of the time we are given drawings, patterns. Those things take a lot of your time. So there is not enough time to go and study.

The responses above, from both lecturing staff and a student emphasise time as a debilitating factor to quality assessment. Two building blocks of the BEAR assessment system speak to this factor. Within the building block 'item design' it is proposed that assessment must be part of the learning event, and that assessment tasks can be increased without impacting on instruction and/or teaching time (Wilson & Sloan, 2000). The second building block (measurement model) was designed by Wilson and Sloan to uphold the integrity of classroom assessment. They champion that the advantage of classroom based assessment is that it can be designed within the constructs of a specific curriculum, and can be made adaptable to suite the teacher's needs (Wilson & Sloan, 2000).

4.5 Summary

National documents on assessment, which included HEQC (2004) and SAQA (2001) were examined and were found to have clear instructions as to how assessment must be implemented. The policy document of the researched university provided no useful information on which a department could design an assessment framework.

It is evident from the responses to the interviews that there are misconceptions as to how assessment should be planned and implemented within the department. It also became apparent through the interviews that lecturers were not in sync with one another when administering assessment and that assessment is conducted on a haphazard basis.

In accordance with seeking answers to the research questions, the following became apparent:

- Assessment methods presently in use are not keeping up with international trends.
- Quality and consistency could be implemented with the aid of an assessment strategy framework such as the BEAR assessment system.

Chapter five will focus on a discussion of the main findings in chapter four.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

Detailed findings of the research questions as postured in chapter one of this study were described in chapter four. Chapter five discusses the findings of chapter four.

5.2 Developing an assessment strategy framework for the National Diploma: Fashion

The purpose of this study was to develop an assessment strategy framework for the National Diploma: Fashion at an Eastern Cape university. It was confirmed in this study that no formal structure for assessment, in the form of a framework, exists within the Fashion programme of this university. From the document analysis and the interview process the researcher was able to glean information that will contribute to the formulation of an assessment strategy framework based on the BEAR assessment system. The elements which will inform this framework are discussed below. The first of the elements to be discussed is that of embedded assessment.

5.2.1 An embedded approach to assessment

Wilson and Sloan state that using an embedded approach to assessment allows for the opportunity of assessment to take place within a time frame of an instruction module (Wilson & Sloan, 2000). This study confirmed that there is no common understanding between both lecturers and students as to what is meant by embedded assessment and continuous assessment.

The interviews with the lecturers exposed a clear misunderstanding of the term ‘embed’. Respondent S2L5 said:

S2L5:

I don't embed it, just because it is too difficult with the number of students to keep track of.

This statement is in conflict with what is meant by the term embedded approach to assessment as described by Wilson and Sloan (2000). Embedded assessment should provide the assessor and the student with an opportunity to assesses at what level the students' knowledge and skills are at any specific point in the instruction process (Wilson & Sloan, 2000). The number of students being assessed should not impact on the use of an embedded approach. The BEAR assessment system was designed to assess and track the assessed knowledge of a large number of students. Using the BEAR assessment system as an assessment framework to support and inform assessment planning will help to alleviate S2L5's dilemma of trying to keep track of too many students. Wilson and Sloan say that when assessment becomes part of the learning event, assessment tasks can be increased without impacting on teaching time (Wilson & Sloan, 2000). It is implied in S2L5's response that he/she does not understand the concept of embedded assessment, nor is he/she complying with the standard national documents which clearly champion the use of assessment as an integral part of the teaching and learning process.

The HEQC document Criteria for Programme Accreditation states that assessment must be an integral part of the teaching and learning process (HEQC, 2004). The SAQA document Guidelines for Integrated Assessment supports HEQC. In this document, SAQA states that in order for assessment to be meaningful, it must be integrated into teaching and learning (SAQA, 2005). Two fundamental elements of assessment are emphasised by these documents, namely assessment should be an 'integral' part of teaching and learning, as well as 'meaningful'. These two elements are represented in the BEAR assessment system. First, 'integral' positions assessment as totally integrated into teaching and learning, feeding into the delivery of content, whilst at the same time supporting the attainment of the envisaged outcomes. 'Meaningful' speaks to the clarity of purpose lecturers should strive for in their delivery. Assessment becomes an interwoven part of the curriculum delivery. The theoretical framework for this study is the BEAR assessment system. The system is made up of four building blocks which support quality teaching, learning and assessment. The blocks support integration of assessment as well as assessment lending meaning to teaching and learning. The second of the building blocks (item design) is a framework in which assessment is built into teaching. The importance of this building block is the principle that the assessment must be curriculum dependent. Wilson and Sloan stress that the assessment should not drive the curriculum, but rather that the two, assessment and instruction, should be in harmony, that they drive one another (Wilson & Sloan, 2000).

Given the above requisites for validating assessment, e.g. integration and meaningfulness, the assessment application as part of the curriculum delivery at the researched institution is clearly lacking. The element of quantified assessment is in direct contrast with the concept of being ‘integral’. Lecturers and students are very aware of the function of their assessment, which is to enable students to attain a pass based solely on their marks. No qualitative development is built into assessment. This in turn leads to a negation of the concept of ‘meaningful’. Qualitative development will emphasise the meaning of the content delivery, adding assessment as a meaningful integrated extension of teaching and learning. Once this is in place, students will be able to ‘make meaning’ of content, showing gained knowledge as practical applications (assessments) to be taken forward to the world of work.

The embedded approach to assessment is in harmony with continuous assessment. Hernandez (2012) and Rowntree (1996) describe continuous assessment as a formative function around the time that learning is taking place. The term ‘formative function’ needed further explanation with regards to continuous assessment.

5.2.2 Continuous assessment

The responses from the interviews illustrate that there is no meeting of the minds between the stakeholders (lecturers and students) as to the understanding of continuous assessment. This is evident from the response of S1L4, who alludes to students not committing because of continuous assessment. This respondent does not seem to grasp that continuous assessment should be driven by the assessor. It is the assessor who should commit and then transfer that commitment to the students. S1L4’s response to understanding of continuous assessment was:

S1L4:

> *My understanding, I am not happy with it, because the continuous assessment allows our students not to commit.*

However, student S1S4 said the following:

S1S4:

> *My understanding of continuous assessment is that you are given a chance to do your marks.*

Although S1S4, does not grasp the meaning of continuous assessment, commitment is alluded to in the statement "*you are given a chance to do your marks*". Both stakeholders' understanding of continuous assessment is in stark contrast to that of McAlpine. McAlpine describes continuous assessment as an appropriate assessment method where student feedback is required and when information can be gathered to build a picture of the student abilities over a period of a course (McAlpine, 2002). This description of continuous assessment by McAlpine shows the connection between continuous assessment and an embedded approach to assessment. Embedded assessment should provide the assessor and the student with an opportunity to assess at what level the students' knowledge and skills are at any specific point in the instruction process (Wilson & Sloan, 2000). The assessment of the level of the students' knowledge and skills is an indication to the assessor of how well a student is performing within an assessment task – is the student in the process of achieving the desired outcome? BEAR assessment system building block one (construct maps) underpins the concept of assessing a student's progress through a task. This building block proposes that assessments must be designed with a developmental view of student learning. Further to building block one, building block three (outcomes space) attests that teachers are to be the primary managers of assessment in the classroom. The collection of assessment data informs the teacher of the student knowledge at a given point in the task.

The response from student S1S4 indicates a misunderstanding of continuous assessment. The emphasis is on a quantitative rather than a qualitative understanding of continuous assessment. S1S4 said:

S1S4:

> *So I think that people that get below "50" are given a chance to get a "50".*

From S1S4's response it is evident that the quantitative aspect of assessment is given emphasis. There is an absence of a qualitative aspect. The fact that this student makes mention of "*50*" means that students are only doing enough to pass. They are not concerned about the quality of the product. This again emphasises quantity over quality. Although respondents stated intentions to support student learning through assessment, there is also a superficial application of assessment. It is as if it is just a requirement to authenticate teaching and learning in class.

The assessment policy document of the researched university is very vague in its description of continuous assessment. It lists four points which are more in line with the administration of continuous assessment rather than the implementation thereof. It could be the lack of policy and information on continuous assessment within the university policy document that allows staff and students to interpret continuous assessment according to their level of understanding.

The BEAR assessment system advocates the use of a continuous assessment. Building block one (construct maps) is grounded in the principle that assessments are to be designed with a developmental view of student learning. The developmental approach is designed to focus on the process of learning with the emphasis on the individual's progress through this process. Building block two (item design) supports building block one in that it keeps assessment, teaching and learning in alignment. If assessors were to use building block one (construct maps) of the BEAR assessment system, continuous assessment and feedback to students on their progress would be automatic. This would be achieved through the construct map, which clearly outlines the purpose of assessment to determine how students are progressing from less expert to more expert.

