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Emerging Perspectives in Teaching Practice External Examining in the University of Zimbabwe Scheme of Association

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Abstract

The study was undertaken to investigate critical issues surrounding Teaching Practice (TP) external assessment in the University of Zimbabwe Scheme of Association. The participants were college lecturers appointed as external assessors for the period 2007/ 2008. Data collection involved intensive elite interviews, analysis of TP reports by team leaders and regional coordinators as well as lesson crits spanning over two years. A questionnaire administered to 18 participants yielded both qualitative and quantitative data including assessors' demographics.

Findings indicated several emerging issues. The assessors were suitably qualified and experienced despite having undergone varied college-based induction processes in which the Department of Teacher Education (DTE) had little input. Central to TP assessment was the need for objectivity, a notion most assessors found difficult to pin down. This was compounded by several challenges in the field, which included logistics, economic, morality and bureaucratic systems. Despite all challenges, TP external assessment emerged as an indispensable aspect that needs to be maintained with improved resource input. Suggestions to improve the internal efficacy of the process are made in light of contemporary internal challenges in the Scheme of Association.

Introduction

The study focused on a range of questions surrounding the role of external assessors in the examination of practical teaching in teachers' colleges in Zimbabwe. The study was based on the observation that currently, not enough local empirical data was available on the general phenomenon of external assessment in teacher education although several teaching practice studies exist on issues concerning policies, students, subject matter, methods, classrooms and learning media etc (Zindi, 1996; Machingura, 2006; Siyakwazi & Nyawaranda, 1999; Hapanyengwi, 2003; Dengu. 1993; Mukorera, 2002; Chiromo, 1999; Moyo, 1997). Another element motivational to the study involved the search for appropriate critical insights into the TP external assessment process itself, and the foregrounding of their relevance to the problem of building models of teaching practice assessment appropriate for continuously changing local challenges and conditions (Mamvuto, 2009).

Theoretical Framework

Teaching practice (Section 1) is one of the four fundamental components in teacher preparation in Zimbabwe. The other three are Theory of Education (Section 2), Academic Study (Section 3) and Professional Studies (Section 4). The four however have a complementary relationship.

It is during teaching practice that students put into practice theories of instruction and learning acquired during the first residential phase of the teacher programme. Thew (1976: 32) in Turney (1977) conceptualises teaching practice as "… that body of professional experiences during which the student applies, tests and reconstructs the theory which he is evolving and during which he further develops his own competence as a teacher". It is therefore, considered the most important component in teacher development since the best way of learning to teach is actually to go into the classroom and teach.

Several local studies were carried out in the last decade on the desirability of teaching practice in teacher education (Zindi, 1996; Siyakwazi & Nyawaranda, 1995; Mkondo, 1999; Nyawaranda, 1993; Moyo, 1997; Chiromo, 1997). The studies however mainly focused on the practice of teaching by students and mentoring processes in schools with impressive results on how these could be enhanced. Zindi (1996) however found lack of reliability of assessments due to absence of discrete criteria for the assessment of practical teaching. In this respect, elsewhere, performance based assessment instruments have been used and were found to be fairly reliable (Shapiro & Sheehan, 1986; Wassermann & Eggert 1980; Woolerver 1986 cited in Zindi, 1996). These include the Shapiro Scale and the Modified Tuckman Form. Strategies such as the Evaluation model and the Feedback for Effective Teaching were also tried to improve student supervision. Other strategies include co-operative efforts between students and supervisors; frequent meetings among stakeholders; shared understandings of criteria between supervisors, schools and students; more time for students to reflect on their teaching; discussions; systematic observation and ethnographic enquiry by students in their practising schools. These have resulted in different teaching practice models being tried out.

The foregoing are primarily school and college based professional development activities. One critical aspect (external assessment) is done by the University of Zimbabwe through the Department of Teacher Education aimed at authenticating the internal supervision and assessment processes by colleges and schools. This is carried out by assessors externally appointed by the university. The moderation exercise is done using DTE criteria agreed upon

between the university and associate institutions. Despite the explicit criteria, variations in observations often occur as making the tacit professional knowledge explicit is difficult. Tsui (1998) and Zepeda and Ponticelli (1998) observe that assessment is the most stressful experience from a student's perspective. The student is asked to perform in public and his/ her authority is usurped by an assessor and is thus exposed and vulnerable. This means the whole assessment exercise is compounded by unique issues peculiar to student/ assessor relationship, which is part of the objectives of this study.

