Issues in Assessment Practices at Botswana Private Tertiary Institutions as Perceived by Undergraduate Students

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ABSTRACT--- *This study investigated undergraduate students' perceptions on the issues pertaining to assessment practices at Botswana Private Tertiary Institutions. The purpose of the study was to investigate their perceptions on the issues relating to assessment practices. A survey research design was used for the study. A close- ended questionnaire, with four point Likert scale was developed regarding the issues on assessment practices and administered to a randomly selected five hundred (500) undergraduates from five (5) randomly selected tertiary institutions of higher Education in Botswana. Out of which four hundred and thirty six (436) undergraduate tertiary students responded to the questionnaire and their responses were coded, analysed using descriptive statistics (frequency distributions, mean, standard deviation of responses), exploratory factor analysis, independent t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA). Results revealed eight (8) main issues of assessment practices as perceived by Botswana Private Tertiary undergraduate students which were as follows: Limited assessment strategies used by lecturers; Inadequate feedback; Non-challenging quality of test items; Assessment to be structured for teaching and learning; Assessment by lecturers not fair and valid; Assessment items focuses more on low order cognitive questions; Timing of assessments not strategic; Marking of assessments by lecturers not consistent.*

The study further determined if gender and the different tertiary institutions had a significant influence on the undergraduate students' perceived issues on assessment practices at the different private tertiary universities. It was found that that gender and university of study had significant influence on students' perceptions with regard to some issues on assessment practices. Based on the findings, all these issues perceived by the undergraduate students would inform institutions of higher education in Botswana tertiary institutions. Recommendations and way forward were suggested to improve the assessment practices at Botswana private tertiary institutions.

Keywords--- assessment practices; perceptions; Botswana private tertiary institutions

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1. INTRODUCTION

Assessment is at the centre of all educational activities and every activity in any educational system ascertains the extent to which educational learning outcomes have been achieved and also the extent to which learners have mastered the subject matter. Adedoyin (2016), specified that ' Educators, through assessment can determine whether students are developing desired competencies and values, or whether the curriculum provides the vital knowledge and skills of the discipline, and whether students can integrate learning from individual courses into a complete educational experience that prepares them for future careers'. Assessment has played a fundamental role in educational policies in different institutions of learning especially tertiary institutions. The primary purpose, value and goals of assessment in any institution of learning are to improve students' learning and exit learning outcomes of students for future career or further educational professional development.

Definitions of assessment concepts by researchers.

Assessment concepts can be defined as the formation of judgements on the quality of students' achievement (Knight, 2006); source of informing students about their learning performance and how they can improve their learning (Carless, Joughin, & Mok, 2006; Gibbs & Simpson, 2004); a tool to determine the progress of student learning towards qualifications, and measures their performance in attaining graduate profiles (Banta & Associates (2002); the fundamentals for learning and teaching for getting students involved in learning Falchikov (2005); a judgement which can be justified according to specific weighted set goals, yielding either comparative or numerical ratings Taras (2005); any act of interpreting information about student performance, collected through any of a multitude of means or practices Brown (2004); a process of forming a judgment about the quality and extent of student achievement or performance, and therefore by inference a judgment about the learning that has taken place. Sadler (2005); the process of

gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; the process culminates when the assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning (Huba & Free, cited in Jones, 2007, p.69). The above authors can be seen to define assessment differently because of their different conceptions or perceptions towards assessment. On top of these purposes and perhaps more importantly, assessment can also be a fundamental tool to support student learning. Brown (2004) emphasises that assessment methods or tasks should promote and foster student learning rather than simply measure student learning. Similarly, Boud and Falchikov (2005) claim that assessment does not only grade and certify students but it also functions to support further learning. Boud (2000) further suggested that assessment should not only aim to fulfil the immediate goals of a course or program, but also build a foundation for students to adopt their own assessment within their academic life and for their lifetime.

With all these definitions on assessment concepts, assessment practices can serve two key purposes—summative and formative. For example, Taras and Brown's (2005) definition tends to imply a judgement of student performance, which is consistent with a summative purpose. On the contrary, Huba and Freed (2007) prefer assessment that supports further learning which is consistent with formative evaluation.

Major types of assessment concepts

There are two major types of assessment that have been identified by educationalist and researchers *Assessment for learning* and *Assessment of Learning.*

Assessment for learning can simply be explained as a continuous process in student learning which is always geared towards understanding and improving their learning outcomes and hence an assurance of providing quality education. Assessment for learning can also be defined as a formative strategy aimed to support and advance students in their learning, it involves teachers using evidence about students' knowledge, understanding and skills to inform their teaching, which usually occurs throughout the teaching and learning process to clarify student learning and understanding (Brown 2004).

