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ARTICLE

A MODEL FOR WHOLESALE AND RETAIL ASSESSMENT CENTRES IN REGULATED OCCUPATIONAL LEARNING IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

South Africa's new occupational and vocational qualifications require assessment centres with a national footprint to conduct national summative assessments which are convenient and cost effective for learners. This new assessment process requires specialised facilities, but few current facilities can provide these. The research project proposed a model which is able to serve the needs of the quality assurance body and industry and be appropriate to the retail sector occupational qualifications. A qualitative method was used, involving a literature review and secondary data analysis; small focus groups; semi-structured interviews; and follow-up workshops to peer review the findings. The participants included industry experts, education providers and quality assurance experts. Two models were identified and considered, namely: Model A, which involves private businesses that can be accredited to become assessment centres; and Model B, which uses Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges for all national assessments. The overall finding was that Model B is more suitable.

Keywords: assessment; wholesale and retail; occupational; vocational; assessment facility

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INTRODUCTION

Regulated learning has been associated with trades in many countries around the world. Whenever regulated learning is implemented there are specific rules that govern the way in which the assessment component will be handled. There is usually a national policy linked to the regulating or examination body, with very specific guidelines and requirements. Therefore, the assessment model and design has to use this as the principle requirement. In trades it is somewhat easier to have a "trade test", as this creates the mechanism for the formal evaluation of knowledge and skills.

However, there is a focus on extending the assessment of trades to that of occupations too, as is the case in South Africa. There is a formal system in place which will assess a candidate's occupational ability in terms of published national standards and outcomes. This validation of the candidate's skills, like that of trades, provides an opportunity for specific sectors to improve learning and development, as well as to ensure the integrity of the associated body of knowledge. There are many benefits to this system, such as, a learning pathway for new learners; and an opportunity for formal recognition of existing candidates already in the workplace.

An assessment model required for this sector would be very different from others, as there are many variables, from equipment to processes, which are in most cases business specific. The purpose of the current research, therefore, was to investigate various assessment centre models used internationally, and to identify and recommend the most appropriate model for the South African vocational and occupational qualification system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Assessment has been changing, and even more rapidly so in vocational learning. As Willis (1993, 384) notes: "Learning and assessment do not exist in a vacuum, yet there is a divide between the assessment and purpose of assessment, and the needs of the learning to be practical and valid."

It is indeed the purpose of validity to ensure that industry accepts learning as having met its objectives. "The needs are more complex in relation to employment, where validity requires links to the diverse needs of employers" (Black 2000, 411). It is these needs which must be satisfied in order for the assessment to be considered valid. If assessment does not meet the employer's needs, then it will be rejected and there will be a loss of faith in the current model of learning.

However, assessment models have been problematic and mired in controversy, from rote-based learning and assessment models, to outcomes-based assessment and its hybrid criterion-referenced assessment. As Black (2000 417) notes, "the consistency of standards over time has been an enduring point of interest and controversy".

As South Africa embarks on a new model in terms of the new Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) Occupational Certificate and Part Qualification

concept with its Assessment Specification, there is a need to ensure that the model that is used for assessment is seen as fit for the purpose, so that industry can buy into the new model: "Assessment should, therefore, clearly be integrated into the work of the classroom with clear links to personal and vocational concerns" (Willis 1993, 397).

The changing face of assessment has brought about new opportunities for using technology to assess and to limit the large use of paper in the old portfolio of evidence system. Desai (2006) has evaluated the success that institutions can have by using a paperless, web-based portfolio and digital recording, all of which would improve the perception of assessment by learners and industry.

Desai (2006, 11) notes about the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) process in the United Kingdom (UK):

> More emphasis is being placed on ways of trying to make the NVQ process either truly paper-free or significantly reduce the amount of paperwork. An emerging feature is the use of information technology (IT) to help record assessment evidence in electronic portfolios and to extend training opportunities in the workplace.

Therefore, the model to be developed for assessment should consider the changing methodologies which are used in assessment, but should still be aligned to national policy and consider the Occupational Certificates and Part Qualifications.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The exploratory research focused on the current and future situation and on perceptions with regard to assessment of vocational qualifications. It had an interest in meaning, perspective and understanding, focusing on process and combining inductive analysis with grounded theory. As a result, the standard methods of qualitative research were applied, including: observation, interviews, sampling, written documentation, questionnaires/surveys, and dealing with issues related to validity, ethics and assessment or evaluation of the research conducted.

