Assessment of Industrial Attachment: Issues and Concerns of Chinhoyi University of Technology's Undergraduate Degree Programme, Zimbabwe

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This article presents findings from an action research that explored industrial attachment supervision and assessment issues and concerns of CUT's (Chinhoyi University of Technology) undergraduate degree programme. The study was motivated by the observation that there is no research project contacted in order to determine the social and economic value of the programme objectives. The study used a cross-sectional survey technique to establish the strengths and weaknesses in the supervision and assessment practices of industrial attachment using 78 academic staff (including 13 industrial attachment coordinators) and 116 forth-year students drawn from six schools. They were required to fill in self-completion questionnaires containing closed and open-ended items. A t-test statistic for mean differences was used to confirm descriptive data at 5% level of significance and thematic generation was used to synthesize qualitative data. The study found that at $df = 14$, the calculated $t = 0.314$, one tailed test, critical $t = 1.761$ led to the conclusion that the supervision and assessment of industrial attachment was not competency-based. Authentic assessment of students on industrial attachment only takes place where the student is attached at credible organizations and is exposed practically to the broad categories of the specific field of study. The study raises several organizational weaknesses on the assessment process and techniques employed by academic and workplace supervisors. As such, authentic assessment of students on industrial attachment effectively takes place where the student is attached at credible organizations and only in cases where he/she is exposed practically to the broad categories of the specific field of study. The study raises several organizational weaknesses on the assessment process and techniques employed by both academic and workplace supervisors. As such, workplace assessment is not competency-based. Lecturers and students concurred that there is a need for attachment coordinators to communicate with and involve employers in the assessment process. The researchers recommend professional development of lecturers to handle competency-based assessments as footholds for improving connectivity between workplace and learning.

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Introduction and Background

Research has shown that one of the main challenges in developing quality workplace-based assessments is the provision, design, and development of a reliable assessment tool that incorporates a clear specification of standards, criteria, and scoring guides (Southgate et al., 2001; Baker et al., 1991). As such, Crossley et al. (2002) highlighted three potential threats to reliability of workplace-based assessments as inter-observer variation, intra-observer variation, and case specificity. Further, Wilkinson et al. (2002) is in favour of the use of portfolios as providing a good dossier of evidence collected overtime. The portfolio demonstrates students' education and practical achievements over the period of attachment. Concerns about assessors' incompetency and uncoordinated assessment procedures are also a potential threat to quality assurance management systems. In line with the concept of competence development practice, CUT (Chinhoyi University of Technology) uses continuous assessment approach in assessing students on industrial attachment. Continuous assessment is, however, not an activity solely done at particular times of the year to obtain information on students' knowledge or progress. Instead, it is ongoing (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998). For CUT, continuous assessment of industrial attachment and the implementation are prescribed by the specific school/institute regulations. The supervision and assessment programme is operationally articulated and implemented at the department level. The setback is that the assessment process is usually carried out with limited coordination at the department and institutional level (university and industry). It is not clear whether university lecturers and industry/workplace supervisors share a common understanding and/or meaning regarding the assessment process itself in terms of the programme objectives. This study, therefore, is a formative evaluation of the supervision and assessment of industrial attachment of the undergraduate degree programmes to establish the effectiveness of the assessment practice in developing competences as part of quality assurance initiatives by CUT.

It is assumed that when the regulations were crafted, the policy-makers had in mind a competence development framework as a measure of performance in vivo. Just as Beckett (2009) put it: "When educational and training policy-makers push on with competence structures, they typically have in mind an overriding concern with outcomes" (p. 70). As such assembling evidence of performance of how an outcome has been reached and how to arrive at pre-specified levels of competence development is, however, an important policy problem not only for CUT. Much as the assessment regulations may appear clear at face value, our sleepless assessment is stirred by something else. The students' technical competence is not in doubt, but the assessors' reliance on hitherto strange psychological experiences and personal views of the workplace supervisor's word and cursory observation of students' selected works is indeed curious. What is the assessor drawing upon to make a professional decision or judgment? Can one show how work performed to standards, is best conceptualized by making judgments based on workplace supervisor's word when the student is not part to the assessment discussant? This article investigates an approach used by CUT lecturers in assessing students on industrial attachment and tries to build upon what both lecturers as assessors and students consider as strengths and weaknesses in terms of developing competences. It examines the weaknesses of the industrial attachment supervision and assessment practice from the perspective of lecturers and students.