Assessment of learning, this is an opportunity for students to demonstrate learning in a variety of ways at the end of a learning process (Angelo, 1995). This type of assessment of learning is summative in nature, i.e. its main purpose is to grade and certify students' achievement; it involves measuring what and how much students have learned, tied to specific learning outcomes which are themselves derived from the graduate profile. It involves making expected learning outcomes known to varied stakeholders of educational process. It also entails establishing appropriate criteria and standards for education, and systematically collecting, understanding, and interpreting evidence to ascertain if student's performance satisfies those expectations and criteria (Angelo, 1995). This resulting information would then be utilized to record, clarify, and enhance student performance (Angelo, 1995). When used in this manner, assessment serves as quality assurance of academic standards of higher education institution.

Assessment Practices in tertiary educational system:

Assessment practices are strategies implemented to validate learning outcomes in any educational institutions. In institutions of higher learning, assessment practices have been described by researchers as any process that can be used to appraise undergraduate students' knowledge, abilities or skills, comprehension, understanding of the concepts learnt (Falchikov 2005); vehicles for gathering information about students' achievements or behaviour about their learning outcomes (Marzano 2000), assessment implemented in a traditional way; revolving around examinations, assignments and other kinds of tests (Boud 2009); assessment in higher education that has traditionally focused on preparing students for acquisition of knowledge rather than participation in learning (Boud and Falchikov 2006).

Statement of the problem

Some researchers in education have suggested that assessment practices at tertiary institutions are failing to measure learning outcomes. Boud (2000) warned that some current assessment practices in tertiary education were unlikely to help prepare students for lifelong learning. Knight (2002) further claimed that summative assessment in higher education was in 'disarray'. In his view, current assessment practices have negative effects on students' learning due to an overemphasis on grades and learning outcomes, and it thus did not necessarily take learning processes into account. Educational processes and products of any system cannot be of a quality higher than that of the assessment processes in practice in the system. In other words, the quality of assessment bears on the quality of educational inputs, processes and products and hence on the quality of education enjoyed by the society. In recent years, educators, employers, policy makers in education and students in tertiary institutions in Botswana tertiary institutions have been questioning whether the current assessment practices in the educational system are able to measure undergraduate students' abilities and effective learning outcomes. Tertiary institutions in Botswana are still using the old system of assessing undergraduate

students, but with the advancement in technology and innovations for learning outcomes, undergraduate students ' abilities should not be assessed using assessment practices which involve recalling of knowledge using structured short essay questions. Undergraduate students' abilities should be assessed using high ordered thinking, analytical questions, which involves complex thinking and problem solving skills. There is now a need within tertiary institutions in Botswana to improve the assessment practices in order to meet the 21st century assessment demands for effective learning outcomes.

Studies into the assessment practices in tertiary education have mostly been undertaken in Western countries (see Fletcher, Meyer, Anderson, Johnston, & Rees, 2012; - 4 - McDowell, Wakelin, Montgomery, & King, 2011; Weurlander, Söderberge, Scheja, Hult, & Wernerson, 2012; Willis, 2011). A few studies investigating perceptions and experiences of lecturers and students have also been conducted in Asian tertiary education contexts (Brown & Wang, 2011; Fook & Sidhu 2011; Mussawy, 2009), though these studies may not be relevant to assessment practices in Botswana, they may be useful in providing a baseline for assessment practices in tertiary institutions.

Objectives of the study

The objectives for this study are as follows:

1. Identifying the issues related to assessment practices in Botswana Tertiary institutions as perceived by undergraduate students.

2. Determining whether there is a significant gender difference in the perceptions on issues regarding to assessment practices in tertiary institutions in Botswana.

3. Determining whether there is significant difference among the students' responses from the five (5) tertiary institutions sampled in their perceptions of issues regarding to assessment practices.

4. Investigate from the undergraduate students the best assessment practices perceived to meet their needs in the current educational system for effective learning outcomes.

Research Questions

1. What are the issues in assessment practices at Botswana Tertiary institutions as perceived by undergraduate students?

2. Is there a significant gender difference in the perceptions on issues regarding to assessment practices in tertiary institutions in Botswana?

3. Is there a significant difference among the students' responses from the five (5) tertiary institutions sampled in their perceptions of issues regarding to assessment practices.

4. What are the best assessment practices perceived by the undergraduate students to meet their needs in the current educational system for effective learning outcomes.

Research hypothesis

1. There is a significant difference with respect to gender of students in how they perceive assessment practices in tertiary intuitions in Botswana.

2. There is a significant difference with respect to the tertiary institution students are enrolled in and their perception on assessment practices in Botswana. .