Informants

Due to the nature of the research problem and outcomes sought, it was felt that a range of expert participants would be able to provide the bulk of relevant high-level inputs, rather than a broad-based quantitative survey providing relatively low-level inputs. Thus, the population included knowledgeable experts from a number of target groups, namely: the wholesale and retail industry; learning and assessment; QCTO practice and requirements; Wholesale and Retail Sector Education Training Authority (W&RSETA) trade and occupational qualifications; and Assessment Quality Partner

(AQP) management systems and procedures. The sample would be subjects with special expertise; thus, a key informant sampling method was selected. This is a judgemental sampling method which includes those who have knowledge about the problem.

An appropriate sample size for such a qualitative study is one that adequately answers the research question, as the object is not about generalisation but about understanding (Marshall 1996). A total of 36 participants were selected within the target groups collected over the three sites: 18 (50%) were from KwaZulu-Natal; 10 (28%) from Gauteng; and eight (22%) from the Western Cape. The participants were made up of: 16 (44%) skills development provider representatives; 16 (44%) industry representatives; and four (11%) quality assurance and Sector Education Training Authority (SETA) related personnel. Following Hennink, Hutter and Bailey's (2011) guide of a sample of up to 50 for depth interviews and 20 for focus groups, it was felt 36 was a sufficient sample size. This was confirmed by the fact that around this value, we started getting information saturation.

Data Collection Instruments

The initial phase of the research included a literature survey to consider current practice used both nationally and internationally. The findings from the research were then considered for selection of the most appropriate models for the target audience, the W&RSETA, as well as the regulatory authority, the QCTO. Based on this background, the research instrument was designed considering the target respondents, namely: skills development providers; industry and quality assurance; as well as W&RSETA related personnel. Therefore, the instruments needed to be generic enough to be able to collect data from all of these target groups, and a questionnaire was selected as the best research instrument. Semi-structured interviews were used to initially gather data to assist with instrument design. The instrument designed included open-ended questions to which respondents could provide information specifically contextualised to their situation.

Data Collection

The participants were invited to workshops to debate and reach consensus on key components of the research. Each model was presented to the participants using a PowerPoint presentation, in which the outline of the model was explained. The participants were then asked to complete an evaluation of the model; consider the advantages and disadvantages; consider the costs and resource requirements; and then select the model that they thought best for purposes of the W&RSETA. The questionnaires were collected and a discussion held with the respondents in a focus group format in order to understand their concerns, as well as to note best practice opportunities. In terms of data collected, 27 (75%) of the respondents completed all fields within the questionnaire; six (17%) partially completed the questionnaire; and three (8%) either did not participate or chose not to complete the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

The data was analysed through theme identification and review, as well as by liaison with a research panel that consisted of the research team, a project management team and a steering committee. A range of inputs was solicited from these key experts, and, where appropriate, more than one expert in any particular area was consulted to ensure objective interpretation of the findings, thus providing a degree of trustworthiness through "peer debriefing".

The data was collected from the questionnaires by taking each questionnaire and decomposing the data to create a simplified structure. The data was then reconstructed, classifying it according to categories to provide "new and broadening perspectives" (Lee 1999, 97). In this way the data was analysed using a thematic identifier looking for common trends and language use. The data was reviewed for themes, categories, patterns and relationships, before being organised via transcripts into tables and other thematic systems. Independent checks were put into place in which data was cross-referenced and audited to ensure that all the findings produced were error free. In addition, focus group input was collected, considering each of the discussions and key concerns. Notes of the discussions were collected and used to support the findings.

Ethics

The research was approved by the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) Ethics Committee prior to commencement. All the participants were voluntary, and they were advised both in writing and verbally that their informed consent to participate was required and that each participant was free to withdraw from participation at any time without any adverse consequences, in line with CPUT's ethical policy and procedure. Confidentiality and anonymity was offered to all participants and maintained through the use of a coded database. However, due to the nature and purpose of the research, as well as the methodology, most of the participants did not take up this option.

Trustworthiness of Research

In order to enhance the credibility of the research every attempt was made to identify, encourage and support the participation of key stakeholders and experts. Wherever possible organisational support and input were sought, and where necessary appropriate alternative individuals and/or organisations were identified and approached. The trustworthiness of the findings was further enhanced by data triangulation (literature, documentation, interviews and focus groups) and observer triangulation (three researchers participated in data collection), and by a final focus group used to peer review and approve the final findings, conclusions and recommendations.