Research Questions

The research direction was elaborated through the following questions:

1. What are the basic characteristics of personnel appointed as external assessors?
2. How are external assessors appointed or prepared for their work in the field?
3. What do external assessors actually do in the field and what is expected of them?
4. What operational variations exist between and among internal and external assessors?
5. What are the assessors' views of their role and that of other stakeholders in the system and their attitudes to innovation in the assessment of TP?
6. What are the views of external assessors regarding the improvement of teaching practice assessment in the colleges and in the Scheme of Association?

The Research Methodology

The research was constructed on a qualitative approach in which issues of collaboration and subjective individual opinion remain paramount. This is in line with Nherera's definition in which he sees the role of qualitative analysis as emanating from its value in helping analysts "probe underlying issues and phenomena that are not readily apparent through quantitative analyses" (Nherera, 1999: vii). Qualitative designs have been very useful in illuminating similarly unquantifiable subjective and inter-subjective dimensions of classroom life when it is broadly conceived as a social microcosm, or as the basis for theorising on aspects of educational practice (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Guba & Lincoln, 1985). In Zimbabwe researchers have also achieved impressive results in the qualitative analysis of a number of specific problem areas in Mathematics (Clegghorn, Munetsi & Mtetwa, 1998), History (Chisaka, 2001), Special Education (Chiswanda, 1997) and Technical Education (Assami, 1999).

Since only a few local studies on teaching practice have captalized on the advantages offered by this paradigm, minimal qualitative data has been available on the external assessment dimension of the teaching practice phenomenon. The qualitative nature of this study was, therefore, intended as the best way to discover aspects of external assessment not generally accessible in the current literature and to examine the relevance for the operationalisation of teaching practice as a whole.

Sampling and Instrumentation

A purposively selected sample of external assessors from all fifteen participating colleges was used, making sure that each of the five regions (Mashonaland, Matebeleland, Masvingo, Manicaland, Midlands) was represented. In the selected sample what was more important was representation of each of the regions than the representation of each individual college because external assessment of TP in Zimbabwe is carried out on a regional team basis. This translated to a total of eighteen participants, from the register of those assessors appointed for the 2007/2008 examination period.

Instruments designed for the study were selected on the basis of their suitability for a qualitative analysis. The main data collection methods and related instruments were, therefore, as follows:

Individual interviews of the elite kind were carried out over a two-week period with five external assessors purposively selected from the overall sample of respondents. After negotiating the parameters of time, place and duration, the interviews were undertaken with the respondents. An audio-record of each of the elite interviews was made for transcription, coding and analysis at a later stage.

A content analysis schedule was constructed for the purpose of structuring and analysing information available in relevant external assessment documents such as external assessors' lesson critiques and team leaders' summative team reports. Basically, content analysis of documents is supposed to yield data, both routine and contextual data deemed useful in understanding the setting and the target group and the information derived is checked against other data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The methods of analysing content that were used include enumeration and generalisation of key terms, topics or phrases, categorisation of ideas and coding and ordering of various types (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

A twenty five item questionnaire was developed, pilot tested and delivered to the respondents through institutional channels. The questionnaire solicited for-

information seen as pertinent from an external assessor's point of view, including demographics, practices, problems and suggestions. These questionnaires were completed after assessors returned from the field. A 90% return rate was achieved.

Results

Analysis of the results was done in stages targeting certain sections of the research problem. The first part of the analysis looked at the characteristics of the assessors (demographics, academic and preparation). The second part looked at the data on assessors' evaluation of TP performance of different stakeholders and their self-evaluation on their own TP performance. The third part analyses some quantitative elements in the data and the suggestions assessors made regarding innovation and improvement of TP operations.

Gender and Age Profile of External Assessors

The gender balance amongst external assessors was skewed against women (only 16%). This statistic appears to be very simple, yet it reflects one of the tragic paradoxes in Zimbabwe teacher education where more than 68% of trained teaching staff at primary school level and 45% at secondary school level is female. These are produced within a national system of tertiary education, which enrolls more than 50% female students. Although tertiary education in Zimbabwe achieved a gender parity index of 0.60 (GPI) by 2005 (Kangai, 2005; UNESCO, 2005; UNESCO, 2005a) there is an indication of a dislocation between the substantive number of females in the system and their representation in strategic decision and policy-making levels such as TP external assessor appointments.