In conclusion, the tension between quality and quantity in the application of continuous assessment is very real. This stems from a lack of insight from both the students as well as the lecturers. Since the lecturers are the drivers of the process, their knowledge base is clearly lacking. The question arises from the data collected, Are the lecturers the drivers of the assessment process, or do they suffer from a lack of knowledge comparable to that of the students? Pertinent to this question is the data collected. Both lecturers and students display an 'ignorance' as far as theoretical and practical application of assessment is concerned. If this is the case, namely ignorance during the assessment process, the validity of assessment results are in question, leading to a question mark regarding the quality output of the qualification. Since assessment consists of many building blocks, such as formative feedback, let us look at the place of formative feedback as a qualitative building block in the researched institution.

5.2.3 The role of formative assessment as a feedback mechanism

Irons describes formative assessment feedback as a task or activity which enables the assessor to give feedback (or feedforward) to students about their learning. A grade for formative assessment is not allocated for further use in a summative judgment (Irons, 2008)

Feedback to students from assessors is an important aspect of continuous assessment. Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick state that for formative assessment to play an integral role in teaching and learning in higher education, feedback and feedforward should be systematically embedded in the curriculum (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2004). Thus the process of implementing assessment becomes a two-pronged approach. Although a clear distinction is made between feedback, traditionally meant to be after the fact, and feedforward, meaning preparing students to actively engage with the feedback, enabling them to use it to improve their performance, in essence the two approaches are intertwined, and as such should be embedded throughout the formative assessment process.

In this study respondents eluded to the value of feedback as giving students a second chance. This is in line with Hernandez, who states that continuous assessment should be twofold. Firstly, it should encompass grading and reporting student achievements; and, secondly, it must support students in their learning (Hernandez, 2012). The tension between the contradicting views of respondents mainly stems from an emphasis on the need for quality feedback and a skewed look at the commitment level of students regarding teaching and learning. Formative assessment, by its nature, creates feedback or feedforward for students about their learning (Irons, 2008).

The lack of formative assessment in the form of feedback is apparent. It became evident from the stakeholders' responses that summative assessment occurs without any formative assessment taking place. It is inferred that assessment is carried out only after the task (product) is completed, and not through the task. York says that in order for assessment to be useful, it is imperative that it is given in time. Besides being too late to assist the student in their learning, it may also be insufficient if given as a mark or grade (Yorke, 2003). The inference that assessment is done only after a task (product) is completed, indicates that there is no developmental view of student learning. If assessment is carried out only at the end of the task, it also indicates that no feedback was given to students as they worked through a task. This is in line with Black and Williams, who state that assessment is often treated as a social and managerial function which transcends the function of learning. The learning needs of learners and the analysis of previous assessment records of learners is given no importance. Importance is placed on the collection of marks and the record keeping process (Black & Williams, 2003). This points to a technical view of assessment. Assessment is not part of the teaching and learning culture of an institution, but is viewed as an add-on, a tick box exercise to produce a quantitative value. The use of assessment as a mere technical exercise points to assessment being seen as a separate entity, removed from teaching and learning. The notion of assessment informing teaching and thus learning is invalid in this instance. Given the separation of assessment from teaching and learning, no qualitative, formative feedback will be shared with students, only quantitative feedback. Feedback is not only important for student learning. Its function must be twofold. That is, it can be used as a tool to inform teaching and learning, and it also can be used to improve the curriculum (HEQC, 2004).

In the BEAR assessment system, building block one (construct maps) allows the lecturer to design assessment tasks with a developmental view of student learning. The underlying purpose of this building block is that assessment must be designed in such a way as to determine how the student is progressing from less expert to more expert. This is in line with Luckert and Sutherland who attest that assessment should be a continuous process. Each and every product/task done by the student in the process of ordinary class work should be assessed (Luckett & Sutherland, 2000). Luckert and Sutherland further describe continuous assessment as an approach in which the students are assessed on a regular basis during the teaching process. Each assessment session is then used as a building block in further teaching and construction of the next assessment (Luckett & Sutherland, 2000). From stakeholders' responses it is clear that this planning and designing phase of an embedded continuous assessment is not taking place. This leads to the questions:

- Are lecturers in limbo in terms of assessment skills? Are they not becoming experts in the assessments they apply?
- Are the lecturers keeping up with current trends in assessment on a national level as well as internationally?

This has been an issue that has been identified by Friedrich et al. Their research showed that challenges do exist in changing assessors' mindsets from the traditional approach to assessment. It requires an innovative attitude, time, energy, effort and patience from educators and learners (Friedrich-Nel et al., 2003). If lecturers are not keeping up with current assessment trends both nationally and internationally, it means that the researched university is not developing as an institution that can accommodate massification, globalisation and internationalisation.

If only the traditional summative assessment is applied, then the growth of all stakeholders, i.e. lecturers and student, is to be questioned. - students as learners developing insight into content, and lecturers developing insight into the students' development.

If lecturers are concentrating only on summative assessment and not valuing and embracing the developmental aspect of formative assessment, then the main aspects, such as only giving a quantitative view of assessment, are foregrounded by lecturers and students. Putting emphasis on quantitative rather than qualitative can result in a negative connotation to assessment.

To conclude, there seems to be an understanding amongst some lecturers that summative assessment alone will fulfil the requirements of assessment at the higher education level. However, given the fact that quantitative assessment is focused on by some lecturers as well as by students, it means no development, as required by the ultimate job market students are striving for, takes place. Boud states that the phenomenon of lifelong learning means that assessment must not only inform the assessor, but should also belong to and inform the learner (Boud, 2000).

It is also clear that formative assessment does not include feedback, or any ‘formative’ elements. Summative assessment is mainly applied, leaning heavily on its quantitative qualities. Questions arising from the research relate to issues which include how much external pressure is put to bear on assessors. Is the pass rate a priority at the expense of assessor integrity? Is internal pressure felt by assessors? Do students expectations have an influence on how the assessor assesses?

If assessors feel the pressure of the above, it could have a direct bearing on the quality and consistency of assessment.

5.3 Ways to ensure quality and consistency within the assessment framework

In order for quality and consistency to become an integral part of the fashion department, an assessment framework needs to be developed. The framework needs to encompass the elements that will ultimately deliver consistent quality assessment. The use of a common assessment framework within the fashion department will ensure that there is an improvement on quality and consistency. The BEAR assessment system has been chosen for this purpose. This framework includes the necessary foundations within the four building blocks to ensure quality and consistency of assessment. The system is a comprehensive, integrated system for assessing, interpreting, monitoring and responding to student performance. The BEAR assessment system has been designed with a set of tools with which to enable both teacher and learner to:

- Confidently assess performance on key elements and skills in the curriculum.
- Set standards for performance.
- Provide a valid track record of annual progression on the key elements.
- Provide the mechanisms for feedback and follow up (Wilson & Scalise, 2006).

The four building blocks and the manner in which they will assist the department to develop an assessment framework that delivers quality and consistency will be discussed below.

5.3.1 Planning

Palomba and Bantra (1999) posit that in order for assessment to succeed, planning thereof is vital (Palomba & Bantra, 1999). The information gathered from the interviews shows evidence that there is a lack of planning of assessment within the researched department. The evidence is that lecturers have a tendency to add assessment to the end of a teaching module rather than through it. The act of tacking assessment onto the end of a teaching module indicates there is no forethought to the assessment aspect of teaching. This lack of planning is confirmed in the response from S1L5 who says that lecturers tend to act independently and do what they think is right for their classes, drawing from their own experiences in the learning situation. This statement confirms that there is no departmental cohesion in terms of planning. Planning of assessment is important and as such is stipulated as a requirement of basic assessment procedure by SAQA.

SAQA attests that all assessments must follow the same basic procedure. This includes planning of the assessment with the learner, the conducting of the assessment and ultimately the feedback to the student (SAQA, 2001). SAQA further states that, when planning the assessment, the assessor must make choices of the assessment type, assessment instruments, activities, type and amount of evidence required (SAQA, 2001). The study has revealed that the department lacks in planning assessment and providing students with feedback. It also revealed that lecturers seemed to have limited knowledge of assessment types. The limited knowledge aspect speaks directly to lecturers not planning assessment. If a lecturer has a very limited and narrow-minded view of an element of teaching and learning, it will not be utilized as it should be by the lecturer. In this case, lecturers do not have adequate knowledge of assessment types, therefore their planning is lacking. This shortfall could be addressed by the implementation of the BAS building block one: construct maps. The BEAR assessment system building block one (construct maps) supports planning of assessment. The construct map indicates a thoroughly thought out and explored ordering of qualitatively different levels of performance focusing on one characteristic.