Contextual Analysis

Creating opportunities for students in meaningful learning environments, in which they can develop integrated and performance-oriented capabilities for handling professional core problems in practice is critical (Biemans, Wesselink, Gulikers, Schaafsma, Verstegen, & Mulder, 2009), so is improving connectivity between learning in school and learning in the workplace is also crucial (Wesselink et al., 2010). Industrial attachment supervision and assessment should be competence-based, as misalignment of the two is detrimental for learning (Gulikers et al., 2008). In Biemans et al.'s (2009) view, competences are being described in the assessment scheme or profile, supposedly included in prior learning courses and workplace programme via innovative educational methods and subsequently students need to be assessed to determine their sufficiently achieved required competences, also called summative assessments or "assessment of learning". Borrowing from Gulikers et al. (2008), more emphasis is placed on competence-based assessment which is formative in nature.

From Beckett (2009), it is also learnt that holistic conceptual underpinnings of competence development have much to do with what an individual can actually do at work. In Beckett's view, individuals come to understandings of how to go on by constructing these in the "hot action" of their daily work. Coming to understand something at and through one's work is very context-specific (Beckett, 2009, p. 72). Authentic or performance assessment provides students with the opportunity to engage with real-world assessment tasks that are relevant and meaningful, especially in professional context associated with the subject or discipline (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998; CDU (Charles Darwin University), 2009). Many alternative assessment approaches exist, but what is critical is for assessors to make all of them as authentic as possible (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998). These approaches include real problem-solving, designing and conducting experiments on real problems, creating videotapes, developing performances, doing actual fieldwork, creating exhibits, developing demonstrations, creating new products, formulating computer simulations, and creating portfolios and many others (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998, p. 338). Given this standpoint, it becomes prudent to question the social and economic value of the CUT's industrial attachment programme as it cannot be fully realized if built on an ineffective industrial assessment approach which may be defective, loosely implemented, uncoordinated, and limited in use in terms of assessment methods or techniques. It is, therefore argued, that the quality of industrial attachment supervision and assessment depends on the quality of assessment in terms of selecting suitable assessment techniques, involvement of industry among other factors and how the lecturers and workplace supervisors and/or assessors interpret and apply the contents of the assessment form itself. This also depends on the effectiveness of induction and training of assessors or pre-orientation training of assessors (both academic staff and workplace supervisors), and how the system is administered by the institutions as well as effective participation of employers.

Statement of the Problem

One of the shortcomings of using an assessment form where assessors have not been trained and coordinated is the peculiar characterization related to lack of knowledge in interpreting parts/sections of its contents (Chinyemba, Muzinda, & Nhemachena, 2010) and this may force lecturers to make superficial comments about students' performance and fail to deliver justice to the assessment process itself (Chinyemba & Bvekerwa, 2011; Chinyemba, 2011). Research findings have also shown that more often than not assessors lack adequate knowledge on the procedures of workplace-based assessments. The peculiarity of this is that industrial attachment supervision and assessment processes fall short in their relevance to industry, social and

labour market realities in terms of reflecting the specific competences that should be acquired during the attachment period. Their effectiveness in delivering quality assurance and utility value could be seen as suspect. The main question is: Is the supervision and assessment practices of industrial attachment by CUT guide collective action towards competence development and quality assurance mechanism of the university's departments in which academics share a common meaning of the assessment standards, criteria, and scoring guides with workplace supervisors regarding the assessment process itself?

Purpose and Objective of the Study

The study describes CUT lecturers' and students' views on the strength and weaknesses of industrial attachment supervision and assessment practices in terms of its contribution to competence development and how the programme guarantees quality of the products (trainees) with respect to the programme objectives. The specific objective was to establish strength and weakness of the industrial attachment supervision and assessment practices from the perspective of both lecturers and students in terms of its organization and implementation.

Research Question

What are the strengths and weaknesses regarding CUT's supervision and assessment of industrial attachment programme and which aspects of the supervision and assessment practices affect the quality of assessment?

The above research question stimulated the following hypotheses:

H_0: Supervision and assessment of student industrial attachment is not competence-based.

H_1: Supervision and assessment of student industrial attachment is competence-based.