SOUTH AFRICAN REGULATORY FRAMEWORK AND ASSOCIATED BODIES

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act (No. 67 of 2008) brought into being the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO), under the auspices of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), responsible for the development, implementation and quality control of learning interventions registered on the QCTO sub-framework of the NQF. The W&RSETA has developed, and will continue to develop, qualifications for trades and occupations in the wholesale and retail (and related) sectors, for registration on this sub-framework and for delivery in order to benefit individuals, organisations, communities and the country as a whole.

The framework for occupational qualifications in South Africa has changed from unit standard based learning to occupational profiles, which do not have pre-defined minimum credit requirements, but rather focus on the needs of the occupational profile, as per industry requirements and needs.

The new framework considers specific occupational profiles linked to a job. All learning outcomes and assessment criteria consider the knowledge and functional requirements of the job. This process is managed through a Development Quality Partner (DQP), which engages with industry, educators and quality assurance experts from the SETA. The new framework sees a split between the delivery of learning by skills development providers and a national assessment, designed, managed and centrally assessed by an AQP. QCTO policy and procedure requires independent, fair and objective assessment of learning interventions through an AQP. As with the DQP, the AQP operates in terms of a Service Level Agreement with the QCTO. The AQP is to be overseen by the relevant SETA; in the case of W&RSETA, the SETA itself is the AQP for various qualifications within the W&RSETA's mandate.

In the new framework, assessment takes place at each stage of the learning cycle: after training (formative); practical (formative); workplace based assessment (logbook as well as formative); and then the summative, which is a controlled summative assessment that is standardised, and which all learners complete in order to be awarded the Occupational Certificate.

The new framework has AQPs which administer the summative assessment component of the assessment cycle in a controlled external summative assessment administered nationally for all learners who qualify to meet the requirements of external summative assessment. Therefore, the AQP has to consider the development of assessment instruments, as well as the logistics and planning of a national summative assessment, in a controlled environment.

QCTO AQP Criteria and Guidelines

The QCTO, a relatively new quality assurance body in South Africa, is in the process of developing a policy to help facilitate the implementation of the new framework.

The current research offers an opportunity to interface with the QCTO to consider how the current policy defines the quality assurance expectations and how feedback from education providers, industry and the workplace and other stakeholders, who will be involved in the future assessment of learners, respond to it.

As there is no current practice against which to benchmark, the research had to rely on documentation released by the QCTO, which although identified as policy, will be revised and updated as more of the implementation model is defined. The limitation of the study, therefore, accepts that, should these policies, guidelines or documents change, the research would reflect the version that was originally used as part of the scope of the research project.

All definitions and explanations refer to documents sourced from the QCTO website as being the current versions of these documents. As these could subsequently change, in the References, the date the document was approved specifically, is noted as well as the date it was accessed for research purposes.

The current policy, in part, shapes the model as there is an expectation of what the quality assurance body foresees as being the requirements to be met by the various role-players in the summative assessments.

In order to develop a model it is important to understand the different terms as defined by the QCTO, namely what an AQP and an Accredited Assessment Centre are. In terms of the definitions below, they have been sourced from the criteria and guidelines, either in the definitions section or elsewhere, to help create a comprehensive understanding of what their roles are:

> **Assessment Quality Partner** – A body delegated by the QCTO to manage and coordinate the external integrated summative assessments of specified NQF registered occupational qualifications and part qualifications (QCTO 2013a, 4). In short, an AQP is an entity appointed by the QCTO and delegated to manage, on behalf of the QCTO, the assessment process in order to achieve the above objective. (QCTO 2013a, 5)

> **Accredited Assessment Centre** – A centre accredited by the QCTO for the purpose of conducting external integrated summative assessments for specified NQF registered occupational qualifications and part qualifications. (QCTO 2013a, 4)

Therefore, it is noted that the AQP fulfils the function which determines the "Assessment centre accreditation/de-accreditation, and assessment site approval/de-approval" (QCTO 2013a, 11).