The construct map is a skeleton of the learning progression. It provides structure and form to the assessments that support a learning progression (Wilson, 2009). The aims of teaching are also specified when instructional practices are linked to the construct map. Wilson posits that a construct map is a model of how assessments can be included with instruction and accountability (Wilson, 2009). The typical student level of understanding can be represented in a construct map using general descriptions of what a student needs to accomplish in order to progress to the next level of understanding. Below is an example of a construct map devised for first year fashion students. This construct map is designed for three linked subjects (referred to in the BEAR assessment system as ‘constructs’). The construct map contains levels of development from notional, where the student has very limited knowledge, through to generalization, which indicates that the student has reached a higher level of knowledge within that construct.

Table 5.1: Proposed construct map for three constructs that are linked across the curriculum.

LEVELS	CREATIVE DESIGN	TECHNICAL SKILL	TEXTILES
GENERALIZATION	What new design details are you able to include in your skirt to make it unique?	Are you able to sew a skirt?	Can you use the fabric creatively in your design?
CONSTRUCTION	Are you able to combine a restricted number of design elements to design a skirt?	Are you proficient in sewing of samples that will help you in the final sewing of the skirt?	Are you able to match a suitable fabric to a garment type?
FORMULATION	Are you able to sketch the openings and design elements?	Are you able to operate machinery required to make a skirt?	Are you able to describe the different fabrics?
RECOGNITION	Can you describe and name various garment openings, and other design elements that might form part of a design?	Are you aware of the types of machinery involved in the making of a skirt?	Are you aware of the various types of fabric?
NOTIONS	What do you know about fashion design?	What do you know about sewing a garment?	What do you understand about fabric?

The above example shows three construct maps (each represented by a column) for part of the Fashion curriculum: Creative Design, Technical skill and Textiles. These are represented as headers ranging across the top of the table. On the left of the table is a column which indicates generic terms for each level of all three construct maps. The levels indicated are from lowest (notions) at the bottom of the table, through to highest (generation) at the top. Each cell of the table is an indication of how much expertise students should have gained in order to move up the table to the next level of expertise. Every level should be assessed before the student is able to move to the next level of expertise. Each of the generic terms is defined below.

The construct map needs to be read from the bottom up:

Notion: The student is asked to use prior knowledge in the teaching and learning setting.

Recognition: This block and linked row refer to knowledge of technical detail and the language of teaching and learning pertaining to fashion design

Formulation: The focus in the third row is on skills. The student must show generic skills already attained. These generic skills pertain to the use of teaching resources and general application of teaching and learning.

Construction: Practical application of attained skills is tested in the construction row. The skills referred to in this row are very specific. It is focused on the specialization students wish to attain through this qualification

Generalization: The final construct leads students to the world of work. Through their attainment of this last construct, they have to show evidence of all the previous constructs in their application. The integration of generic and specialized skills will lead to meaningful assessment.

Looking at this generic construct map, it is clear that assessment construction should be a process, starting from the very elementary, moving on to proof of skills clearly showing the qualitative development of the student as a student, as well as a prospective qualified employee.

The study confirmed that there was no uniformity in the construction of assessment tasks. It also confirmed that there was limited knowledge of various options of assessment types.

5.3.2 Constructing assessment tasks

Rowntree states that assessment in the education arena is intentional and of the essence (Rowntree, 1996). According to Rowntree, the assessor must plan and evaluate the assessment methods he/she will use in relation to the purpose he/she is pursuing. He further states that it is important for the assessor to keep in mind what sort of knowledge he/she is looking for and who will benefit from this particular knowledge being known (Rowntree, 1996).

In constructing an assessment, the assessor must apply criteria of educational relevance. This means that it is important for the assessor to match type of assessment with the content and style of the teaching and learning as experienced by the student (Rowntree, 1996). Further to applying criteria that are of educational relevance, the SAQA registered qualification document stipulates a set of outcomes that must be applied to and included in assessments. The study revealed that although some staff used this set of outcomes in the construction of their assessments, it was not widely used nor understood; therefore, the construct map (Figure 5.1) is not within the skills set of many lecturers.

Data from the study showed lecturers attempting assessment tasks as follows:

Table 5.2: Actual construct map for three constructs that are linked across the curriculum

LEVELS	CREATIVE DESIGN	TECHNICAL SKILL	TEXTILES
GENERALIZATION	What new design details are you able to include in your skirt to make it unique?	Are you able to sew a skirt?	Can you use the fabric creatively in your design?
CONSTRUCTION	Not applied	Not applied	Not applied
FORMULATION	Not applied	Not applied	Not applied
RECOGNITION	Not applied	Not applied	Not applied
NOTIONS	Not applied	Not applied	Not applied

The above example shows three construct maps (each represented by a column) for part of the Fashion curriculum: Creative Design, Technical skill and Textiles. These are represented as headers ranging across the top of the table. On the left of the table is a column which indicates generic terms for each level of all three construct maps. The levels indicated are from lowest (notions) at the bottom of the table, through to highest (generation) at the top. Each cell of the table is an indication of how much expertise students should have gained in order to move up the table to the next level of expertise. Every level should be assessed before the student is able to move to the next level of expertise. The study revealed that assessment was treated as add on at the end of a teaching module. The developmental aspect of student growth through assessment was lacking. The steps notion, recognition, formulation, and construction are not applied. The construct map above therefore shows only the generalization part being applied. Having alluded earlier to the possible lack in quality of the qualification, the fact that the ‘building blocks’ of the applied construct map are missing confirms the notion students need to be introduced into the learning area step by step, starting from explaining their prior knowledge to applying advanced skills. The applied construct map attests to the opposite, thus creating a huge gap in students' development and final application of skills. Their assessment output will be based on regurgitation since no academic development has taken place and no building up of a knowledge base has been achieved.

Now that clear gaps have been identified in the understanding and application of the assessment framework used by lecturers, let us turn our attention to the BEAR assessment system.

5.4 BEAR assessment system

The Bear assessment system is the theoretical framework on which this study is based. BEAR is an acronym for Berkley Evaluation and Assessment Research System.

The BEAR assessment system is described by Wilson and Scalise as an embedded assessment system. They expand this description further as being a comprehensive, integrated system for assessing, interpreting, monitoring and responding to student performance (Wilson & Scalise, 2006). The BEAR assessment system is an integrated approach that seeks to link meaningful interpretations of student work relative to the cognitive and developmental goals of the curriculum (Kennedy, 2005). The BEAR assessment system has been designed to include a set of tools which will enable the teacher and student to:

- Confidently assess performance on key elements and skills in the curriculum.
- Set standards for performance.
- Provide a valid track record of annual progression on the key elements.
- Provide the mechanisms for feedback and follow up (Wilson & Scalise, 2006).

When Wilson and Sloan designed the BEAR assessment system, they used four building blocks to underpin their design. The building blocks form a foundation of a technically sound, curriculum-embedded, classroom-based system of student assessment (Wilson & Sloan, 2000). The four building blocks used to construct quality assessment are: building block one – construct maps, building block two – items design, building block three – the outcome space, and building block four - the measurement model. These building blocks will be further expanded below.

5.4.1 Building block one: Construct maps

The first building block in BEAR assessment system is the construct map. The construct map is grounded in the principle that assessments are to be designed with a developmental view of student learning. The developmental approach is designed to focus on the process of learning with the emphasis on the individual's progress. The developmental approach entails planning for the developmental aspect of student knowledge and skills of a particular concept over a period of time, as opposed to making a single judgment at some final or significant point in time (Wilson & Carstensen, 2007). The construct map describes a range of qualitatively different levels of knowledge beginning at a low level and progressing to higher levels.

The construct map is made up of levels of understanding, ranging from low to higher levels. These levels should inform the assessor where to assess with the developmental view of student progress in mind. The construct map is the framework that the assessor can look to in order to embed his/her assessments into teaching and learning. However, from the data collected in the interviews it is evident that this planning stage is not catered for. There is no developmental aspect to assessment, and indeed assessment seems to be something to tack onto the end of a teaching module.

Once a construct map has been designed, the assessor is able to move onto the next building block, building block two – item design.

5.4.2 Building block two: Item design

The second of the BEAR assessment system building blocks is item design. This building block acts as a framework for designing assessment tasks, using a variety of assessment types that will not only show evidence of student learning, but also keep assessment aligned with the curriculum. Wilson and Sloan stress that the assessment should not drive the curriculum, but rather that the two, assessment and instruction should be in harmony - they 'drive one another' (Wilson & Sloan, 2000). The guiding principle of the item design is that assessment should be integrated into teaching (Kennedy, 2005). The link between assessment activities and curricular content allows for assessment results that can be used to improve teaching and learning activities in an ongoing process.

In the case of the researched university, it is evident that assessment and the curriculum are not in harmony. They are treated as independent entities with assessment being an add-on at the end of a teaching module. Building block two further advocates that a variety of assessment types should be used. This allows the assessor to garner from the students a range of skills and knowledge development. However, the interview respondents revealed that there is a lack of knowledge amongst the assessors as to various types of assessment.