The average age of assessors in the study ranged between 41 and 57 years. Being an external assessor is a fairly senior administrative appointment and so one would expect such personnel to at least be in this given age range. This means colleges are more likely to appoint to this position staff members who have more advanced qualifications and experience than average. Such individuals are deemed more acceptable to the University on the basis that they are knowledgeable, objective and pragmatic in dealing with the many sensitive issues likely to arise out of the examination of student teachers in the field.

Academic Qualifications and Specialisation of External Assessors

The majority of external assessors (72%) had a first degree either in education or another cognate subject area, while 28% indicated that they had a second degree. The ratio was that of one Masters to about three Bachelors degrees, which seems

to reflect roughly the structure of academic power in education and with the other demographic factors above.

Experience of External Assessors
Most external assessors are people with extensive experience in the classroom. The majority of assessors had teaching experience of above 10 years in the college. Since there is no formal academic or professional qualification that can be obtained locally to make one an external assessor, college administrators, have in practice relied solely on the number of years of college and teaching experience. However, this does call into question the depth of preparation available to such personnel, its relevance and theoretical efficacy. Experience alone may not be adequate to enable one to practice effectively as an external assessor.

Given the lack of uniform training for the role of external assessor in the teachers' colleges, the study found it useful to analyse the distribution of external assessors among the various subjects. This distribution would indicate the general area of cognate training from which external assessors were selected. The summary of the subject/ assessor percentage representation among the sample was: Languages, 44%; Social sciences, 16%; Practical subjects (Physical Education, Art, Music, Home Economics), 28%; Science, 12%. Basically, there was a fair distribution of subjects in the sample as a whole, which may not be true at institutional level. The question that can be asked is what special skills and knowledge make language specialists more suitable for the task of external assessment?

How Assessors were Inducted into TP External Assessment
Given that there is no uniform, explicit or formal qualification associated with being appointed an external assessor, it becomes necessary to establish the methods and strategies, which were used in colleges to familiarise new assessors with their professional tasks. The majority of participants mentioned workshops as the primary means by which they were inducted, with variations in the form of meetings, consultations, lectures, handouts, understudy, seminars, observations, attachments and briefing sessions. Though there was no information on how these strategies were actually carried out, it was clear that the process of induction was to a certain extent organised and systematic in all the cases. There was no single case indicating that it was possible for an assessor to be assigned without having undergone some sort of systematic supervised orientation by the college.

Assessors' Preparation for External Assessment Activities

Apart from the induction of assessors at the level of the institution, the respondents were also requested to indicate any personal preparations undertaken before embarking on external assessment. Returns from the respondents are represented in the following selected statement extracts:

Reviewing assessment criteria; checking transport condition; providing documentation; clustering target schools; theoretical reviews; reading through available critiques; meetings with other assessors; reading literature; identification of critical areas; organisation of field teams; sampling of candidates; drawing of schedule of visits; analyses of student profiles for trends; and adjusting sample to available logistics.

Although they cover a wide range of acts, physical checks to planning and analysis, the statements can be grouped into at least three levels or stages of preparation namely identification stage, analysis stage and organisational stage.

External Assessors' Perception of General Problems Related To TP

The next area of analysis concerned the extent to which the sample of assessors viewed the problems associated with teaching practice. Respondents' perceptions were in four categories: general problems, college-based problems, DTE specific problems and school and student problems.

General Problems

A list of selected statements by the assessors include the following:

Logistics (accommodation, food, fuel); large numbers of students to deal with; interference from school heads and mentors; poor college preparation for TP; poor application of assessment criteria by colleges; college grades not consistent with reality; time allocated for assessment inadequate; insufficient information on students; the recall of students to college by TP Departments; disruptions due to local and national examinations; handling of poor or very good students; dissonance/ differences between external and internal assessors' grades; poor level of school management; variation in different college requirements; and absence of criteria on practical subjects.

College Related TP Problems

In the college category respondents specified a shorter list, ranging from the lack of enthusiasm by staff and the desire by college to have more distinction cases confirmed to under-supervision, especially of weak students by college assessors who operate mostly on the barest of resources.