In addition, the AQP and its associated assessment system should meet the principles and values of the QCTO, namely:

- be fair, reliable, valid, ethical and transparent;
- be consistent across time, place, role players and respond to a non-sectoral demand-led model;

- use methodologies that are fit-for-purpose and reflect a consistent level of higher cognitive challenge;
- avoid tendencies of exclusivity;
- adhere to the QCTO values which show:
    - □ innovation and excellence
    - □ empowerment and recognition
    - □ respect and dignity
    - □ ethics and integrity
    - □ ownership and accountability
    - □ authenticity. (QCTO 2013a, 6)

QCTO Policy on Accreditation of Assessment Centres

In terms of understanding the registration criteria that the assessment centre is required to meet, the entity must:

a. be a juristic person registered or established in terms of South African law;
b. have a valid tax clearance certificate issued by the South African Revenue Service if applicable;
c. have a suitable and compliant MIS in accordance with QCTO specifications;
d. be safe, secure and accessible to candidates;
e. meet the relevant standards for occupational health and safety;
f. have the required physical resources (e.g. venue, equipment, machinery or protective clothing) specified by the AQP to assess learners' competence regarding the occupational qualification or part qualification;
g. have appropriately qualified human resources as specified by the AQP; and
h. make provision for any other requirements specified for the relevant trade, occupational qualification or part qualification. (QCTO 2013b, 8)

It is criterion (f) which indicates the physical resource requirements for assessment purposes and the scope includes the venue, equipment and associated specialised clothing. Therefore, any assessment which requires a practical demonstration as part of the examination would need to have the resources on site for learners to use during the assessment. Therefore, an assessment centre would require specialised equipment, which would have its associated costs, and this brings into question what kind of model would be compatible with the requirements.

Using Existing International Models of Assessment Centres to Develop a South African One

City and Guilds – UK and international assessment centres

City and Guilds is a private institution in the UK which offers vocational qualifications. The model that is used combines both theoretical and practical assessment in the form of exit summative assessments, which could assess both theoretical and practical assessments. The City and Guilds assessment model is linked to the qualifications offered as part of multiple sector skills councils in the UK. The City and Guilds model is closely aligned to the requirements of the QCTO.

City and Guilds has produced various documents which list the process and procedure for accrediting, conducting and providing the administrative and data support for assessments, using a national, or in its case an international, exit summative assessment.

Amongst the external resources that it requires are: a quality systems consultant; an external verifier; a setting and marking examiner (City and Guilds 2008, 11–13); and an internal quality assurer (City and Guilds 2011, 27), for the initial phases of accreditation and assessment. In addition to these roles, the monitoring post-registration is conducted by a consultant to ensure that the assessment centre meets requirements (City and Guilds 2011, 23). In addition, where there is a practical component—like a workplace based assessment or practical assessment which is part of a summative assessment—then it is up to the assessment centre to manage this and to ensure the credibility of the assessment (City and Guilds 2008, 15). Currently, the assessment centres receive two external verifier visits a year, and should more be required, then a charge is levied (City and Guilds 2008, 48).

What should also be noted is that the City and Guilds model follows an assessment on demand model, which means that assessments can be ordered and delivered within a specific time period. There are no restrictions for national set dates which are predefined and published, allowing for continuous assessment throughout the year.

This model is comparable to the requirements noted in the *QCTO Policy on Accreditation of Assessment Centres* (QCTO 2013b). The AQP could fulfil similar functions, noting the costs associated with the process linked to this model. It would seem that there would need to be charges levied for the management of the quality assurance activity.

The concern about this model is that there is a reliance on centres wishing to register and, as this is a voluntary process and one linked to various requirements for continued compliance, it will be driven by the willingness of organisations to register as assessment centres. There could also be challenges if organisations choose not to register as assessment centres in certain regions, resulting in learners having to travel, at their cost, to undertake an assessment at an assessment centre closest to them, noting that there may be no assessment centre for many hundreds of kilometres. Thus, all things

considered, although this model is the best from a management and cost perspective, it could become exclusive.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh also offers a hybrid assessment centre model in which "it may be government or private" (Bangladesh Technical Education Board 2012, 11). Like the QCTO policy on assessment centres, the Bangladeshi model also requires that the assessment centres be able to show capacity to deliver the assessments; be independent legal bodies; be responsive to the demand of the learners; as well as use national assessment instruments.

Furthermore, according to the Bangladesh Technical Education Board (2012, 14), an assessment centre can be:

- A department within a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) that is separate from the teaching departments and which ensures that assessment is conducted by independent assessors. The assessors may be external to the RTO and contracted for the purpose of delivering assessment services or they could also be from other parts of the institution.
- A separate organisation that provides assessment services under contract to institutions or workplaces.
- The management centre of an association of assessors that provide assessment services over a particular area or industry.
- An organisation that services a particular industry with assessment services.

The variety of options available to become an assessment centre offers different partnerships which will ultimately serve the needs of the learners being assessed. In addition, the independence and autonomy of the assessment is the primary concern to ensure that quality assurance practice is maintained.