5.4.3 Building block three: Outcomes space

The third BEAR assessment system building block is the outcome space. The outcome space provides a link between scores and student responses to an item design. Kennedy defines the outcome space as the detail in which qualitatively different levels of responses are associated with the construct map for a particular stimulus (Kennedy, 2005). This building block attests that teachers are to be the primary managers of assessment in the classroom. The collection of assessment data, in the form of scores, informs the teacher of the student knowledge at a given point in the task. Two issues pertaining to the teacher management and responsibility roles are, firstly, that teachers will utilize assessment to gain information which will serve as a guide in their teaching and learning process. Secondly, Tucker as cited in Wilson and Sloan, states that teacher professionalism and accountability are key to the collection and interpretation of student progress and performance (Wilson & Sloan, 2000).

The data collected from the interviews showed there was not a standard practice in place in order to allow assessors to track student progress. Some lecturers had devised their own method of keeping track of students, but mostly lecturers did not employ this practice. This speaks to a lack of teacher management. If assessments are only given scores at the end of a task, and not through it, assessors will not know if there is a need to adapt their teaching and learning process.

5.4.4 Building block 4: Measurement models

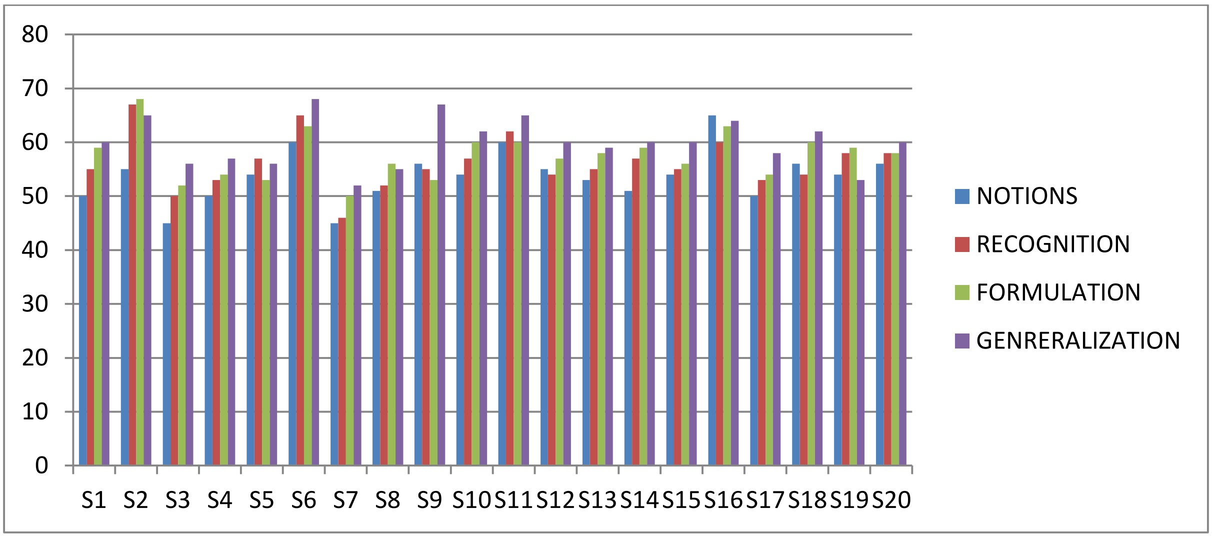
The principle underpinning this building block is good quality classroom assessment. The principle helps to ensure that information gained from classroom assessments is meaningful. The measurement model defines how inferences about student understandings are to be drawn from the scores (Draney, 2009). Wilson and Sloan devised this particular principle building block with the intention of giving classroom assessment integrity within the assessment community (Wilson & Sloan, 2000).

Ultimately the measurement model can be depicted by way of a graph which would show how students performed within a given construct map. The following is a fictional graph (graph 5.1) that depicts how each student has performed within the specific construct map as depicted in rubric 5.1. The graph data is derived from the scores obtained by the student as he/she works through the construct map from the notions phase escalating to the generalization phase. Twenty student scores are captured and are noted as S1 being the first student on the class list through to S20 being the last student on the class list.

Rubric 5.1: Student scores (fictional) for task 1

STUDENT	NOTIONS	RECOGNITION	FORMULATION	GENRERALIZATION
S1	50	55	59	60
S2	55	67	68	65
S3	45	50	52	56
S4	50	53	54	57
S5	54	57	53	56
S6	60	65	63	68
S7	45	46	50	52
S8	51	52	56	55
S9	56	55	53	67
S10	54	57	60	62
S11	60	62	60	65
S12	55	54	57	60
S13	53	55	58	59
S14	51	57	59	60
S15	54	55	56	60
S16	65	60	63	64
S17	50	53	54	58
S18	56	54	60	62
S19	54	58	59	53
S20	56	58	58	60

Graph 5.1: Bar chart of student scores (fictional) for task 1



The above graph shows individual students on the x axis. The marks obtained for each level of the construct map are shown on the y axis. The graph provides the assessor with a picture of how students have progressed through the learning module. Ideally, the graph should show progress from notion level to generalization level. This would show that the student has developed positively through the construct map. Student 1 on the graph is an example of positive progress. The graph provides the assessor with a picture of student development. By using the graphs in this manner, assessors are able to focus on specific needs of their students in the context of the developmental perspective of the curriculum (Kennedy, 2005).

The purpose of building block four - measurement models - is to equip assessors with a graphical picture of how students are performing through a construct. It was indicated through some interview respondents that a class list with scores on was used for this purpose. However, a class list with scores will not show a clear and concise picture of what is happening in the teaching and learning arena.

Assessments that are developed and designed within the bounds of the four building blocks that make up the BEAR assessment system framework work toward ensuring that reliable evidence is produced. From this evidence, reliable inferences about student proficiency can be drawn (Kennedy, 2005).

5.5 An assessment strategy framework for the National Diploma: Fashion at one Eastern Cape comprehensive university

The following table shows an assessment system flow using the Bear assessment system as a framework versus what the study has identified as gaps in the assessment flow of the National Diploma: Fashion at the university under study.

Table 5.3: Assessment flow

Assessment flow as indicated by respondents – current practice	**Assessment flow using BEAR assessment system as a theoretical framework**
Assessors focus on assessing at the end of a task and not through it. Hence no developmental assessment takes place.	Develop construct maps that clearly indicate a developmental plan of student growth.
Assessment and instruction are treated independently. Assessment is not embedded in teaching and learning. No variety of assessment types used.	Match classroom instruction and various types of assessment.
Lack of teacher classroom management in terms of the collection and collating of assessment scores. No system in place to aid in the tracking of student development.	Develop scoring guides that represent student responses to assessment tasks.
No graphical representation of student and class assessment results exists.	Design graphical representations of student and class assessment results.

It is clear from the table that there are gaps in the current assessment flow that could be addressed by implementing the BEAR assessment system.

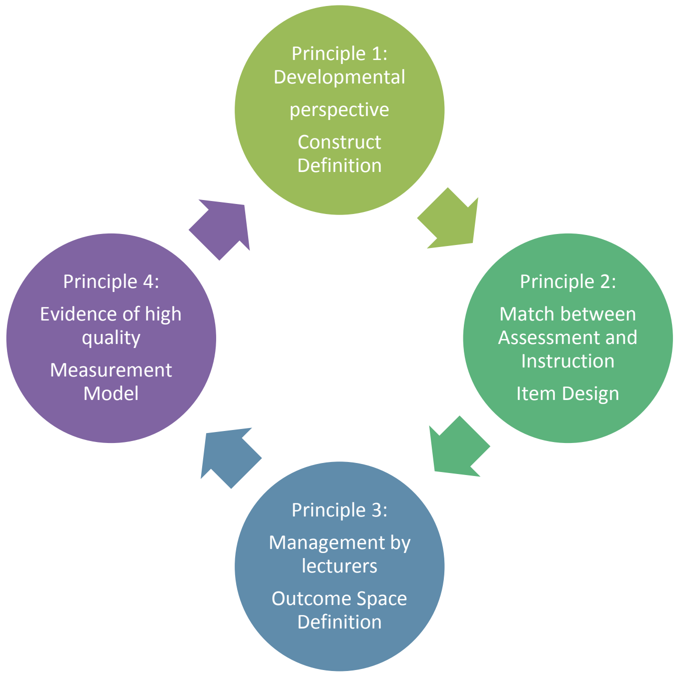


Figure 5.1: The flow of the building blocks and principles of the **BEAR assessment system**