Literature Review

Vaughan and Cameron (2009) observed that workplace-based assessment is overlooked as a research focus yet it is an important area because it directly impacts the training and learning that can take place. The purpose of workplace-based assessment is to assess performance in vivo (performance on-the-job) using samples of data gathered from the working practice of the trainee/attaché (Retrieved from http://www.faculty.londondeanery.ac.uk). Investigation on learning in practice using situations and experiences of learners (trainees) in real situations, classroom and in everyday life shows that everyday practice of a person in situation is intimately linked to the development of his/her actual competence (Jonnaert, Masciotra, Barrette, & Mane, 2007, p. 193). According to the Website (Retrieved from http://www.faculty.londondeanery.ac.uk) to understand what people (trainees) can do in a contextual vacuum, under perfect condition, it is necessary to appreciate what competencies they posses. Competence, therefore, refers to the specification of knowledge and skills and the application of that knowledge and skills within an occupation or industry level to a standard required in employment (CDU, 2009). The value addition of competence is that they have capabilities which consist of clusters of knowledge structures and cognition, interaction, affection, and necessary psychometric skills, attitudes, and values, which are necessary for carrying out tasks, solving problems, and effectively functioning in a certain profession, organization, position, and role (Mulder, 2001). Competencies are a means to performance (Biemans et al., 2009) as they are derived from professional practice (Wesselink, 2010) and only get meaning in a specific context when they are sufficiently specified (Mulder, Gulikers, Biemans, & Wesselink, 2009; Illeris, 2009; Beckett, 2009). Performance, therefore, indicates how people behave in real life,

on a day-to-day basis in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes displayed.

The Institute for Working Futures (2005) defines competence-based assessment as the process of collecting evidence and making judgments about whether competency has been achieved. It defines evidence as the information upon which an assessor uses in making a judgment of competency. This may include direct demonstration/observation, indirect demonstration, products, workplace documents, questions (written and oral), assignments, third party reports, self-assessment, simulation, and portfolios. As such, the Institute for Working Futures (2005) and CDU (2009) prescribed four key principles for workplace-based assessment as validity, reliability, fairness, and flexibility. These principles denote design values that evidence gathering, judgment, and reporting mechanisms must support. Within this framework, validity or sufficiency refers to whether assessor has enough evidence to make a judgment, while reliability denotes how the assessment process is able to provide basis for judging competence despite who, where, or when it is used (The Institute of Working Futures, 2005; Broadbent & Froidevaux, 2003). Broadbent and Froidevaux (2003) further pointed out that it is a good practice to adopt student-centred and workplace-centred approaches to collection of evidence, rather than rely on a "one-method-fits all" approach. The four principles of assessment are crucial in the conduct of assessment, in developing assessment tools, design, establishment, and management of the assessment process itself. A valid assessment, therefore, provides sufficient evidence of what it claims to assess, that is, evidence collected must be relevant to the activity, and demonstrates that the performance criteria have been met (CDU, 2009; Tuckman, 1988). To this end, a judgment made about competency against any of the units must then be based on sufficiently sampled evidence gathered on a number of occasions and in a range of contexts and using different methods focusing on the appropriate areas of competencies.

The second tool or unit of analysis to ensure good assessment practice is reliability of the process which refers to the consistency of the interpretation of evidence and assessment outcome (CDU, 2009). It is argued in this study that, to make reliable assessments, assessors must be competent enough in terms of their own assessment competencies, have the relevant technical competencies, or have access to a subject matter expert who can advise the assessor on the relevant vocational competencies at least to the level being assessed. Working on this assumption, the industrial attachment coordinators could be the individuals with such expertise or otherwise someone who is well-versed and/or at least trained in assessment. Emphasizing that the criteria for the judgment of competence must be stated clearly and adhered to and that the assessment practice needs to be monitored and reviewed to ensure consistency of judgment is fundamental.