Significance for the study.

As Botswana moves from the traditional methods of assessment that focus on examinations and tests towards outcome based assessment procedures, it is necessary to investigate issues in assessment as perceived by tertiary institution students. The findings of this study may help shed light on the practices on the ground and how best to improve practices to match global trends and standards.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Students' perceptions of assessment practices.

Wren, Sparrow, Northcote and Sharp (2009) used action research to investigate experiences, perceptions and beliefs of two cohorts of pre-service teachers about the assessment practices they encountered in their teacher education with Edith Cowan University, Australia. They used three main methods of data collection (self-directed focus groups, written responses, and online discussions). Students in five 4th year tutorial groups (122 students in total) volunteered to participate in self-directed student focus groups. Fifty-two (52) students from focus groups were invited to complete an individual short written response. Eight (8) third year students out of 100 completed online discussions about assessment beliefs. According to the findings, students were concerned with the fairness of assessment. Examples can be found in the weighting of assessments and marking procedures. These students perceived "feedback to be unjust in some cases" and could not always "trust that the markers had read the assignment carefully" (p.15). Students also perceived that summative purposes of assessment were less important and they were less supportive of the inclusion of assessments that judged their performance. Most of the students expressed a view that 'there should be no examinations'. Wren et al. (2009) stressed that negative perceptions and beliefs about assessment in university contexts held by many students may reflect problems of effective implementation in good practice and also reflect differences in thinking regarding the nature and purpose of assessment. Differing perceptions have been found between academics and students with regards to the importance of feedback in relation to student enhancement.

According to studies by Samuelowicz and Bain (2002) and Asghar (2012), academics acknowledged the value of feedback that supports student learning. On the other hand, according to Wren et al. (2009) students reported that feedback given was too brief and unlikely to help them grow. This showed that both academics and students place an importance of feedback; however, the effectiveness of feedback is perceived differently and seen as a challenge by students. Time constraints and numbers of students were seen as challenges in academic studies. Lecturers' knowledge was seen as another factor regarding the provision of effective feedback. As Wren et al.'s study focused on one educational course within a university along with only eight third year students out of a hundred participating in online discussion, the results of this study cannot be generalised to other disciplines.

On the issue of adequate feedback Ferguson (2011) under took a study on the importance of assessment feedback in relation to enhancing student learning. The study investigated perceptions of students about effective, quality feedback from their extensive experiences in higher education was undertaken in a major Australian university. This study used a questionnaire with a mix of open and closed questions. Participants in this study were from three different pre-service education programmes within the university, a four-year undergraduate programme (BEd), a one year-graduate programme (DipEd), and a two-year graduate programme (BTch). Four hundred and sixty-five (80%) graduate students and 101 (72%) undergraduate students out of a total sample of 750 completed the questionnaire voluntarily. This study found that a large number of students needed feedback containing constructive comments to give them confidence and motivation and most students reported that unclear or brief feedback could de- motivate their future learning. This finding was consistent with a study by Wren et al. (2009) showing that it was unhelpful of lecturers to give feedback through brief comments.

A study by Fernandes, Flores and Lima (2012) explored students' perceptions about assessment practices was conducted at a university located in Northern Portugal. It focused on project-led education (PLE) approaches and their impact on students' learning processes and outcomes. This qualitative case study used surveys based on a set of open questions and a focus group. Students involved in PLE experiences in a first-year engineering programme from the academic years 2005/2006 to 2007/2008 participated in this study. There were approximately 40 students enrolling in each academic year of this first-year engineering programme. Students from the academic years 2005/2006 and 2006/2007 participated in the individual survey and 22 students from the academic year 2007/2008 volunteered to participate in the focus group. This study carried out two stages of data collection. Surveys were carried out at the beginning and end of each PLE edition and the focus group was done after a period of six months. Findings from this study revealed key patterns in students' perspectives of learning and assessment, as well as the role of formative and summative assessment in PLE. Some students reported that assessment emphasised deep-level learning and critical learning and allowed them to understand and link course context to real-life situations. In relation to this Fernandes et al. (2012, p. 170) describes how "students were able to relate their work to broader and professional situations outside the academic world". However, according to the findings from their survey, many students still preferred traditional teaching and assessment practices in which students played a more passive role in the learning process.