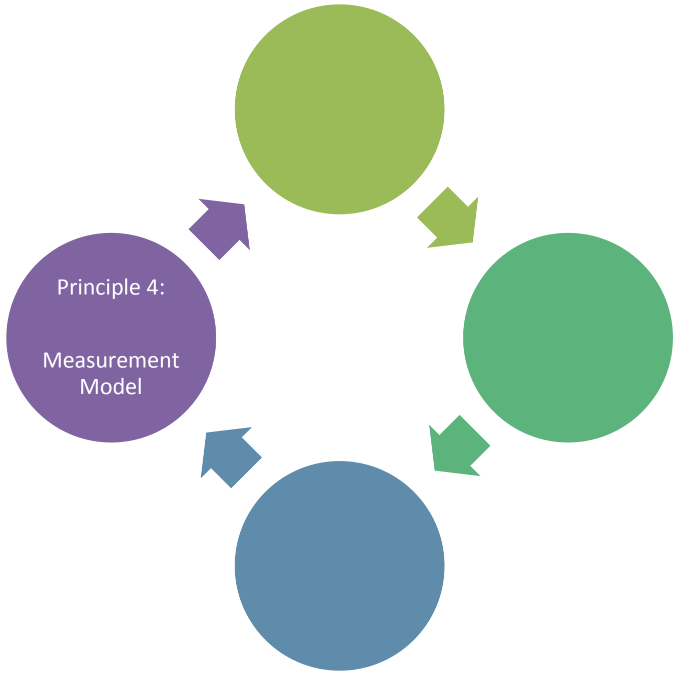


Figure 5.2 Adjusted BEAR assessment system reflecting current assessment system situation of National Diploma: Fashion at one Eastern Cape comprehensive university

The results of the study have shown that assessment within the researched programme National Diploma: Fashion at one Eastern Cape university is tacked onto the end of a teaching module. No assessment appears to take place during teaching. The adjusted BEAR assessment system for this programme therefore only makes use of building block four: Measurement models. Building blocks one, two and three have been left blank so as to indicate this lack of buy-in by lecturers in the preceding building blocks.

5.6 Proposed assessment strategy framework for National Diploma: Fashion at an Eastern Cape comprehensive university

This study, therefore, suggests the following adjustments to the BEAR assessment system. The adjustments are based on the data presented in chapter four and the following analysis thereof. The adjusted format and organisation will enable lecturers and students to gain from assessment practices, as well as establish a standardised framework. This is presented in figure 5.3 below.

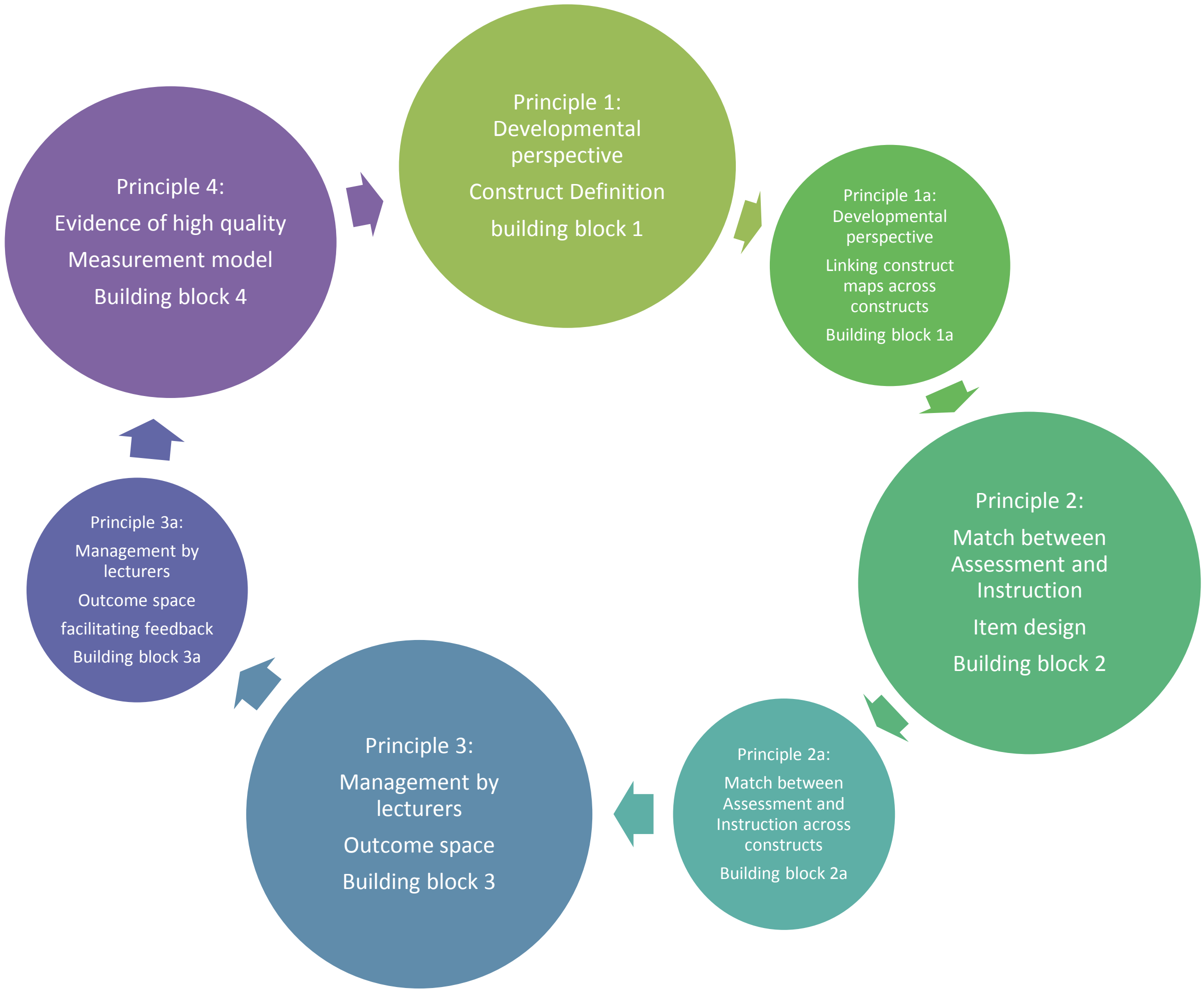


Figure 5.3 Adjusted building blocks and principles of the **BEAR assessment system**

Based on the original BEAR assessment system building blocks, as shown in figure 5.1, the study suggests that further sub--building blocks need to be added as support to the existing framework.

Building block one: construct map – This block advocates a developmental perspective on assessment of student achievement and growth. The study suggests a lack of communication between assessors in the department, with each assessor following his/her own assessment strategy. It was also clear from the study that assessors paid little or no attention to the developmental aspect of student growth and development. Assessment within the researched department is perceived to be largely a ‘tack on at the end’ approach to assessment. Building block one is to be supported by a sub building block 1a. Building block 1a is intended to encourage assessors across linked constructs to deliberate on the intended development of students and ensure that they, the assessors, are of one mind as to the developmental aspect of the student. Building block 1a is intended to provide the opportunity for the assessors to compare and link their developmental aspect of student growth and development strategy and to ensure that there is a link between the constructs. This then leads to building block two and 2a.

Building block two: item design - The item design relates to the match between classroom instruction and the various types of assessment. This building block acts as a framework for designing assessment tasks using a variety of assessment types that show evidence of student learning as well as keeping assessment aligned with curriculum. Building block two ensures that assessment is embedded in the teaching activity. It was noted in the study that assessors lacked a broad based knowledge of assessment types with most of the focus being on peer assessment. The study also determined that the approach of assessment is mostly a ‘tack on the end’ of a teaching module. An embedded approach is not practised by most of the participants in the study. The addition of building block 2a will afford the lecturers an opportunity to meet and together determine which types of assessment could be used over the span of the teaching and learning experience.

Building block three: outcome space - The outcome space includes a set of outcomes into which student performance is scored. It was noted in this study that outcomes, as noted in the SAQA document, were included by some staff, but were not used uniformly throughout the programme. Also noted in the study was the lack of feedback to students. Building block 3a has been introduced to fit after building block three. Building block 3a will assist in facilitating feedback to students before the final building block four is implemented.

Building block four: Measurement models – This is the last of the building blocks and will produce high quality evidence of assessment and assessment records should blocks one through 3a have been implemented and diligently followed by assessors.

5.7 Summary

The findings of this study confirmed that there is no common understanding between both lecturers and students as to what is meant by embedded assessment and continuous assessment. An emphasis is placed on a quantitative rather than a qualitative understanding of continuous assessment. The study further confirmed that formative assessment in the form of feedback is lacking. From stakeholders responses it is clear that summative assessment occurs without any formative assessment taking place. The lack of formative assessment leads to the conclusion that the student is not being developed, as lecturers are only concentrating on summative, and not valuing and embracing the developmental aspect of formative assessment. The study revealed that the department lacks in planning assessment, as well as lecturers having limited knowledge of assessment types. The limited knowledge of assessment types speaks directly to planning. The lack of planning and the use of a variety of assessment types is in conflict with SAQA requirements of assessment (SAQA, 2001).