The third principle of assessment, flexibility, applies to the process—not the standard, either on or off the job and at mutually convenient times and situations (CDU, 2009; AFEI (Australian Federation of Employers and Industries), 2011; Australian National Training Authority, 2006). The objective is to seek current competency in one or more of the units of competency in the assessment and workplace training by drawing on a number of methods that are appropriate to the context, task, and person. Finally, the fourth principle of assessment that of fairness should help the person being assessed understand clearly what is expected and which form the assessment will take (CDU, 2009). A fair assessment of competency should involve demonstration of competence in all dimensions of competency (task skills, task management skills, contingency management skills, job role/environment skills, and transferability). Miller's (1990) "pyramid of competence" is a useful tool of analysis for mapping assessment methods against the various tiers of the pyramid. Assessment should figure out as an integral part of educational planning to ensure quality controls mechanisms. Once the assessment process has been validated, considered reliable, flexible and fair, and the evidence considered sufficient enough,

then the professional decision on a candidate's competency should be a straightforward appraisal of evidence (Broadbent & Froidevaux, 2003).

Methodology

Research Design

The methodological framework was designed to examine the qualitative impact of the strengths and weaknesses of industrial attachment supervision and assessment practices of lecturers as assessors and students as trainee respectively in terms of the programme's contribution to competence development. An explorative descriptive case study research design of lecturers and students which Punch (2000, p. 38), Engel and Schutt (2005, p. 122), Kothari (2004, p. 113), and Ritchie and Lewis (2003, p. 51) describe was adopted. The aim was to collect both qualitative and quantitative data in order to gain insight into the supervision and assessment of industrial attachment programme in as far as it promotes competence development and quality of the assessment. The aim was to capitalize and exploit the advantages of using both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Magagula, 1996; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007).

Population Sample and Sampling

A total of 132 fourth-year students who had just returned from their industrial attachment together with 93 academic staff formed the sample frame for the study. The sample of academics included 15 industrial attachment coordinators and 78 lecturers who prior to this study had participated in the supervision and assessment of industrial attachment. Purposive sampling technique was used as it was considered ideal due to the small size of sample. Kothari (2004) advised the use of purposive sampling when the universe is small and if a known characteristic of it is to be studied intensively. In this case, both lecturers and students were considered to have substantially gained information pertaining to issues and concerns in the assessment of industrial attachment in terms of its organization and implementation from which inferences about its contribution to competence development could be inferred.

Data Collection, Instrumentation, and Procedure

Two separate semi-structured questionnaires (one for lecturers and one for students) containing closed and open-ended items were distributed by the researcher to the participants who in turn filled in the questionnaire at convenient times due to their busy schedules. This gave respondents the opportunity to freely express their views on paper by either ticking the appropriate boxes and/or filling in the blank spaces provided for on the questionnaire. A follow-up to collect the completed questionnaires was done within an interval of one week making it possible to achieve a questionnaire return rate of 85.9% for industrial attachment coordinators, 86.7% for lecturers, and 87.8% for students respectively.

Data Analysis

The SPSS (Social Package for Social Scientists) version 16.0 was used to compute the mean, mode, and *SD* (standard deviation) ratings for the sub-groups and the *t*-test statistic for differences between the means of industrial attachment coordinators and lecturers was used to verify the descriptive data. Additionally, a thematic generation frame work as recommended by Ritchie and Lewis (2003) was adopted in analyzing qualitative data. For quantitative data, a collapsed scale which Allen and Seaman (2007) define as a psychometric response scale was used to obtain participant's preferences or degree of agreement with closed statements. To this end, computed mean ratings of an item below 2.5 indicate agreement, between 2.5 and 3.4 indicate not sure (neutral),

and above 3.4 indicate disagreement.

Findings and Discussion

Perceived Strength of the Supervision and Assessment Activity

Industrial attachment coordinators and lecturers concurred that the strength of the programme lies were student is exposed practically and usually happens were the student is attached to an organization providing the broad categories for the subject. In such organizations, students are exposed to real life situations and both industry and university are "genuinely" involved in the supervision and assessment of the student's work. In recounting their own experiences of what they considered as the strength of assessment process, four of the 73 who responded to the item indicated that:

(1) The process is strong as it gives one (student) the pressure to learn new things;

(2) The process is effective as it allows supervisors and mentors to award marks;

(3) The assessment helps students to self-analyze their own processes;

(4) The assessment was accurate mainly because it was the people from industry who know how the student will be performing.

Eighteen other students indicated that assessment was somewhat good but had more reservations about the process describing it as an "event". Eleven others students indicated that the assessment was being done late. Thirteen were of the opinion that the assessment was generally good, but indicated that the frequency of assessment was low. They suggested that the number of assessment visits by university lecturers increased at least three times while 27 others described the supervision and assessment as "just" but a process in which lectures only fulfilled their duties.