Academics and students' perceptions about assessment practices

Maclellan (2001) conducted a survey research in one UK university. This study focused on the differences in perceptions and practices held by lecturers and third-year students in a BEd (Hons) Programme. The study used a 40-item

questionnaire to find lecturers' beliefs and students' experiences with the theory and practice of assessment. Eighty lecturers and 130 third-year undergraduates participated in this study. According to the findings, lecturers and students had different perspectives towards assessment practices. Lecturers were likely to adopt formative assessment for developmental purposes such as motivating students, diagnosing learning and evaluating teaching and this enabled further learning. Students, however, perceived that assessment was commonly summative and that ranking and grading their achievements was the dominant focus of the university. Students considered that assessment was not authentic in practice. In this study, Maclellan (2001) commented that "the staff view of assessment did not fully espouse the philosophy of the standards model, thereby presenting a somewhat confusing picture of assessment" (p.317). Maclellan pointed out that staff declared the use of formative purposes of assessment, but their actual practices of assessment were not consistent with a standards model. Maclellan's study used only a survey questionnaire to investigate lecturers' and students' beliefs and practices of assessment in a university. It can be argued that interviews or a focus group with the key stakeholders could have enabled a deeper understanding.

Gossmann (2008) conducted a case study investigating the perceptions of academic staff and students about the purposes of assessment and actual assessment practices. This study was undertaken in the Baccalaureus Education (BEd), Early Childhood Development, Foundation Phase Programme in the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria, South Africa. This study employed a survey questionnaire and follow-up interviews. Thirty academic staff and 114 third-year students completed the questionnaire, and three academic staff and three students participated in interviews. The key findings revealed that academic staff and students perceived the main purpose of assessment as 'developmental or formative'. According to the study, however, it was confirmed that the purpose of formative assessment was not evident in the practice of academic staff. Also, academic staff reported that class size was the major issue in implementing effective assessment practice. Students, on the other hand, reported that the main issues were the reliability of assessment. The results of this study were similar to Maclellan's (2001) study. While academic staff declared their focus on formative assessment, their practices of assessment did not follow the standards model. Gossmann (2008) argued the standards model is needed in tertiary education because it can be used to reflect what has been learnt in criterion-referenced assessment. The follow-up interviews of Gossmann's study invited only three academics and three students, so their views are not considered to represent the views of the faculty as the whole.

Mussawy (2009) undertook a study in three departments in an Afghanistan university. This study used mixed methods to explore students and teachers' perceptions of classroom assessment practices. Two hundred and three third-and fourth-year students completed the questionnaire (Students' Perception of Assessment Questionnaire). The students were from three departments (social science, natural science, and languages) at the Baghlan Higher Education Institution. Thirteen faculty lecturers drawn from the three departments and 28 students from third and fourth year volunteered for interviews. This study showed differences between the survey and interview findings. In the questionnaire students had more positive perceptions about assessment practices and their learning. In the interview, on the other hand, students reported that the current assessment practices limited their learning. The study also found that the current dynamics had a negative impact on assessment practice in this institute. Teachers and students, however, were aware of the importance of assessment in relation to student learning. In addition, this study revealed that while current assessment practices focused on exams, classroom discussion, classroom assignments, projects, and seminars, teachers were willing to include a combination of alternative approaches with traditional methods. In the study, faculty teachers recognised the weaknesses in the dominant traditional assessment approaches implemented in this institute. According to the findings, Mussawy (2009) suggested that alternative assessment approaches— performance-based assessment, portfolios, self-assessment and peer-assessment, cooperative group assessment, reflective journal writing, and scaffolded essays—were needed for this institute.

Fletcher, Meyer, Anderson, Johnston, & Rees (2012) investigated faculty and students' attitudes with regards to aspects of assessment was conducted at four tertiary institutions in New Zealand. This study employed parallel surveys of conceptions of assessment in which a six-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree was used to investigate the differences between faculties' and students' conceptions of assessment. Faculties teaching undergraduate programme and first year undergraduate students at four New Zealand tertiary institutes participated in this study. The tertiary institutions consisted of two universities, one polytechnic institute, and a wananga. This study used a convenience sample, so participation was voluntary and confidential. There were 877 faculty teaching staff (males=441; females=436) and 1,224 first year undergraduates (males=379; females=845) completed questionnaires. The findings of this study revealed that teaching staff perceived assessment as a tool to improve student learning and reflect their teaching practices, whereas students perceived assessment as irrelevant and unfair in the teaching and learning process.