The main challenge of this study was the evident disconnect between assessors and how they understood and implemented assessment. The BEAR assessment system was used as a theoretical framework for this study. The study revealed that the BEAR assessment system framework did not encompass enough building blocks to serve the Fashion programme adequately. Further sub building blocks were added to address and assist in identified problematic areas identified by the study.

Chapter six follows in which a summary of all chapters of the study will be presented. A final conclusion and recommendations for further study will be included.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6. 1 Introduction

Chapter six provides an overview of the study, focusing on the main concepts that were found. The first section of this chapter will provide a synopsis of previous chapters. This will be followed by conclusions and recommendations derived from the research study.

6.2 Main ideas of the study

The first chapter put the study in context and provided a background. A problem statement was formulated from which the research questions were framed. Three questions were tabled to inform the study as to the development of an assessment strategy framework. Chapter one set out the basic plan for the study and how the study would be conducted. Aims, benefits, methodology, limitations and significance of the study were discussed. A concise literature review was conducted to inform the researcher of the current trends regarding all facets of assessment at higher institutions, both nationally and internationally.

Chapter two provided an in-depth reading and recording of the literature in respect of assessment in education. Assessment within the international landscape was discussed followed by a discussion on assessment within the national landscape. Assessment in the broader sense was then deconstructed into forms of assessment, the process of assessment, assessment and accountability, quality of assessment, methods of assessment and finally types of assessments.

Chapter two also focused on the BEAR assessment system, which provided a theoretical framework for this study. The BEAR assessment system, as described by Wilson and Scalise, is a comprehensive, integrated system for assessing, interpreting, monitoring and responding to student performance (Wilson & Scalise, 2006).

The literature review of chapter two was followed by chapter three. Chapter three set out to describe the research methodology and design that were used in this study. The research design is essentially a map or blue print of how the research took shape. A case study was designed based on the research questions. The research orientation chosen for the study was qualitative. Qualitative research was defined and reasons for choosing a qualitative research were explained. Qualitative research was further explored and the option of an interpretive qualitative approach was deemed to be suitable for this study. An interpretive qualitative approach is learning how individuals experience and interact with their social world and the meaning it has for them (Merriam, 2002). In this way the researcher was able to interact with lecturers and students who are at the core of the assessment procedure.

Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews as well as document analysis. Both data collection methods were discussed and their appropriateness to the study justified.

Data collection methods, as discussed in chapter three, were implemented. The collected data was presented in chapter four. Chapter four set out the demographic details of the participants. The discussion that followed presented responses from the interview process as well as the bearing of the relevant documents used in the study in order to address the research questions.

The data described and presented in chapter four was discussed in depth in chapter five. The study confirmed that an assessment strategy framework was needed for the programme National Diploma: Fashion at one Eastern Cape comprehensive university. It was found that the assessment application as part of the curriculum delivery at the researched institution is clearly lacking. There is an emphasis on quantitative rather that qualitative understanding of continuous assessment. The lack of policy and information on continuous assessment within the university policy document allows staff and students to interpret continuous assessment to their level of understanding. The use of assessment as a mere technical exercise points to assessment being seen as a separate entity, removed from teaching and learning. The notion of assessment informing teaching and thus learning is invalid in this instance. There seems to be an understanding amongst some lecturers that summative assessment alone will fulfil the requirements of assessment at higher education level. The study confirmed that there was no uniformity in the construction of assessment tasks. It also confirmed that there was a limited knowledge of various options of assessment types.

Due to the findings of this study as established in chapter four and discussed in chapter five, the following conclusions are made towards the formation of an assessment strategy framework for the National Diploma: Fashion at an Eastern Cape university:

6.3 Conclusions

The findings of this study lead to the conclusion that there is no clear assessment framework currently in place for the National Diploma: Fashion at the university under study. The assessment methods currently in use are not fully understood and comprehended by lecturers or students. The assessment types are limited with little or no variety as to how assessment is practiced. Although continuous assessment is advocated in the department, a lack of understanding by lecturers and students as to the true practice of continuous assessment is evident. Much of the assessment is done at the end of a teaching module, rather than embedded in the teaching module. This means that assessment is done of learning, rather than for learning.

6.4 Potential contribution of the study

The study has highlighted assessment issues that are problematic within the current assessment system of the National Diploma: Fashion at the Eastern Cape comprehensive university studied. Assessment needs to be revisited and a strategic framework put in place. This study will contribute to the designing of such an assessment framework to be implemented at all universities offering the qualification National Diploma: Fashion.

6.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, as tabled in chapter four and discussed in chapter five, the following recommendations are made in order that an assessment strategy framework for the National Diploma: Fashion can be developed at the university under study and at other universities:

- An assessment strategy framework should be developed and revisited every three to four years for updating with input from all stakeholders.
- Lecturers attend regular assessment workshops at national level. This will empower and enlighten them in standardising their practice.

- To remain current with assessment trends, lecturers are encouraged to engage with their counterparts at other universities on the subject of assessment.

6.6 Issues for further research

The study recommends the following for further research:

A study could be conducted to investigate assessment types best suited for the National Diploma: Fashion.

A study could be undertaken to determine how assessment could be used as a motivation factor for student learning.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A	Certificate – ethical clearance
Appendix B	Certificate – editing
Appendix C	Letter of approval for study from departmental HOD
Appendix D	Interview schedules - staff
Appendix E	Interview schedules – students

Appendix A

University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE
REC-270710-028-RA Level 01

Certificate Reference Number:	VAN041SMCL01
Project title:	**Assessment strategy framework for the National Diploma: Fashion course at one Eastern Cape Comprehensive University**
Nature of Project:	Masters
Principal Researcher:	Lorian Joan McLaren
Supervisor:	Dr M Van Der Walt
Co-supervisor:	

On behalf of the University of Fort Hare's Research Ethics Committee (UREC) I hereby give ethical approval in respect of the undertakings contained in the above-mentioned project and research instrument(s). Should any other instruments be used, these require separate authorization. The Researcher may therefore commence with the research as from the date of this certificate, using the reference number indicated above.

Please note that the UREC must be informed immediately of

- Any material change in the conditions or undertakings mentioned in the document
- Any material breaches of ethical undertakings or events that impact upon the ethical conduct of the research

The Principal Researcher must report to the UREC in the prescribed format, where applicable, annually, and at the end of the project, in respect of ethical compliance.

Appendix B

8 Nahoon Valley Place

Nahoon Valley

East London

5241

26 May 2017

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I hereby confirm that I have edited the following master's thesis using the Windows 'Tracking' system to reflect my comments and suggested corrections for the student to action:

Assessment strategy framework for the National Diploma: Fashion Course at one Eastern Cape Comprehensive University by Lorian McLaren, a dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Education at the University of Fort Hare.

Brian Carlson (B.A., M.Ed.)
Professional Editor

Email: bcarlson521@gmail.com

Cell: 0834596647

17 June 2015

TO: H.O.D. Visual Arts Department

Re: Conducting Research within the Visual Arts, Fashion programme

I, Lorian McLaren am currently registered for Masters in Education at Fort Hare University. My research title is "Assessment strategy framework for a National Diploma Fashion course at one Eastern Cape University".

I hereby request permission to conduct interviews with staff members and students of the fashion programme. Attached are my research questions.

Yours sincerely

RMcLare.

Lorian McLaren

2015 -06- 17

Permission Granted:..(Mr P. Mbanya) HOD

Date: 18/06/15.

Appendix C

Appendix D

Semi structured interview questions: staff

Section A: Demographic knowledge (Staff)

L: What is your academic rank?

L: How many years have you had in lecturing in the programme of Fashion at this institution?

L: Have you lectured in any other fields besides fashion?

L: Do you have any previous experience in lecturing in a Higher Education Institution?

L: Do you have any formal training in assessment, for example assessors training course?

Section B: Specific knowledge – Staff

L: What is the current method of assessment employed in the fashion programme? (Exams or continuous assessment?)

L: What is your understanding of continuous assessment?

L: Is there, in your opinion, a structured approach to assessment within the fashion department? If yes, please elaborate. If no, please explain your answer.

L: What informs the construction of your assessment tasks? (How do you break down your assessment, what informs you?)

L: Do you embed your assessment in your activities and teaching or do you put it as a separate activity at the end?

L: If you were to improve the assessment practices in your class, how would you do this?

L: Outcomes – do you discuss the outcomes of tasks to be assessed with students before they embark on the task? Why? / Why not?

L: Through your assessment tasks, are you able to easily track and identify students' progress? Explain how you achieve this.

L: Do you make use of more than one method of assessment? Explain

L: Does the marking component of assessment have an influence on what type of assessment methods you use? (Examples would be multiple choice, fairly easy to capture as opposed to essay in theoretical subjects. Group marking, as opposed to individual marking)

L: This institution offers the programme Fashion on two sites. Should assessment take the same form at both sites? Why?