The above responses illuminate the importance of the programme objectives in particularly were the student has been exposed practically in relevant areas in addition to accurate assessment. When an assessment is accepted by the student as helpful it means to a large extent it was carried out in a fair and flexible manner.

Concerns/Weaknesses of the Supervision and Assessment Activity

Academics' perspective. Industrial attachment coordinators and lecturers concurred that students faced challenges in getting attachment places and adversely affected timing in carrying out the supervision and assessment programme. Furthermore, industrial attachment coordinators agreed that the majority of employers were not concerned with assessment due to business imperatives. Academics were not clear whether workplace-based assessments between themselves and industry supervisor were well-coordinated. The computed results show that the industrial attachment coordinators were not sure with a mean of 2.75 ("Not sure") and a mode of 3 ("Not sure") to the statement that there is evidence of bad assessment due to uncoordinated industrial assessment process. Lecturers were agreeable with a mean rating of 1.47 ("Strongly agreeing") and a mode of 1 ("Strongly agreeing") that there is a need for industrial attachment coordinators to communicate with employer on the assessment process. However, lecturers were not sure with a mean of 2.68 ("Not sure"), a mode of 2 ("Agreeing"), and an *SD* of 1.025 ("Close") whether all aspects of the assessment form were adequately explained. Furthermore, lecturers were equally doubtful with a mean rating of 2.54 ("Not sure"), a mode of 2 ("Agreeing"), and an *SD* of 0.893 ("Almost close") whether workplace supervisors fulfilled their roles as mentors and expert assessors in balance.

Industrial attachment coordinators agreed with a mean rating of 1.38 ("Strongly agreeing"), a mode of 1 ("Strongly agreeing"), and an *SD* of 0.506 ("Close") to the statement that workplace supervision and

assessment could be improved by placement of students to accredited companies to allow for transferability of competencies. Lecturers also agreed to the same view point with a mean rating of 1.61 ("Agreeing"), a mode of 1 ("Strongly agreeing"), and an *SD* of 0.797 ("Almost close"). The two sub-groups were, however, not sure as to whether the current mode of assessment used by CUT was providing a full dossier of student's practical achievements collected over the attachment period. The specific mean ratings were 2.93 ("Not sure") and 2.69 ("Not sure") respectively and a mode of 2 ("Agreeing") in each case. While industrial attachment coordinators were agreeable with a mean of 2.38 ("Agreeing") and a mode of 2 ("Agreeing") to the statement that students on attachment utilized logbooks for self-reflection of work covered lecturers were not sure with a mean rating of 3.03 ("Not sure") and a mode of 2 ("Agreeing") on the contrary. The majority of lecturers indicated that students did not have the log books.

Differences in opinion between industrial attachment coordinators and lecturers could have been emanating from the fact that industrial attachment coordinators wanted to ring-fence their positions as coordinators while lecturers pointed out to what they experienced as reality on the ground. Challenges in securing industrial attachment place are a phenomenon not associated or limited to CUT students alone. Elsewhere in Zimbabwe, Chiweshe, Motsi, and Edziwa (2010) had similar findings with the UZ (University of Zimbabwe) B.Ed. technical degree programme. Nevertheless, this development should not be an excuse for allowing students to be attached at companies that did not provide relevant skills. The use of portfolio and logbook remains an underutilized approach as observed in this study, and yet is one such popular technique of alternative assessment which is not being used in the training programme. A logbook provides evidence of theoretical and practical experiences gained and as such prompts the student (trainee) through report writing to identify and describe the elements and tasks contained in their competence development frameworks in a logical and concise manner. This approach provides an essential mean for assessing and reviewing the progress of the student for correction and/or further development.

The hypotheses. H_0: Supervision and assessment of student's industrial attachment is not competency-based; H_1: Supervision and assessment of student's industrial attachment is competency-based.

These were tested using *t*-test statistic for differences between means of industrial attachment coordinators and lecturers. The computed results showed that *df* is14, the level of significance 0.05, with one tailed test, critical $t = 1.761$, and the calculated $t = 0.314$. Since $0.314 < 1.761$, researchers retained the null hypothesis and concluded that the supervision and assessment of industrial attachment is not competency-based.

To clarify how the development of competences is compromised through the execution of the assessment activity, the authors considered some of the extracts from academic staff responses in which they recounted their experiences during assessment activity. The authors begin with industrial attachment coordinators.