In the Asian context, there are very few studies in the area of assessment practices in higher education. One study about assessment preferences, practices and alternative forms of assessment was conducted in a public university in Malaysia. Fook and Sidhu (2011) conducted this study to explore the perspectives of undergraduates, postgraduates and lecturers with regard to assessment preferences and practices. This study employed both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Two sets of questionnaires were used for faculty lecturers, and undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Follow-up interviews were also used to investigate assessment preferences and practices by lecturers, undergraduates, and postgraduates. Thirty lecturers, 27 postgraduates, and 42 undergraduates were selected to participate in this study. Three lecturers, three postgraduates and three undergraduates were drawn from the sample group participated in interviews. The aim of the interviews was to gain more insight into the assessment practices in higher education. Fook and Sidhu's study (2011) found that respondents preferred alternative assessment to traditional summative assessments. The findings highlighted the need for alternative assessment and practices of formative assessment which were deemed to transform knowledge among the students in higher education. This finding has also been confirmed by other studies carried out in the context of higher education (Wren et al., 2009; Asghar, 2012). With the empirical evidence from this study, Fook and Sidhu (2011, p. 70) highlighted that "institutions of higher learning need to revisit their assessment procedures to include more formative assessment procedures that would encourage more student participation". The study also suggested that issues of validity and reliability in formative assessment should be extensively considered because these two are the most important characteristics of good assessment criteria. The study concluded that the assessment tasks should range from comprehension to problem solving, explaining, drawing conclusions and critical thinking (Fook & Sidhu, 2011). It can be concluded that two key findings about academics and students with regard to assessment practices in higher education have emerged in the previous empirical studies. These studies have demonstrated that academics considered the purpose of assessment practices is to further student learning and support them to grow with provided formative feedback while students seemed to believe that the dominant focus of assessment in the institutes had a summative purpose. Importantly, students seemed to need more alternative assessment methods, authentic assessment tasks with timely and quality feedback to enhance their learning. Some students were in favour of traditional methods of assessment since they needed marks rather than the types of assessment that support their learning.

3. DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This is a quantitative research study which used a survey research design, in identifying the issues related to assessment practices at Botswana Private Tertiary Institutions as perceived by undergraduate students. The population of the study comprised of all private tertiary institutions in Botswana with campuses in the capital city called Gaborone. Out of the tertiary institutions in Botswana, a random sample of five (5) was selected and one hundred (100) undergraduates selected each from the identified private tertiary institutions. A questionnaire consisting of forty five (45) items was used to collect data. The questionnaire consisted of two sections A&B; Section A had questions on demographic information about the undergraduate students and Section B consisted of issues pertaining to assessment practices from literature review .The items will be on four (4) point Likert scale; strongly agree (SA= 4); agree (A=3); disagree (D=2); strongly disagree (SD=1).

Procedure for collecting data

The researcher employed two (2) research assistants who distributed the questionnaires and collected the undergraduate students' responses from the selected random sampled tertiary institutions.

Validity and reliability of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was validated using both face and content validity by experts in measurements and assessment of learning outcomes. Cronbach'a alpha was used to find the reliability of the questionnaire which was 0.869 for the forty five items.

Procedure for analysis

The responses from the questionnaire were coded, checked for missing responses, scored and subjected into SPSS software, and then analysed using descriptive (frequencies, means and standard deviations), factor analysis and inferential statistics (independent t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA).

4. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Table 1. Eigen values of the 8 issues after varimax rotation emerged

factors	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1.	7.646	16.992	16.992
2.	4.377	14.590	31.642
3.	4.137	13.789	45.152
4.	3.830	12.766	58.107
5.	3.247	10.824	68.482
6.	2.889	9.629	78.741
7.	2.744	9.148	87.916
8.	1.408	8.026	95.654

Factor analysis with principal components method and varimax rotation was used to summarise the variables into underlying sets of factors. Through factor analysis, variables can be reduced into factors, each reflecting an underlying property which is commonly shared by a group of variables (De Vaus, 2002). In order to determine the number of factors to be extracted, several rotation solutions were compared, taking into account the percentage of variance explained, the screw plot and the eigenvalue criterion. Finally, eight factors emerged accounting for approximate 95% of the variance, with eigenvalues ranging from 7.646 to 1.408. The final factor structure is shown in tables that follow:

Question 1
What are the issues in assessment practices in Botswana tertiary institutions as perceived by undergraduate students?

Issue 1: Limited assessment strategies used by lecturers.	Factor loadings	Number of students	Min	Max	Mean	Std deviation
Q 7 Lecturers use traditional assessment practices which is an inaccurate measure of learning.	.916	436	1	5	3.27	1.093
Q 42 Often students expressed concern that it was too easy to leave out large portions of the course material, when writing essays or taking exams, and still do well in terms of marks.	.842	436	1	5	3.07	1.058
Q 16 In completing the assignments, students can get away with not understanding and still get high marks.	.818	436	1	5	3.23	1.301
Q 23 Lecturers should use various assessment strategies to evaluate students' learning outcomes.						
Q 12 Lecturers' assignments fail to give very clear instructions about what students are expected to do.	.723	436	1	5	3.60	1.129
Q 31 Frequent use of assessment methods like self-assessment, peer assessment are not used by lecturers as part of assessment strategies in tertiary institutions of learning.						
	.684	436	1	5	3.58	1.112
	.619	436	1	5	3.04	1.079