Appendix E

Semi structured interview questions: students

Section A: Demographic knowledge (Student)

L: What is your current level of study in the fashion programme?

L: How many years have you been a student in the fashion programme?

L: Have you studied any other fields before studying fashion? Explain.

Section B: Specific knowledge – Students

L: Do you think assessment tests knowledge OR understanding? (Probe)

L: What do you see as the value of assessment in your course? Is there a reason for assessment?

L: Do the current assessment practices enhance the quality of your learning? (Explain how)?

L: As a student, if you have to suggest an assessment practice made for the course, what will it be and why?

L: Are there any assessment practices currently used within the course, that you feel have no benefit?

L: As a student do you prefer theoretical assessment, for example, test or practical assessments, such as controlled projects which require you to show your knowledge and understanding through a practical component?

L: How important is feedback, especially time wise, and should the feedback be written or oral? Explain why.

L: The fashion programme makes use of continuous assessment. What is your understanding of continuous assessment?

L: This institution offers the programme Fashion on two sites. Should assessment take the same form at both sites? Why?

Appedix F

Interviewee: S1L1

Legend:

L – Interviewer

S1L1 - Interviewee

Section A: Demographic knowledge (Staff)

L: What is your academic rank?

> **S1L1:** *I am a Lecturer*

L: How many years have you had in lecturing in the programme of Fashion at this institution?

> **S1L1***: 17 years*

L: Have you lectured in any other fields besides fashion?

> **S1L1:** *No*

L: Do you have any previous experience in lecturing in a Higher Education Institution?

> **S1L1:** *No*

L: Do you have any formal training in assessment, for example assessors training course?

> ***S1L1:*** *I have completed my BTech in Education, which had an assessment component to it, so yes.*

Section B: Specific knowledge – Staff

L: What is the current method of assessment employed in the fashion programme? (Exams or continuous assessment?)

> **S1L1:** *We currently make use of continuous assessment.*

L: What is your understanding of continuous assessment?

S1L1: *Continuous assessment is not a set exam that happens once, it is, normally takes place in the form of different ways of assessing students and giving them more than one opportunity and enough feedback to correct any mistakes and therefore be able to improve on their capabilities and be able to pass and meet the requirements.*

L: Is there, in your opinion, a structured approach to assessment within the fashion department? If yes, please elaborate. If no, please explain your answer.

S1L1: *Um…… To me there are guidelines, let me put it that way, that we have in our prospectus, but whether each lecturer sticks to those guidelines I doubt… and they aren't implemented in a hard and fast rule. So no, I wouldn't say that we all follow the same manner of assessment.*

L: What informs the construction of your assessment tasks? (How do you break down your assessment, what informs you?)

S1L1: *Okay, when I decide to do a project let's say, and I need to first know what I am wanting students to learn out of that project. So I would base it on an outcomes. So that the student and I are both aware of what they need to do and what I need to look for in assessing that task. So I would say that outcomes in the form of a brief with their clear outcomes so that we have mutual understanding.*

L: Do you embed your assessment in your activities and teaching or do you put it as a separate activity at the end?

S1L1: *No, I definitely embed my assessment, because, as we do, say the first step and that will be explained to them, and they will go ahead and do that first step and do changes if they need to, …… so it's not something I would just add on at the end…. So you would get X amount at the end, so sorry for you, but you fail.*

L: If you were to improve the assessment practices in your class, how would you do this?

S1L1: *I think improvement of assessment practices needs more time to do the actual assessment or the project to be able to allow the assessment to be built in, in a continuous manner. Um… and* *also then I suppose space is required, but getting back to improving assessment in practices ….. if we had more time so that we could get to seeing each student and improving and helping them and assessing them during classes, because it takes a lot of time to get through each and every student if you have a group of say thirty students. So time wise you need to lengthen the hours that you need to see the students.*

L: Outcomes – do you discuss the outcomes of tasks to be assessed with students before they embark on the task? Why? / Why not?

S1L1: *Yes, definitely, because that forms part of my brief. So with every new project they will get a brief and clearly, their outcomes are clearly outlined in their brief so that they have a knowledge and understanding of where they need to put their emphasis for being able to get the required outcomes.*

L: Through your assessment tasks, are you able to easily track and identify students' progress? Explain how you achieve this.

S1L1: *Umm…. No. at the moment I can't really track and easily identify the progress. You can only really see it at the end of the task. Yes, you can see it during the task, you can see the weaker students and the stronger students. So obliviously you spend more time on the weaker ones, but there isn't a set way of identifying straight away.*

L: Do you make use of more than one method of assessment? Explain

S1L1: *Okay, I do try and make use of different kinds of assessment, but unfortunately at the moment I am only doing practical courses, so I can't really build many different forms of theory assignment assessments, so in other words, I have done theory in the past and to make up an assessment test I would use different forms as in a combination of multiple choice, with long explanation questions, with true and false questions. And then weight those sections of the test so that it not just pass the test because you have put all your on the easier section of the test more difficult questions less weighting on those. But even in practical assessment, sometimes your outcomes are vastly varied so you need to use different ways of assessing.*

L: Does the marking component of assessment have an influence on what type of assessment methods you use? (Examples would be multiple choice, fairly easy to capture as opposed to essay in theoretical subjects. Group marking, as opposed to individual marking)

> ***S1L1:*** *I would say generally, that that would or could affect someone's plan on how to assess but it shouldn't because you don't get a true reflection. If I was to set a task and do a group assignment on each and every task that I do, it's unfair because certain students have different strengths and weaknesses. So to always perform a group assignment you might find that you carrying a student through that is actually weak and they not just flying by on the marks of the group and not actually their own capabilities are showing. And also it's unfair on those that are the stronger students to carry through the weaker students. Yes group marking is needed as in our field of fashion, It is important to work in a group but you need to vary the assessment tasks, because, like I said there are pro's and con's to group marking, and it's unfair on both a weak or a poor student.*

L: This institution offers the programme Fashion on two sites. Should assessment take the same form at both sites? Why?

> ***S1L1****: Alright, um.. at the moment yes, we do offer the same programme in fashion and for that reason it should definitely assessment, definitely take the same form and the same sort of structure on how and when assessment takes place. Because it is unfair, if, let's just play devil's advocate, that the one site may have an easier form of assessment so students start choosing that site as a preference to do the course there, because the other site has got stricter rules. So I think that all forms of assessment need to be the same for both sites.*

Appendix G

Interviewee: S1S1

Legend:

L – Interviewer

S1S1 - Interviewee

Section A: Demographic knowledge (Student)

L: What is your current level of study in the fashion programme?

> ***S1S1:*** *I am… I am doing the third year level.*

L: How many years have you been a student in the fashion programme?

> ***S1S1:*** *This is my third year.*

L: Have you studied any other fields before studying fashion? Explain.

> ***S1S1:*** *Yes, I have. I have studied, umm information technology.*

Section B: Specific knowledge – Students

L: Do you think assessment tests knowledge OR understanding? (Probe)

> ***S1S1:*** *I think it tests the understanding rather than the knowledge. Ok, if I can make an example umm … with garment technology and technical drawings. When you doing technical drawings, your creatives, you designed a garment, right? Then you do a technical drawing, then now the understanding would be, you understand the design that you have created on your creative. And what you have put on your technical drawing does it correspond with the creative, then from your technical drawing, can you construct that into a full garment that can be worn, is it a … is it usable. So I think it does test your understanding of what you are doing, from your creative to technical drawing to finish.*

L: What do you see as the value of assessment in your course? Is there a reason for assessment?

> ***S1S1:*** *The reason for assessment….. I think it is basically for the school to show, or to exactly the, like what they are doing. The implementation of the programme,is it something that a student can use after the… after the complete the fashion design course.*

L: Do the current assessment practices enhance the quality of your learning? (Explain how)?

> ***S1S1:*** *Ummm … that is for me a yes and no answer. During the first year, I can say yes, because when you come umm… when you first register, it's your first time doing the course. Everything is blank and then in the first year it is to know …*
>
> *But then for me I compare the second level and the third year and I think I am at the same level as um.. Compared to the second, the previous year. When I looked at my work now, ja, I don't see any improvement. Um… because I think I do now in third year level thin here. Okay, I think this year, the final year I should be able to do most of the things by myself, but as a fashion student, a third year fashion student, I still go and ask for help in some areas. So I think for third year, you should be like more advanced. So if I can look at myself and compare myself with a second year student then I would feel that we would be on the same level.*

L: As a student, if you have to suggest an assessment practice made for the course, what will it be and why?

> ***S1S1:*** *Umm … I basically now, the way that the institution does its assessment as, I can say it's okay. We do get assessed like once a term. And, but um... if we would at least get assessed like twice as in if the first term we assessed with our local lecturers. The ones that are in the department here. And then the second one, on the same term, get the external ones to assess us. Umm … for example, if we get assessed by our lecturers here within our department and then they give us back our work and then we improve. And then the second assessment would be the one with the external moderators.*

L: Are there any assessment practices currently used within the course, that you feel have no benefit?