In order to become an accredited assessment centre, the applicant registers its interest with the regulatory body. It is then given a self-evaluation to complete in preparation for the submission of information as well as to understand what the requirements are to become an accredited assessment centre. Only once this is complete is the application submitted, after which an external assessment is conducted and, should all criteria be met, accreditation is awarded (Bangladesh Technical Education Board 2012, 15).

In summary, therefore, the two models considered in the research have distinctive differences. Model A, which is similar to the City and Guilds model, is an on-demand model in which any organisation can register to be an assessment centre, but the focus is on the desire of the assessment centre to register. Model B, which is similar to the Bangladeshi model, is a combination of public and private, as well as the workplace. In this model there is a need to provide multiple types of organisations as assessment centres. The current research considered how these models can best be implemented in the wholesale and retail sector in South Africa.

KEY FINDINGS

The research findings encompass the opinions of the various stakeholders involved with occupational learning. Industry and workplace ultimately are affected by any assessments and this will directly impact on the integrity of the assessments. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the impact that either model will have.

The findings are noted based on an overall evaluation of the model. The subjective nature of the respondents, as well as the fact that the data is opinion based, suggests that the information should be used to encourage future dialogue and not to take a determinant position. The findings are presented as the number of, and percentages of, participants who made up the focus groups and provided the data, which has been collated and classified as summary statements. Rather than summarise the various responses, the raw analysis is used to identify what role-players felt without trying to interpret it.

Model A

The initial evaluation, based on the 33 respondents, reflected the following opinions about the model:

- 10 respondents (29%) thought it was the simplest and easiest model to use as it was mostly outsourced by the AQP;
- four respondents (12%) thought it was costly to the learner and costly to run as an assessment centre if it was doing it for profit; and thought it was business friendly and could create business opportunities;
- three respondents (10%) thought it could create employment opportunities; and thought there could be a problem with consistency across the various assessment centres;
- two respondents (7%) thought there could be issues with distribution of assessments to the various centres.

Other opinions mentioned by single respondents (3%) included: that there would be limited opportunities to audit the assessment centres; thought it was subjective; thought it follows the trade test methodology; thought there were limited people with expertise to run an assessment centre; thought it was not QCTO friendly; thought private providers would not be able to get a fuel licence; and thought there would be better integrity in terms of learning and assessment.

After the initial evaluation of the model, the respondents were asked to consider the advantages and disadvantages of the model, identifying amongst other things, systems and procedures, management and maintenance frameworks and the costs.

Advantages

- 12 respondents (35%) thought resources were already available nationally;
- nine respondents (27%) thought it was accessible;
- eight respondents (24%) thought it was more efficient;
- two respondents (5%) thought it would create unbiased assessment;
- single respondents (3%) thought it could make the cost market-related as it would be private assessment centres wanting to offer the assessments; thought it was flexible; and thought there was a once off set up cost.

Disadvantages

- 12 respondents (35%) thought there would be increased cost for assessment and were concerned whether funding would be available from the W&RSETA for this;
- nine respondents (27%) thought the model was open to abuse and would require regular auditing from the AQP;
- five respondents (15%) thought it would not work for a number of organisations that would require their learners to take leave for assessments;
- three respondents (9%) thought, as it was for profit, it would be costly;
- two respondents (5%) thought it would have to be generic enough to meet the entire population who would be assessed using resources with which they were not familiar; and it was limited to bodies with resources;
- single respondents (3%) thought it was not small town friendly.

Model B

The respondents' initial evaluations of this model noted that:

- 20 respondents (60%) thought that it was more practical from an implementation perspective;
- four respondents (12%) thought that industry may prefer private assessment centres, whereas government/SETA/AQP may prefer public institutions;
- three respondents (9%) thought that standards might drop; and that in-house providers could apply;
- two respondents (5%) noted that funding already exists for SETAs and Technical Vocational Education and Training *(*TVET) colleges and this would be the more cost effective model.

After the initial evaluation of the model, the respondents were asked to consider the advantages and disadvantages of the model, identifying amongst other things, systems and procedures, management and maintenance frameworks and the costs.

Advantages

- eight respondents (24%) thought it was a more flexible model;
- seven respondents (20%) thought it was more acceptable for industry;
- six respondents (18%) thought there would be more venues available;
- five respondents (15%) thought that in-house would have their own technology and systems with which the learners would be familiar;
- four respondents (12%) thought that an outside assessment agency should assess in-house to ensure objectivity;
- three respondents (9%) thought it was cost-effective;
- single respondents (3%) thought that quality assurance would be more streamlined; and that the SETA would maintain control.