DTE Related TP Problems

When the respondents turned their attention to the problems related to DTE they were quite scathing. DTE was blamed for almost everything that went wrong with the external assessment programme in the scheme. The list of problems attributed to DTE can be thematised as: economic, personnel, logistics, bureaucracy, morality and timing.

Most assessors felt that they were getting a raw deal by virtue of DTE paying them very little for important external assessment duties. They felt that they were better handled by other examination bodies such as the Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council, or when doing part-time work for some universities and non-governmental organisations. Thus they reported feeling demotivated and unrecognised by their own system.

The other dimension of DTE related problems had to do with the timing of various activities that are co-ordinated by the department. Respondents were worried about how some activities were organised, in particular, the apparent lack of prior consultation with colleges. In essence, the assessors believed that DTE should not change calendar dates 'willy nilly' and that more time should be allocated to TP external assessment. The respondents were thus aware that an effective logistical process would ensure the optimal working together of available personnel, economy and time. However, due to the partnership nature of the process it is not possible to posit all logistics entirely on either the DTE or the colleges.

Another dimension in the critique of DTE was centred on its bureaucratic nature. This theme emanated from the possible contradiction between the objectivity of the assessment process and the trust that is embedded in it. In particular, the respondents perceived a lack of trust by DTE in college processes and decisions and also a lack of fairness in the dealings of DTE with the colleges. These issues pointed to the need to deal with questions of moral trust and ethics in teaching practice assessment, and therefore in the realm of teacher education.

Student and School Related Problems

Assessors also presented problems related to the students and schools they visited as they carried out the business of external assessment. These were categorised into two lists of representative statements as follows:

Student Related Problems

Lack of confidence and stage fright; poor use of media, class control, preparation and scanty records; lack of reflection on teaching; lack of awareness of DTE

performance criteria; poor support from mentors and colleges; low allowances.

School Related Problems
Covering up for students; poor TP administration and school environment; inadequate assistance to students; heads using assessment for other purposes; school suspicious of external assessors; mentors feel left out of the process of assessment; students placed with temporary teachers; school heads feel themselves under assessment; school programmes taking precedence over TP.

Self Reflection by External Assessors
The study also analysed the internal workings of external assessors themselves beyond their demographics. It was thus essential to find out what they thought about themselves in relation to their task and working processes: Did they face any particular problems in their duties? Did they have any particular weaknesses? How did they conceptualise their own practice as external assessors?

Assessment Standards
In general, assessors were concerned about the quality of their work, the problem of objective standards. Although standards of performance in the Scheme of Association are agreed and explicit, difficulties often do arise in terms of their interpretation and application, with serious consequences for the student. Some assessors' problems with standards arise from the lack of the skills of external assessment. They felt that although there was a clear set of indicators these were not translated into specific guidelines of external assessment skills beyond the need to be objective. For example, at what point would one attend to the documents and what proportion should this be worth in the grading? How does one perform the technique of observing intensely while reading, writing and making reasoned judgment at the same time? Added to this were anxieties to do with how much time one would spend in a classroom given that there were at least six other observations to be made, several kilometers apart in the space of a single day, for example? To make the situation even more compound we are confronted with the fact that assessors may confuse their roles as moderators with either supervision or assessment. Such role confusion in the work of external assessment may have serious consequences on the integrity of the process.

Physical and Mental Fatigue
Some of the assessors referred to their failure to physically concentrate for long periods during student assessment. Apart from the generally poor classroom conditions (ventilation, crowding, poor furniture), fatigue is also expected from

the sheer physical stress personnel are subjected to in a normal two-day intensive commitment in the field. More often than not assessors cover long distances driving along dangerous rural tracks or crowded and potholed urban roads. Weather conditions and the poor state of some of the vehicles used also additionally take their toll. One respondent felt they were "rushing from candidate to candidate" while another felt that the colleges were responsible for the pressure on assessors "due to their desire for more and more distinctions." This meant that assessors sometimes had to travel longer than usual to reach their targets. In these circumstances not only objectivity is bound to suffer, but also the physical alertness and mental capacity of the external assessors to effectively carry out the task of assessment.