Table 2

Issue 2 Inadequate feedback	Factor loadings	Number of students	Min	Max	Mean	Std deviation
Q 6 The feedback is late to students to go back over material covered earlier in the course.	.816	436	1	5	3.08	.961
Q 9 The feedback from lecturers fail to trigger students creative thinking and problem solving	.742	436	1	5	3.28	1.137
Q 3 There is hardly any feedback from lecturers on students' assignments.	.618	436	1	5	3.14	.967
Q 1 Quality and appropriateness of feedback not provided by lecturers.	.586	436	1	5	3.08	.961
Q 5 The feedback from lecturers does not help students with any subsequent assignments.						
Q 2 The feedback comes late and not useful for students.	.557	436	1	5	3.45	.989
	.555	436	1	5	3.06	.999

Table 3

Issue 3. Non challenging quality of test items	Factor loadings	Number of students	Min	Max	Mean	Std deviation
Q 15 The quality of question items in tests, assignments and examinations are not valid and non- related to what was taught by lecturers.	.771	436	1	5	2.62	1.084
Q 18 Lecturers' examination questions are not always very challenging.						
Q 36 Exams had little to do with the more challenging task of trying to make sense and understand their subject.	.619	436	1	5	3.47	1.086
Q22 During examinations, students can get away without understanding the concepts and still get good marks.	.595	436	1	5	3.06	1.042
	.548	436	1	5	2.94	1.318

Table 4

Issue4. Assessment to be structured for teaching and learning	Factor loadings	Number of students	Min	Max	Mean	Std deviation
Q 26 Assessment of students in tertiary institutions should only be a continuous process.	.757	436	1	5	3.28	1.141
Q 28 The ratio of continuous assessment CA to final examination FA in tertiary institutions of higher learning needs to be addressed.						
Q 45 There should be an increase in the variety and frequency of formative assessment practices to inform and modify teaching and learning outcomes.	.722	436	1	5	3.33	1.164
	.690	436	1	5	3.40	1.280

Table 5

Issue5: Assessment by lecturers not fair and valid	Factor loadings	Number of students	Min	Max	Mean	Std deviation
Q 43 Many students feel that openness and clarity were fundamental requirements of a fair and valid assessment system.	.716	436	1	5	3.27	1.175
Q 44 Students have some concerns about the reliability of self and peer assessment, even though students valued the activity.						
Q 35 Assessment in tertiary institutions are not very fair to students.	.691	436	1	5	3.15	1.036
Q 29 Various modes of assessment strategies should be incorporated during students' learning outcomes like portfolios and projects	.663	436	1	5	2.98	1.104
Q 37 Normal assessment methods in tertiary institutions have a severely detrimental effect on the learning process.	.639	436	1	5	3.34	1.081
Q 32 Diagnostic assessment should often be used in tertiary institutions because it helps students to learn than summative assessment modes.						
	.586	436	1	5	3.03	.951
	.508	436	1	5	3.09	1.054

Table 6

Issue 6: Assessment items focuses more on low order cognitive questions.	Factor loadings	Number	Min	Max	Mean	Std deviation
Q 11 Assignments by lecturers do not need students to analyse, synthesise and evaluate the questions.	.717	436	1	5	3.54	1.042
Q 14 Lecturers' assignments should be more challenging.	.691	436	1	5	3.39	1.116
Q 33 Assessment items in tertiary institutions are not of high order cognitive skills.						
	655	436	1	5	2.97	1.004

Table 7

Issue 7 Timing of assessments not strategic	Factor loadings	Number	Min	Max	Mean	Std deviation
Q 24 Lecturers should use various assessment strategies to evaluate students' learning outcomes.	.779	436	1	5	3.09	1.029
Q 25 Timing of lecturers' assessment of students learning outcomes are not always strategic and appropriate.	.672	436	1	5	2.97	1.009

Table 8

Issue 8: Marking of assessments by the lecturers not consistent.	Factor loadings	Number	Min	Max	Mean	Std deviation
Q 17. Lecturers' marking/ grading during assessment are not very consistent.	.751	436	1	5	3.08	.936

Following the factor analysis, eight issues emerged from include;

Limited assessment strategies used by lecturers: students felt that the strategies that are used to assess them are the traditional measures which may not fully assess students' capabilities. This is in line with the findings of Mussawy (2009) when students reported that the current assessment practices limited their learning.