Disadvantages

- eight respondents (24%) were concerned that in-house should not assess its own learners;
- seven respondents (20%) thought it was more costly; and thought it would require more AQP involvement;
- five respondents (15%) were concerned that standards would be compromised;
- two respondents (7%) were concerned how assessment design would consider different kinds of equipment specific to certain workplaces; and were concerned with the currency of assessment instruments after initial implementation;
- single respondents (3%) were concerned with TVET colleges not having the subject matter expertise; were concerned with the idea of online assessments for the target learner; and were concerned that the TVET colleges could not provide all the practical requirements in terms of equipment and other resources.

DISCUSSION AND KEY CONSIDERATIONS

In terms of evaluating which model is more appropriate, 30 of the 33 respondents (91%) chose Model B when asked to give a summarising decision taking all the factors into account. Overall they felt that it is more suitable for both industry as well as assessment

centre provision. The three (9%) respondents who preferred Model A did so because they believed that each centre would be set up like a business and therefore would be more efficient and that not enough TVET (FET) colleges are located in rural areas. These findings, taken together with the opinions above, including the advantages and disadvantages, show that Model B was felt to be more suitable.

Using Model B, there is no reliance on private assessment centre provision, or on for-profit assessments. The TVET colleges could offer the use of their resources—which already exist—and the TVET colleges would also benefit financially from the use of their resources, but as it is not-for-profit, the cost of assessments would be reduced. There are TVET colleges with a large national footprint, which would ensure accessibility throughout the country, including rural areas; where there are no TVET colleges, private providers could offer support.

An issue which Model B does not completely address is the practical component of the assessment as it would require, by the AQP, more capacity building and investment of resources into the various TVET colleges' assessment centres. Due to the practical nature of some of the assessments, there could be public/private partnerships in which the TVET college partners with a workplace, and assesses the learners in their workplace, but using assessors from the assessment centre to ensure objectivity and the integrity of the assessment. Considering that assessments require items, like point of sale (POS) systems, service station forecourts, dispatch areas, and so on, this partnership would be beneficial.

Should in-house assessment be considered by the AQP, then it could consider assessments held at the workplace. However, the workplace would not be able to assess its own learners but could assess learners from other workplaces. There are various issues noted with this option, for example, a workplace might be unwilling to allow non-staff members onto its premises, and there is a consideration that learners from other sites may be subjectively, and thus unfairly, assessed.

An alternative could include the registration of mobile assessment centres. However for this to be feasible the Accreditation of Assessment Centre Policy of the QCTO would need to be amended, as each mobile site visit would need to be registered as a site of delivery, which would be cumbersome and require resources at the AQP to manage this. In addition, the policy notes that the assessment centres must have sufficient equipment and resources, which means there could not be a partnership between, for example, an institution that could offer the paper based assessment, and a workplace where learners could be assessed through a mobile external assessment centre, registered to be able to go and assess in real time in the workplace.

This consideration is critical as, for example, in the wholesale and retail sector, each of the POS systems is different and learners would be disadvantaged if they had to use alternative POS systems. This would also increase the cost as learners would first need to be trained on how to use the alternative POS system before the national assessment, if it was a generic system.

Secondly, since a national assessment centre model is to be implemented, it would be advantageous to consider the use of shared resources in setting up the model, which would benefit all AQPs. Current concerns include the capacity building requirements of setting up assessment centres across a national footprint, whereas multiple AQP's could use the same resources and share the costs of capacity building.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of any new assessment model needs to consider various factors, including the mechanisms of meeting the needs of a national assessment with a national footprint. In addition to this, the cost and resources, as well as capacity, of the assessment centres have to ensure a feasible cost-effective and streamlined process which will ensure that learners are able to be assessed with minimal influences.

Consideration of costs and resources are also directly linked to the type of model used, as, depending on which is more suitable to the AQP as well as the QCTO, there could be significant investment required upfront versus one in which there is minimal investment as private provision is responsible for its own capacity to deliver the assessments.

Research offers an opportunity to engage with industry and the workplace in considering a national assessment model. Since the consideration of educational management was not the key consideration of the current research, it is recommended that further research be undertaken to see how all role-players in the assessment, as well as all stakeholders, consider the feasibility of the model. There is also the possibility of engaging further with the quality assurance body about the needs of industry as well as other role-players to ensure improved implementation of the chosen model.

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