Relationship with Student Teachers
Another theme in the weakness of the assessors' own reflection is related to the different types of students on TP and their different circumstances. In their reflections assessors conceded that the student does have an influence on the assessors' approach. Although assessors' decisions formally reside in the content of the observation, it cannot be denied that results are also influenced by the subconscious interaction of the assessor with the student teacher. Examples offered about this ranged from sympathy with the students to outright impatience and antagonism.

Data indicated that assessors are more likely to exhibit or reinforce a particular type of student such as those cases identified as critical. The quality of interaction will, to a large extent also colour the assessor's image of the student- the good ones are seen as even better while the poor performers are seen as even worse. The potential for the assessor to be disappointed or impressed is as such something that cannot be easily factored out of the assessment equation, nor can it be controlled for, since it arises from genuine interpersonal factors that are imbedded within the assessors' own thinking and action.

Field Snapshots Tables: what assessors actually did in the field
Respondents were requested to provide data on a number of technical areas of their operation such as grading of students, candidates seen a day, duration of lesson observation among others. This data enabled us to approach the question of who awards which grades the most on teaching practice, given that the respondents have also alluded to a degree of dissonance between college and university external assessors' observations.

Table 1: Candidates Seen Per Day Per Assessor

Number	Percentage
1 to 3	6%
3 to 5	83%
5+	11%

Due to limitations of time and other logistics, assessors rarely exceeded three to five students per day. Even though most assessors do not stay for the whole duration of the 30- 40 minute lesson in practice, it seemed impossible to exceed this number unless documents only are the target as sometimes happens. Over a two-day assessment period the assessors see only a small representation of the group.

Table 2: Duration of Assessment Periods

Duration	Percentage
Less than 15 minutes	0%
15-20 minutes	6%
20-25 minutes	11%
25-30 minutes	44%
More than 30 minutes	39%

The table indicates that assessors gave as much time to the assessment as they needed. The factors that affected duration of assessment include school distance, time of the day and type of lesson observed. Morning lessons tend to take more time, while failing students tend to be given less time and distant students may be left out. There is thus no standard rule about how much time should be spent by an assessor, apart from the need to keep or exceed the target set by the team in terms of numbers and geographical coverage of students seen over the two day period. We are not aware of any evidence that duration improves external assessment although this might be true for normal supervision.

Table 3: Subjects Most Likely to be Assessed

Subject	Ranking
Social Studies	1
Shona	2
English	3
Mathematics	4
Religious and Moral Education	5
Sciences	6
Physical Education	7
Music	8
Art and Design	9
Ndebele	10
Computers	11

The subjects on the top half of the ranking were observed most due to the fact that they fall in the earlier part of the day and are likely to be taught more frequently. The subjects on the bottom half are likely to occur in the later part of the day and will appear less frequently on the timetable. Some assessors would go out of their way to see other subjects but assessors tend not to risk any imposition on the student.

Table 4: Frequency of Grades Awarded by External Assessors

Category	Very often	Often	Rarely	Never
80% Distinction	11%	39%	44%	6%
70%-79% Merit	39%	50%	11%	Nil
50%-69% Pass	44%	56%	Nil	Nil
40%-49% Supplement	Nil	44%	44%	11%
0-39% Fail	Nil	Nil	67%	33%

The grades most awarded to students were in the 50% -79% modal range. Assessors rarely awarded grades in the bottom and top ranges. This picture tallies with the understanding that generally assessors seek to confirm the internal process, except where principles are violated throwing into question the generally held belief of dissonance in the observation of external and internal assessors. The pattern confirms the general expectations and approximates a distribution that is close to normal. However, (6%) never awarded a distinction and (33%) never awarded a grade in the 0-39% range. The data actually confirms the fact that both groups of assessors have common parameters for assessment and that the Scheme of Association has a robust self-checking quality control mechanism. Externals are, however, more likely to offer a distinction than to fail a student.

Below is a graphic presentation of how the assessors rated themselves and others in their teaching practice performance.

Assessors' Rating of TP Performance

	Not effective	Somewhat effective	Satisfactory	Effective	Very effective
Self	Nil	Nil	6%	78%	16%
TP Department	Nil	Nil	17%	72%	11%
DTE	Nil	Nil	33%	56%	11%
School Heads	Nil	33%	44%	17%	6%
Mentors	6%	17%	43%	17%	17%
College	Nil	27%	28%	39%	6%

The majority (78%) of assessors rated themselves as effective, 6% said satisfactory with 16% saying that they were very effective. The picture is similar to their performance rating of their Teaching Practice Departments. (72%) said they were effective with 17% rating them as satisfactory. Views about the DTE effectiveness were also similar with figures at 56% and 33% respectively. TP performance ratings of school personnel and college staff were more evenly spread over the five bands, thus showing mixed perceptions.