Inadequate feedback: the findings reveal that students felt that feedback came late and was inadequate to facilitate further. These findings are consistent with the findings of Wren. Et al (2009) when they reported that students felt that feedback given was too brief and unlikely to help them grow. Ferguson (2011) also shared the same sentiments when he reported students needed feedback containing constructive comments to give them confidence and motivation for learning, adding that unclear or brief feedback could de-motivate future learning.

Non challenging quality of test items: students agreed that items are not challenging and that other aspects of their understanding are not measured by the assessment. This observation differs with the findings of Fernandes, Flores and Lima (2012) as they submit that students revealed that their assessment emphasised deep level learning and critical learning and allowed them to understand and link course content to real life situations. The variation could be due to varying contexts where the said universities are situated.

Assessment to be structured for teaching and learning: students revealed that assessment should be structured such that it helps inform and modify teaching and learning outcomes. The findings are in agreement with the findings of Wren. et al (2009) who reported that students expressed that there should be no final examinations as they perceived that summative assessment was less able to judge their performance holistically. Maclellan (2001) concurs with the same findings; students felt grading and ranking their achievements was the dominant focus of the university.

Assessment by lectures not fair and valid: most students felt that there was lack of clarity and openness as to what is required of them, resulting in unfair and invalid assessment. The findings concur with the findings of Maclellan (2001) which revealed that students considered assessment a practice that is not authentic. Fletcher, et al (2012) share the same sentiments where students perceived assessment as irrelevant and unfair in the teaching and learning process.

Assessment items focus on low order cognitive questions: students agreed that the assignments they were given, do not need them to analyse, synthesis or evaluate. Fook and Sidhu (2011) pointed out that assessment tasks should range from comprehension to problem solving, explaining, drawing conclusions and critical thinking.

Other issues that emerged were that the ***timing of assessments are not strategic*** and ***marking of assessments by the lecturers are not consistent***.

Question 2

Is there a significant gender difference in the perceptions of students on issues regarding assessment practices in Botswana tertiary institutions?

Issues on Assessment Practices.		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Q3.There is hardly any feedback from lecturers on students' assignments.	Equal variances assumed	11.755	.001	4.437	434	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			4.629	388.928	.000
Q6. The feedback is too late for students to go over materials covered earlier in the course.	Equal variances assumed	.509	.476	2.515	434	.012
	Equal variances not assumed			2.507	339.991	.013
Q11. Assignments from lecturers need students to analyse, synthesise and evaluate the questions.	Equal variances assumed	15.256	.000	2.539	434	.011
	Equal variances not assumed			2.698	406.426	.007
Q23. Lecturers should use various assessment strategies to evaluate students learning outcomes.	Equal variances assumed	3.493	.062	2.867	434	.004
	Equal variances not assumed			2.920	363.686	.004
Q25.Timing of lecturers assessment of students learning outcomes are always strategic and appropriate	Equal variances assumed	4.939	.027	2.055	434	.040
	Equal variances not assumed			2.151	392.368	.032
Q31.Frequent use of assessment methods like self assessment, peer assessment are used by lecturers as part of assessment strategies	Equal variances assumed	.000	.998	-2.037	434	.042
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.026	337.598	.044
Q45. There should be an increase in the variety and frequency of formative assessment practices to inform and modify teaching and learning outcomes.	Equal variances assumed	.012	.912	2.604	434	.010
	Equal variances not assumed			2.639	358.598	.009

Significant gender differences were observed in the following variables;

- .**There is hardly any feedback from lecturers on students' assignments** (.**000*****) equal variances cannot be assumed, because the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was .001, but there was a significant difference between male and female at t(4.629), p= .000 and degrees of freedom is 388.928.

- **The feedback is too late for students to go over materials covered earlier in the course. (.012***)** equal variances can be assumed, because the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was .476, but there was a significant difference between male and female at t(2.515), p= .012 and degrees of freedom is 434.

- **Assignments from lecturers need students to analyse, synthesise and evaluate the questions. (.007***)** equal variances cannot be assumed, because the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was .000, but there was a significant difference between male and female at t(2.698), p= .007 and degrees of freedom is 406.426.

- **Lecturers should use various assessment strategies to evaluate students learning outcomes**. **(.004***)** equal variances can be assumed, because the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was .062, but there was a significant difference between male and female at t(2.867), p= .004 and degrees of freedom is 434.

- **Timing of lecturers assessment of students learning outcomes are always strategic and appropriate (.032***),** equal variances cannot be assumed, because the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was .027, but there was a significant difference between male and female at t(2.151), p= .032 and degrees of freedom is 392.368.