> Respondent 5: Industrial assessment procedures are sometimes limited by lack of ample time to observe and rate work related activities. In the end scoring can be done in a subjective manner.
> Respondent 2: Majority of workplace mentors lack assessment skills.
> Respondent 7: Not all students are doing relevant activities since they are finding it difficult to get attachment places.
> Respondent 13: The approach used sometimes provide for corruption. In some cases, the form is left with the industry supervisor who in-turn makes the student fill in the details.

Lecturers' response extracts. The lecturers' response extracts were as follows:

> Respondent 21: New lecturers are not inducted. No one has an emic view of the companies where students are attached.

> Respondent 22: Some workplace supervisors do not provide enough tangible evidence on student performance, some give false information to protect students on attachment.
>
> Respondent 30: Students do not have logbooks (productive reports) which must be signed daily by the supervisor.
>
> Respondent 37: Some students do not get attachment places in time and the period of assessment may not be sufficient to achieve intended objectives.
>
> Respondent 44: Students spend most of the time doing administrative work and not the actual industrial training they are supposed to do.
>
> Respondent 47: Rarely do lecturers have a look at work done by the student. Too much reliance on the supervisor word who in most cases do not provide correct information.

The narratives by industrial attachment coordinators are centered on the absence of a direct observation of student performing tasks, a lack of collective action between college and industry in sharing the contents of the marking scheme. From Groopman (2007), we learn that sensitivity to judgments-in-context is taken to be the hallmark of the successful lecturer. Further borrowing from Illeris (2009), this means lecturers need to read the moment (case specific) or the situation in general, for its particularities for opportunities are probably those most likely to identify niche of workplace practices.

Students' perspective. Students also agreed with a mean of 1.57 ("Agreeing") and a mode of 1 ("Strongly agreeing") that there is need for attachment coordinators to communicate with employers on the assessment process. However, the students were not sure with a mean rating of 3.18 ("Not sure") and a mode of 2 ("Agreeing") whether they had received adequate information on the assessment criteria and guidelines prior to the attachment period. Students raised the following concerns regarding the supervision and assessment activity:

(1) The student is not part of the assessment discussion between the academic and workplace supervisor;

(2) There is minimal involvement of the employer;

(3) Lecturers are not showing students their marks after assessment;

(4) The supervision and assessment activity is not standardized and there are no clear guidelines to assist workplace supervisors;

(5) Assessments by different lecturers sometimes cause confusion and misunderstanding of expectations;

(6) Assessment is done late and in many of the cases students have had to wait for assessment when the attachment period has gone out especially for those students deployed in areas far away from the college;

(7) There is poor coordination between academic supervisor and student before assessment;

(8) Employers have not been supplied with assessment guidelines on what the university wants covered by the student in the form of programmes;

(9) Students are not being given the opportunity to air their views and concerns with lecturers when they visited;

(10) Industry supervisors tend to give personal feelings and opinions when evaluating students.

The authors also provide in this section some of the extracts from students who recounted their experiences.

> Respondent 103: I think the assessment process is weak in that lecturers come to assess well into the attachment period and the internal assessors are not too sure about their role in the assessment.
>
> Respondent 105: There should be a mechanism to moderate the marks, i.e., given by industry supervisor because they have a negative attitude towards students. They see us as threat to their jobs. Some of them are under qualified.
>
> Respondent 109: Workplace supervisors are not really informed on the needs of student's requirements.
>
> Respondent 1: Can be biased because lecturers ask workplace supervisors how the student is performing, and these

views can be affected by factors such as conflicts that may have occurred between student and supervisor, and for ladies, if you refused a proposal you can be in trouble.

Respondent 2: There is no way to validate the comments given by mentors and employer as they may not want to give a bad report or not give a good one depending on how the mentor relates with the student.

Respondent 18: Assessors should be people who have undergone such a programme otherwise they are also fulfilling their duties. Assessments are not showing a true reflection of students' performance. They are influenced by relationship of the assessor and student.

Respondent 19: College supervisors must work closely with workplace supervisors and give advice on how to assess students.

Respondent 27: Needs to be more practical and less biased. Currently, I deem it in-appropriate and useless.

Respondent 36: It is effective to a great extent. However, the bias lies when the mentor does not give honest student assessment as they will just give students high marks depending on their personal relationship.

Respondent 37: The weakness is that the workplace supervisor kind of feels compelled to award "you" good marks in order to pass despite one's under performance. However, the fact that you are supervised compels you to perform well at work.

From Donkor, Nsoh, and Mitchual (2009, p. 3), it must be understood that visits by lecturers are for the purpose of ensuring that students are engaged in various aspects of work that are relevant to their occupational areas. The visits could minimize the chance that students are taken advantage of and used as cheap labour. Additionally, the visits offer lecturers the opportunity to monitor students' progress and meet with students and workplace staff, (especially supervisors), to discuss any problems of concern to any of the stakeholders. But on the basis of the recorded and transcribed responses and/or extracts with academic staff and students, the authors think assessment is not allowing students to receive feedback on their learning and performance. As such, it is not a developmental activity. CDU (2009) advised that there should be no hidden agendas in assessment and that the assessors should be prepared to justify to students the grades or scores they give them, and help students to work out how to improve. Additionally, assessment criteria need to be understandable, explicit, and public (CDU). A deep analysis of the responses extracts raises more questions in terms of the University's approach to assessment of industrial attachment with respect to programme objectives.

From Wolf and Reardon (1996), it is learnt that employing alternative or authentic forms of assessment requires serious gestation. It is critical for professional development that the conceptions lecturers and students have on (supervision and assessment of industrial attachment) are made explicit and visible (Brown, 2003; Borko, Mayfield, Marion, Flexes, & Cumbo, 1997). Assessors need to reconceptualise their idea of competence development as the underlying reason for student assessment. There is need to rethink what it means to know something, by redefining excellence, and rethinking their measurements habits. What criterion is being used for awarding good performance? Is the assessment able to gather data on the possibility of fostering students' competence development? Does the assessment approach contemplated or being used allow assessors to realize possible ways to get students into a competence development pattern regarding their workplace learning and behaviour? How valid or is there sufficient evidence to make a correct judgments on the supervisor's word, single approach and, how reliable is the judgments when the assessment process does not provide basis for judging the competence? What route should we as university and industry collectively take for competence development? A third aspect is to check whether our assessment is promoting transparency and openness. If we borrow from Glasser as cited in Ornstein and Hunkins (1998), the assessment employed should be such that the processes and products of learning are closely visible to the assessor. Undoubtedly, this allows for a fair treatment of the assessment. It is important to give the individual student to judge their own achievement as active participant of the assessment process by involving them in the feedback loop. This will make the process

more transparent and flexible as possible. Glasser as cited in Ornstein and Hunkins (1998) proposes "social situation assessment" as an integral part of group activity. This approach focuses on how well the student is working with others and adapts to group dynamics. Additionally, we should ask if the assessment activity is providing learning opportunities and overall programme goals. To this end, performance assessment should also focus on both scope and comprehensiveness (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998). Performance or authentic assessment as it may be called to address a wider range of learning and performance. By employing these criteria, the assessment becomes a continuous activity that is integral to the enactment of the industrial attachment programme objective as the student is experiencing it. It has already been stated that continuous assessment is not an activity solely done at particular times of the year to obtain information on the student's knowledge or progress. Instead "it is ongoing". As such, lecturers and students should continually generate questions as to how well things are being instructed and learned at the workplace. This only takes place when there is a dialogue and spirit of collective action between the parties in which students are active participants and genuine involvement of employers in the assessment process. In closing this issue, Illeris (2009) had the last words here:

> Competence development is not a production process that can be planned and directed from the outside. It is rather a personal and social endeavour to grow to deal with a complex world by taking in important and complex professional activities. If there is no room for the engagement and participation of those who are to develop their competences, there will hardly be any adequate competence development. (p. 98)

Recommendations

Professional development and lecturer readiness are critical if assessment is to improve connectivity between workplace and learning. Lecturers and workplace supervisor need to change their attitudes and approaches to supporting one more student's competence development environment. They need tools and training to adjust their assessment approaches to taking advantages of a transformative competence-based assessment as recommended approaches to workplace learning. Competence-based assessment standards must be adopted to ensure students to learn the critical competences to succeed in the global economy. This means having robust and balanced competence-based workplace assessment approaches and techniques that measure students' competences in specific contexts to meet national, regional, and international standards through flexible and adaptable means.

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