The assessors showed a bias towards their own reflectivity, especially when their ratings are compared to the very high negatives awarded for heads and colleges (33% and 28% respectively) against only 6% each awarded for 'very effective.'

Assessors' Suggestions on TP Innovations
Numerous suggestions were made by assessors to improve TP operations in the

Scheme of Association. After rigorous analysis and thematic consolidation of thick data the following were considered to be most innovative and feasible given the nature of the Scheme, the aims of teaching practice and the available resources in schools, colleges and DTE.

Cross-regionalize the assessment of TP; make greater use of ICT for organising TP; widen the pool of assessors to include other institutions; fine-tune the internal college moderation process; institute special college programmes for weak students; dualize the assessment process for each student; re-visit identified weak cases to follow up; conduct mid-course external assessment.

All these suggestions were good enough to assist in the improvement of teaching practice assessment, but most of them could materialise only at a greater cost to the Scheme and, therefore, the student. The general conclusion is, therefore, that the stakeholders should agree that to a large extent improvement will mean the allocation of more resources to increase the time, personnel, strategies etc. available for TP.

Discussion of Results

The study showed that personnel appointed as external assessors were generally male in the 41-57 age range. They are highly qualified academically and professionally with vast experience in TP assessment and seem to have benefited from systematic preparation within colleges to ready themselves for their work. It was found that there was not much variation between internal and external assessors in grading students although there is evidence of areas of dissonance between the two groups. A number of problems encountered by assessors in the field have been elaborated on especially in relation to resources, logistics, standards and generally unsupportive school environments.

Assessors rated their TP assessment performance highly and in comparison tended to rate DTE and other stakeholders less highly. Other data suggested that in most cases assessors spend about 20 minutes in a lesson and manage to see a minimum of three students a day. Grading data did not show any major variation between the colleges and assessors although there are anomalies about the lack of guidance ensuing from agreed standards and indicators (Shumba et. al, 2001). The subjects that assessors are likely to see are Social Studies, Shona, English and Mathematics, while they are not likely to assess any Art and Design, Ndebele or Computer lessons mainly due to their unfavourable position on the time-table. The study came up with several suggestions for the improvement of this component of teacher preparation. It reminded us that the task of external

assessment is quite a complex and intriguing function, which in reality is a mix of the systematic and the idiosyncratic; the planned and the opportunistic; the ordered and the chaotic in the true manner of praxis. TP assessment thus becomes potentially useful ground on which to interrogate afresh some of the problematic issues plaguing teacher education and the search for better ways of learning. It becomes more than just awarding of grades, but a complex real life process that begins much earlier with meetings, study of schedules and continues later with vehicle breakdowns, frustrated assessors and anxious students. In Zimbabwe and indeed other countries, teaching practice assessment is also an opportunity where school personnel and students meet professionally with university and college lecturers. Apart from the formal business of student assessment there is a chance for both sides to share information and for assessors to come into contact with the communities in which student teaching is contextualised. Thus although it has bureaucratic characteristics, teaching practice assessment begins to look less like a black box in which fundamental processes are out of view, but a more interesting source of qualitative knowledge about a wide spectrum of the world of teaching and learning. Although several areas may be in need of further exploration, we believe that the study has thrown enough useful light on the phenomenon of Teaching Practice external assessment for all teacher educators to be able to see it from another perspective.

Conclusion

External assessment of students on teaching practice is a critical aspect of teacher preparation. It is as valuable as the internal process itself as it attempts to bring fairness and objectivity to student supervision and assessment. However the process has its own challenges ranging from objectivity of the process to inadequate resources. This is compounded by the several challenges assessors encounter whilst in the field. The study recommends more resource input and a reconceptualisation of the assessment exercise in the context of internal challenges in the Scheme of Association. The DTE needs to play a more active role in inducting lecturers appointed as external assessors. The scheme could also benefit from more studies on external assessment.

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