- **Frequent use of assessment methods like self-assessment, peer assessment are used by lecturers as part of assessment strategies (.042*****). equal variances can be assumed, because the Levene's Test for Equality of

Variances was .998, but there was a significant difference between male and female at t(-2.037), p= .042 and degrees of freedom is 434.

- **There should be an increase in the variety and frequency of formative assessment practices to inform and modify teaching and learning outcomes (.010***),**.equal variances can be assumed, because the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was .912, but there was a significant difference between male and female at t(2.604), p= .010 and degrees of freedom is 434.

Question 3

Is there a significant difference among the students' responses from the five (5) tertiary institutions sampled in their perceptions of issues regarding to assessment practices.

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Q1.Quality and appropriateness of feedback not provided by lecturers.	Between Groups	18.890	4	4.722	5.310	.000
	Within Groups	382.453	430	.889		
	Total	401.343	434			
Q2. The feedback comes late and not useful for students.	Between Groups	19.450	4	4.862	5.048	.001
	Within Groups	414.196	430	.963		
	Total	433.646	434			
Q 29.Various modes of assessment strategies should be incorporated during students learning outcomes like portfolios and projects	Between Groups	11.365	4	2.841	2.472	.044
	Within Groups	494.281	430	1.149		
	Total	505.646	434			
Q 31.Frequent use of assessment methods like self -assessment, peer assessment are used by lecturers as part of assessment strategies	Between Groups	14.842	4	3.711	3.253	.012
	Within Groups	490.413	430	1.140		
	Total	505.255	434			

There were significant difference among the students' responses from the five (5) tertiary institutions sampled in their perceptions of issues regarding to assessment practices as follows:

- **Quality and appropriateness of feedback not provided by lecturers (p=.000***).** There was a statistically significant difference between the five (5) tertiary institutions sampled in their perceptions of issues regarding to assessment practices by one way ANOVA (F(4,430)=5.310, P=.000).

- **The feedback comes late and not useful for students (p= .001***)** There was a statistically significant difference between the five (5) tertiary institutions sampled in their perceptions of issues regarding to assessment practices by one way ANOVA (F(4,430)=5.048, P=.001).

- **Various modes of assessment strategies should be incorporated during students learning outcomes like portfolios and projects (p=.044***)** There was a statistically significant difference between the five (5) tertiary institutions sampled in their perceptions of issues regarding to assessment practices by one way ANOVA (F(4,430)=2.472, P=.044).

- **Frequent use of assessment methods like self -assessment, peer assessment are used by lecturers as part of assessment strategies (p=.012***)** There was a statistically significant difference between the five (5) tertiary institutions sampled in their perceptions of issues regarding to assessment practices by one way ANOVA (F(4,430)=3.253, P=.012).

Research question 4

What are the best assessment practices perceived by the undergraduate students to meet their needs in the current educational system for effective learning outcomes.

From the undergraduate students' responses the following can be deduced on the best assessment practices to meet their needs in the current educational system for effective learning outcomes:

- Assessment practices that is full of various activities which should be used regularly or at intervals to check student's progress or level of attainment with accompanying feedback in order to help them improve on their performances.

- Guided assessment practices like classroom presentations of students participation that help students gain confidence and motivation for better learning outcomes.

- Assessment practices that enable them to be involved in their own achievements, some researchers also suggested that self- assessment is highly considered to promote learning. (Bergh et al 2006).

- Peer group assessment practices should be put in place to improve students learning outcomes. This is also supported by O' Farrell (2011) when it was stressed that peer assessment is one of the tools in the evaluation of a student by other students.

- Assessment practices should involve monitoring of students' achievements, which should be paramount and meaningful than marks or grades at the end of learning outcomes.

5. CONCLUSION

Assessment is important to enhance learning and also to establish what students have learnt. It is evident from this study that students show concern over assessment practices that were adopted by lecturers or tertiary institutions. Needless to say, the overall goal of assessment should be promote learning rather than measure or quantify learning. Institutions should be seen to move towards new modes of assessment practices instead of traditional assessment practices.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Tertiary institutions to adopt "assessment for learning" strategies as it was deemed to enhance further learning.
2. Lecturers to broaden the scope of assessment so as to capture students' abilities.
3. Institutions of higher learning to make it easier for lecturers to give adequate feedback (Reduce class size/ workload).
4. Encourage lecturers to ask higher order cognitive questions.
5. Institutions of higher learning to have in-house training to enhance measurement skills in lecturers.
6. New assessment methods of strategies should be developed and implemented in higher education, for example: self and peer assessment, portfolio assessment, simulations,
7. Adequate internal and external moderation of test and examination papers.
8. Quality assurance measures to be put in place in terms of assessment practices.

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