> ***S1S1:*** *I think every assessment is necessary. But then for me, its not working if you get assessed then you don't get your marks back as soon as possible. Umm … If you get assessed with let's say, let me give an example. Let's say you are assessed with your history, you get your marks. You only see your marks on the progress report, but then your assignment is not given back to you, where you can …. Where you can see where you have done wrong, where you should improve. Then it doesn't serve that purpose.*

L: As a student do you prefer theoretical assessment, for example, test or practical assessments, such as controlled projects which require you to show your knowledge and understanding through a practical component?

> ***S1S1:*** *I …. Because this is a, I think 90% (ninety percent) of the subject, of the course is umm …, it has to do with the practical. I think the practical is more relevant.*

L: How important is feedback, especially time wise, and should the feedback be written or oral? Explain why.

> ***S1S1:*** *It can be both. Because I believe when the feedback is written on the rubric, sometimes it's just write key… the key words. So you don't understand when you read it, what exactly is required from you. So if you can get like, the written one and orally, like one interview. Especially when you see that the student is behind and you can see that. Then that particular student needs a one on one interview so that he or she can understand.*

L: The fashion programme makes use of continuous assessment. What is your understanding of continuous assessment?

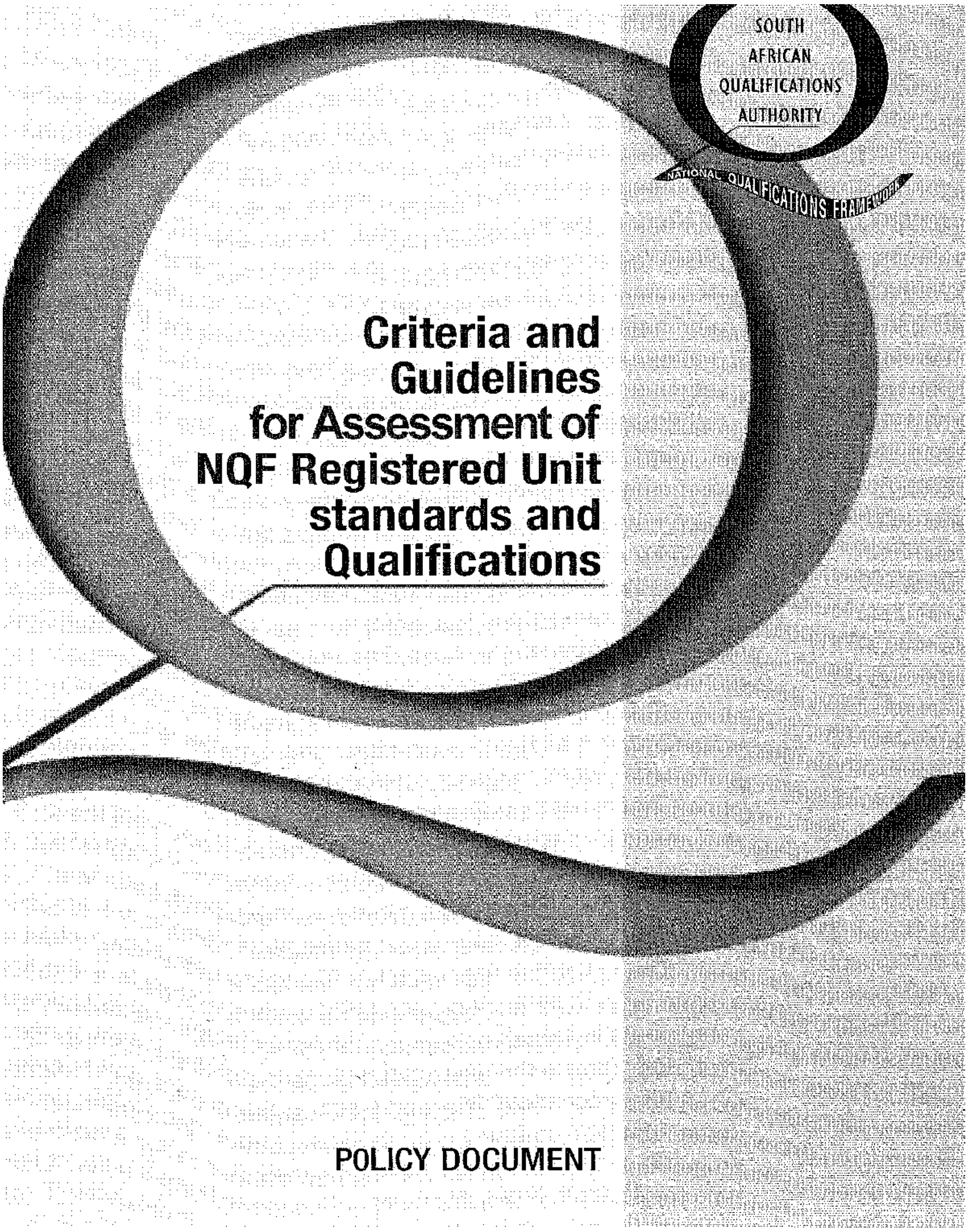
> ***S1S1:*** *Umm… I understand it in this way that we don't have, we don't actually say we are writing exams. Umm … it is continuous in this way that you get your marks on the first semester. Those marks can be changed at the end of the year, so it is continuous on that way. Like you get umm … a June report, where you say you get your June standard, like your definite progress marks. And then you get the separate ones for the end of the year. They get*

combined at the end of the year, and it becomes one mark. So that is my understanding.

L: This institution offers the programme Fashion on two sites. Should assessment take the same form at both sites? Why?

S1S1: *Are you asking if it should be on the same level? I think it should be. It um … it should be, it should be on the same. But somehow, I do feel it's not fair, because they have more umm … space and equipment for their students than here in East London. It's a very small institution that …. Sometimes we share classes. Um … sometimes not all of us fit in one class, because we are such a large number. And umm… another thing is that we are taught by one lecturer and we are so many of us and in some subjects we do need that little number of students in class. So I am not sure if at Ibika or Butterworth they, like the number in the classes… how much they are. But with us, it's like we don't get enough attention from one lecturer. So when we are being assessed the lecturer didn't see that the other one is falling behind, um … she is not getting what you are trying to teach them. So when they are ….. They are assessing one level, um… I don't know if you get what I am trying to say.*

Appendix H


SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment of NQF Registered Unit standards and Qualifications

POLICY DOCUMENT

SAQA

Guidelines for Integrated Assessment

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

SAQA

SAQA

SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

REGISTERED QUALIFICATION THAT HAS PASSED THE END DATE:

National Diploma: Fashion

SAQA QUAL ID	**QUALIFICATION TITLE**			
80162	National Diploma: Fashion			
ORIGINATOR				
Walter Sisulu University				
PRIMARY OR DELEGATED QUALITY ASSURANCE FUNCTIONARY			**NQF SUB-FRAMEWORK**	
CHE - Council on Higher Education			HEQSF - Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework	
QUALIFICATION TYPE	**FIELD**		**SUBFIELD**	
National Diploma	Field 02 - Culture and Arts		Design Studies	
ABET BAND	**MINIMUM CREDITS**	**PRE-2009 NQF LEVEL**	**NQF LEVEL**	**QUAL CLASS**
Undefined	360	Level 6	NQF Level 06	Regular-Provider-ELOAC
REGISTRATION STATUS		**SAQA DECISION NUMBER**	**REGISTRATION START DATE**	**REGISTRATION END DATE**
Passed the End Date - Status was "Reregistered"		SAQA 0695/12	2012-07-01	2014-12-31
LAST DATE FOR ENROLMENT		**LAST DATE FOR ACHIEVEMENT**		
2015-12-31		2019-12-31		

In all of the tables in this document, both the pre-2009 NQF Level and the NQF Level is shown. In the text (purpose statements, qualification rules, etc), any references to NQF Levels are to the pre-2009 levels unless specifically stated otherwise.

This qualification replaces:

Qual ID	Qualification Title	Pre-2009 NQF Level	NQF Level	Min Credits	Replacement Status
2203	National Diploma: Fashion	Level 6	Level TBA: Pre-2009 was L6	360	Complete

This qualification is replaced by:

Qual ID	Qualification Title	Pre-2009 NQF Level	NQF Level	Min Credits	Replacement Status
97040	Diploma in Fashion	Not Applicable	NQF Level 06	360	Complete

PURPOSE AND RATIONALE OF THE QUALIFICATION

A learner accredited with this qualification will be competent in analysing and monitoring design processes to meet market demands and adopt advanced production technology methods to ensure cost effectiveness in relation to cost and manufacturing.

LEARNING ASSUMED TO BE IN PLACE AND RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

- Higher Certificate / Diploma or equivalent.
- Mature age exemption.

Recognition of prior learning: