Narratives of assessment: the newsletter as case study

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KEYWORDS

1. Integration

2. Language

3. Group dynamics

4. Discipline-based

5. Outcomes Based Education (OBE)

6. Narratives

7. Experiential

8. Learning

9. Activity-theory

10. Assessment

ABSTRACT

Narratives of assessment: the newsletter as case study

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The purpose of this minithesis is to evaluate the success of an integrated
newsletter assignment for first year Human Resource Management
students as an authentic and meaningful form of assessment by tracing and
deciphering the narratives of the key role-players. The study also seeks to
examine the role that the newsletter can play regarding experiential
learning, which is an essential component of teaching and learning at
technikons in South Africa.

February 2005

DECLARATION

I declare that *Narratives of assessment: the newsletter as case study (1998 – 2004)* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Jacqueline Norma Scheepers   **February 2005**

Signed: ………………….…

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Assessment is an integral part of the educational environment of teaching and learning. Lecturers design tests, practical tasks, presentations, assignments, and so on, to assess student learning. These assessments are mostly set and assessed or marked by the lecturers. "Usually what is measured is what has been learned, what can be remembered, what is understood, or what can be applied from what has been learnt in a different context" (Siebörger, 1998:5). In the traditional teaching and learning context, students are simply not part of the assessment planning and assessing process. Assessment, in this context, remains firmly within the control of the assessor, with the assessed being excluded and only occupying a role at the end of the process. Pretorius (1998:vii) further emphasises that "the traditional South African education favoured a curriculum that was too academic … and did not keep in touch with the requirements of the sphere of work and possible future needs of both learners and the wider community".

South African schools are clearly moving away from this philosophy as the demands of a modern and highly technological society start to put pressure on educational institutions. In post-apartheid South Africa, the new approach to education rejects many of the old approaches and attitudes regarding assessment. With a relatively large and unskilled population, the focus has been on the readiness of graduates to embrace the workplace. Tertiary institutions have come under scrutiny in terms of their assessment methods as a means of measuring whether learners are ready to enter into the workplace. In response

to assessment reform, the American College Testing program is working on a skills assessment tool to link up the school instruction with workplace needs. "This assessment tool considers the academic skills of reading, writing, and computation along with workplace skills such as problem solving, reasoning, teamwork, and oral communication" (Short, 1993:4).

1.2 THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

I am a lecturer in English Communication in the Human Resource Management (HRM) department, which is housed in the Business Faculty at Peninsula Technikon in Bellville, South Africa. Peninsula Technikon, which is set to merge with Cape Technikon, will become the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in 2005. Peninsula Technikon is primarily concerned with the vocational training of students for the workplace. Its lecturers currently use a system of continuous evaluation, in which students are assessed across subjects throughout the year, rather than the two major semester examinations, which were used previously.

In addition to my work as a lecturer in English Communication, I also serve as a Curriculum Officer. Curriculum Officers are expected to provide training for other academic staff members in the areas of teaching and learning, namely assessment techniques and design. An important aspect of my work, therefore, is that I am expected to generate different forms of assessment to assess whether students have attained the learning outcomes as set out in the first-year curriculum. Learning outcomes are defined as "…the end product of the learning process ... educators work backwards from agreed

desired outcomes. Programmes of learning are then designed to help learners achieve

these outcomes" (LLACSIG, 1996:44). Besides these outcomes educators also have to

ensure that the Essential or Critical Crossfield Outcomes (CCFO's) as proposed by the

department of Education as of 16/9/96 are covered in the learning programme. These

critical outcomes are as follows:

> 1a. Identify and solve problems in which responses display that responsible decisions using critical and creative thinking have been made.
> 2a. Work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation, community.
> 3a. Organise and manage oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively.
> 4a. Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information.
> 5a. Communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and/or written communication.
> 6a. Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and health of others.
> 7a. Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.
> ILLACSIG (1996:44).

In designing my assessments, I had to ensure that the above CCFO's were covered in the

learning process. Of particular interest to me was an exploration of those assessments that

not only stimulate learning in the students, but which also included the work of other

lecturers. In other words, the more staff members were involved, the more learning could

take place for all parties concerned.

From 2000 to 2001, the Personnel Management lecturer, Rashaad Jattiem, and I

volunteered to develop a content and language integrated workbook for the first-year

Human Resource Management (HRM) students. HRM focuses on the communication

and relationship between the employer and the employee. This involves issues like staff

development and training, recruitment and selection, leave, and legislation aimed at

regulating the behaviour of both employer and employee. As future or potential HR

managers, first-year students need to know how to disseminate information to employees.

They therefore need to know how to design written materials for use in the company where they will eventually work. One type of communication that can be used in a company is the newsletter. We therefore selected the newsletter for an assessment, it being an information tool that was most suitable for the integration of content and language. The compilation of the newsletter led to an end product that incorporated many outcomes.

The justification for offering language and content integrated courses and assessments are outlined in a Peninsula Technikon workshop report of the Transdisciplinary Research Niche: Language and Content Integration Project. According to the report, "the initial idea of integration was to provide linguistic access to content knowledge" as content and language are intertwined with and dependent on each other and it is therefore recommended that this method is favoured above the generic method of teaching and assessing (2002: 2-3). An integrated assessment contains elements of more than one learning area and it is designed to assess knowledge practically in a more holistic way. From the original basic design, where only English Communication was assessed, the newsletter evolved and developed to include an integrated approach, which incorporated more Human Resource Management coursework than before, and therefore assessed more learning outcomes (See Appendix A: Integrated Newsletter 2002).

With more lecturers and their subjects being involved in the assessment the concern was whether the newsletter was an adequate tool for achieving certain learning and teaching outcomes as set out in the first-year HRM year programme 2002 (See Appendix B: HRM

Year Programme Units 2002). Another stumbling block was that for many lecturers, assessment is often a neglected part of their training and initiation. Lecturers are expected to have the necessary skills to test their students against the desired outcomes and then to present a final judgement. Assessments are often regurgitated year after year (with the same weaknesses) without any clear and critical evaluation of that assessment being done by the lecturer.

1.3 MOTIVATION FOR INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT

Most of our students at first-year level are not first-language English speakers and have different backgrounds, home languages and cultures. According to the Peninsula Technikon Language Policy (2003:2), a language survey, conducted in April 2003, confirmed that fifty-one percent of students at Peninsula Technikon were Xhosa speaking. As the medium of instruction at Peninsula Technikon for all subjects is English, this poses serious problems for many learners. Compounding the problem even more is the highly technical business jargon used in the field of human resources management. The transitions between different discourses when engaging with the assessment, and the accompanying tasks and material, can be overwhelming for learners.

When structuring assessments these are influences that are often overlooked and can be detrimental to the learning process. Strategies should be evolved that deal adequately with these difficulties. Fortunately my role as Curriculum Officer at Peninsula Technikon has made me conscious of the importance of improving my assessment of the skills and knowledge of students as well as emphasising the links between teaching and assessment.
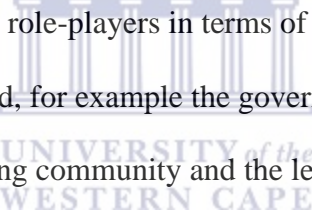
Students in our courses are expected to operate within an integrated environment as the learning and assessment of content subjects (HRM and Business Management) is almost fully integrated with English Communication and End-User Computing. This means that for integration to take place, the lecturers from the different disciplines co-teach parts of the curriculum and design some of the assessment tasks together. The assessment is done in a holistic way so that it is a reflection of the workplace, where tasks often rely on multiple skills rather than the practical application of separate knowledge. The teaching of the units in my year programme is therefore extremely vocational in nature and a great deal of emphasis is given to the application of theory in preparation for the workplace. The business newsletter was thus designed to act as an integrated assessment to assess the teaching and learning units in the first module of the HRM course (See Appendix A: Integrated Newsletter 2002).
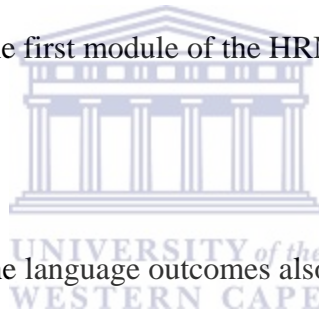
In the HRM first-year course, the language outcomes also had to be determined by using a relevant context like that of the content subjects. Those lecturers who practice the integration of content and language make it easier for the students to gain access to content knowledge by reducing linguistic barriers, which hamper their understanding of difficult content. As a result, with integrated content and language projects, learners also gain English proficiency while engaging with relevant and realistic content.

Integration allows for the opportunity to assess both mode 1 (subject-specific) and mode 2 (application) knowledge and provides learners with the opportunity to show not only their knowledge of a particular area, but also to demonstrate the applied competence of

that knowledge. This also links up with South Africa's Curriculum Framework, which "suggests that an outcomes-based education (OBE) requires that educators move from norm-referenced to criterion-referenced forms of assessment … [and] should focus far more attention on the ability of learners to do, to perform rather than simply being able to memorize or understand information" (Swezy, 1998:49). Lecturers therefore have to ensure that the assessment thoroughly measures the outcomes to be attained and is not just memory based with an emphasis on regurgitation of learnt facts and figures reminiscent of past assessment practices. Therefore, the drawing up of the criteria of the assessment becomes an integral part of the assessment process to ensure that both memory and application is assessed.

But the lecturers are not the only role-players in terms of the assessment and they cannot exclude the other parties involved, for example the government, the academic institution, industry members, the surrounding community and the learners. Their expectations, demands, views and concerns have to be taken into consideration. Their voices often come through in the form of educational policies, advisory committees, and so on. The newsletter was therefore one of the responses to South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) requirements, the National Academic Policy (NAP), modularisation of the first-year course and the integration of language and content, which is promoted strongly by Peninsula Technikon. The level descriptors for the first-year level, as well as the Critical Crossfield Outcomes (CCFO's), were also taken into account when designing the newsletter. These outcomes are important as it places the assessment within a context that

is relevant to the development of the learner. Therefore, lecturers have to ensure that the CCFO's are considered when they design an assessment.

1.4 RESEARCH AIMS

I view learning as being not just the domain of the student, but also as that of the lecturer - in the same way that assessment is not just the domain of the lecturer. I therefore feel strongly that my teaching practice should not be a stagnant, non-evolutionary and immovable institution, but rather open to change, critique and transformation and as such, can adjust to the needs of both the student and the relevant communities. I have chosen to do a critical review of an integrated assessment, the newsletter, with the aim of improving it as a form of assessment.

The evaluation of the newsletter as an integrated assessment had to be done with the view of determining whether it worked as an assessment or not and whether it was a viable assessment for first-year HRM business students. This evaluation process would then inform me of any improvements or changes that needed to be made. My research was guided by the following questions:

- What is integration and how can it be successfully implemented in the business newsletter?
- What forms of evaluation can be used to test the validity of the newsletter?
- How do the lecturers ensure that the students understand the criteria of the assessment?
- Is this assessment appropriately pitched in relation to the first-year level?
- What modifications, if any, can be implemented to improve the existing newsletter?
- How can I make the assessment more meaningful for both the students and the communities involved?
- What are the most appropriate ways of assessing students for this particular assessment (summative/formative)?
- How do I gauge whether the assessment is authentic?
- Are the relevant critical crossfield outcomes successfully addressed?
- What restrictions hinder the attainment of the desired outcomes?
- How can these restrictions be overcome?

I was concerned that any improvements or adjustments to the assessment needed to be focussed on the above issues and not just be changes made to address peripheral issues like convenience and time management. Therefore, I decided to take the newsletter through a rigorous and extensive process of evaluation so that any improvements which were applied were based on a sound knowledge of the interests and objectives of the key players.

1.5 CONCLUSION

It is against the above background that the specific aims of my research were addressed. I have provided a brief background to the research project and have placed my research within the context of the existing body of knowledge regarding assessment. My conceptual framework and theoretical paradigm are outlined and discussed in Chapter Two in relation to the concerns of the project. The results of both qualitative and quantitative data gathering are analysed in Chapter Four and conclusions are drawn so that suitable recommendations can be presented to address the problem areas and weaknesses in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Many lecturers see themselves as giving knowledge to learners who are on the receiving end of this knowledge. Some continually think of creative ways to teach but sometimes forget that there are certain outcomes that have to be attained. Others manage to be exciting and creative with the learning material without losing sight of the learning goals.
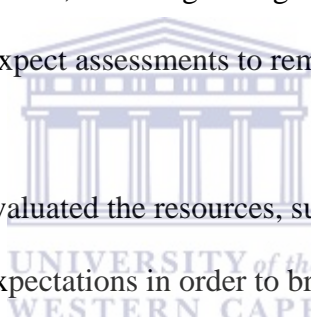
I am informed by the philosophy "…that the teacher must not be a mere implementer but a development agent who is able to develop and apply the relevant curriculum dynamically and creatively" (Carl, 1995:16). It is this daunting challenge that many lecturers face on a daily basis. Sometimes time constraints and teaching overload cause old, out-dated material to be regurgitated without any thought given to recent developments in the social and political environments of the students and lecturers. It is the conflict between the stagnant curriculum and the real experiences of both learner and lecturer which can prompt a reflective attitude towards curriculum and assessment change.

2.2 RESEARCH PARADIGMS UNDERPINNING STUDY

I situate the research of my teaching in the critical paradigm as my approach includes a critical review of my practices in order to bring about a change in my approach to a particular task or assessment. Kerfoot &Winberg (1997:16) view the critical approach as

"…situated within the 'real world' of actual people and practices – the implication is that a critical understanding will lead to social transformation". Gibson (1986:4) supports this view by stating that the critical paradigm argues "that in human affairs all facts are socially constructed, humanly determined and interpreted, and hence subject to change through human means". Therefore there is no logic in keeping the same unchanging assessments over time just because these were always done in a certain way. As lecturers designed these assessments, it makes sense that a certain way of assessing is not a given, but can be improved, changed, adapted and reformulated. The more one critiques one's own method of assessment, the more insight one is given into how to implement the relevant improvements. As the world, with its growing body of knowledge, is continually changing, it would be naïve to expect assessments to remain the same.

In reaction to this paradigm, I evaluated the resources, support structures, programme requirements and institutional expectations in order to bring about positive changes as a means of resolving problem areas and to improve the learning environment in terms of the newsletter as an assessment.   In the evaluation of the business newsletter, I attempted to understand the responses of the learners, my peers (tutor and lecturers), as well as my own responses.

When I evaluated the assessment it was imperative to use some means of measuring to judge whether it was performing the expected role. By considering the features of a typically "good" assessment, it was possible to perform the evaluation. The criteria and principles of a good evaluation, were considered and included aspects of the following:

- *Validity (evaluate what it is supposed to evaluate)*

- *Continuity – Completeness/comprehensiveness (evaluate all relevant aspects).*
- *Correspondance (evaluation is in accordance with what is actually envisaged and what is actually evaluated)*
- *Objectivity (Not reliant or swayed by beliefs or opinion of assessor)*
- *Reliability (permanence of results – for any group or environment)*
- *Comprehensiveness (utilize all relevant methods of evaluation).*
- *Evaluation must lead to meaningful learning experiences (not just a testing exercise)*
- *Individualization (make provision for individual differences and needs).*
- *Democratizing (opportunities for pupil inputs).*
- *Propaedeutic (further learning is encouraged or new learning experiences arise from the evaluation opportunity)*
- *Communicability (feedback of results in a complete manner which gives a true picture to the learner*
(Carl, 1995: 123-124)

To demystify the above terms, I have inserted brief explanations in brackets. It was necessary for me to consider the above criteria when evaluating the newsletter so that I could make informed choices and recommendations regarding the assessment. In Chapter Three I mention a range of data collecting methods that I employed to ensure that I had a rich source of information to sift through.
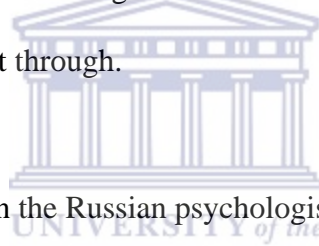
My research also rests solidly on the Russian psychologist, Lev Semonovich Vygotsky's notion of learning, which observes a strong link between learning and social activity between learners in a specific community. According to Lidz (1987:viii) the "…notion of zones of proximal development has its origin in this general assumption of intellectual growth through interactions; so has Luria's research on the development of language in children". Gouws (1998:81) explains some key aspects of Vygotsky's human socio-cultural activity and the process of internalisation. In his discussion, he mentions that people play an important part in the development of others by the activities in which they engage as part of a cultural community. Vygotsky also regarded social interaction as an important part of internalisation and leads to higher cognition and by "using language, people share experiences about their cultural world and, in doing so, mediate cognitive

development" (Gouws, 1998:81). The image of the learner furiously studying alone and memorizing bulks of knowledge gives way to the vibrant and active learning team who share knowledge and resources to achieve their learning objective. The fact that those students did the assessment in teams and as individuals (See Appendix A: Integrated Newsletter 2002) provided me with the opportunity to research whether teamwork was appropriate for this assessment. It was therefore necessary to gather data from the students to determine whether the team worked successfully together.

The interaction of the learners, not only with each other, but also with their surrounding community and environment, can lend an interesting slant to any assessment. New pockets of learning experiences and new opportunities for learning may be generated as a result of these interactions. Luria (1974:15) proposes that "New motives for action appear under extremely complex patterns of social practice. Thus are created new problems, new modes of behavior, new methods of taking in information, and new systems of reflecting reality". Therefore the social interaction that is experienced, via the learning process, in preparation for the assessment, plays an equally important part in the construction of new knowledge as the assessment itself. The students could also give invaluable feedback to each other regarding their experiences with the organisations.

Salomon & Perkins (1998:3) distinguish six meanings of social learning as opposed to solo or individual learning. These are:

1.   *Active social mediation of individual learning*
2.   *Social mediation as participatory knowledge construction*
3.   *Social mediation by cultural scaffolding*
4.   *The social entity as a learning system*
5.   *Learning to be a social learner*

6. Learning social content.
Salomon & Perkins (1998:3).

All these strategies for learning rely on the presence of a social element in relation to the learner. These strategies were explored to explain how social interaction, experienced during the research and compilation of the newsletter could foster learning. A critique of this approach of social mediation is that learners learn at different rates and learning cannot always be predicted or predetermined. This makes it extremely difficult to observe, record and measure the individual learning of the members of a specific group or team as the learning pace and volume differs.

2.3 ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION: THE ACCOUNTABILITY CHALLENGE

Assessment and evaluation do not always mean the same thing. Assessment usually measures the extent to which students are able to remember and apply knowledge. Evaluation is centred more on looking at teaching and is "…a process by which the effects and effectiveness of teaching can be determined" (Siebörger, 1998:5). These two concepts have become entrenched in the rhetoric not only of many lecturers, but also for those who monitor and who are the clients of the learning and teaching institutions. In recent years, the public has actively demanded transparency and accountability. In other words:

> *They wish to assess the content, materials, and teaching methods used. They wish to know what students are learning and what skills they can demonstrate. They also want to know the cost of new programs and whether they are cost effective. The general public wishes to know the quality of education at the local, state and national levels-even how American school students compare with the rest of the world.*
> (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998:319-320)

Although the above statements are modelled on an American system, the similarities to South Africa are clear. As transparency in educational assessments becomes more and more important, so do the responses and perceptions of those outside the educational institutions. Accountability therefore becomes an integral issue to note when dealing with the external communities (sponsors, parents, industry members and the state 'watchdogs') as well as with the internal mechanisms of the institution. Institutions of higher learning are often reminded by government to heed the responses of the industrialists to the skills of the graduates who come into their employ (Heywood, 2000:84). It is the industrialists or the managers of the work sites who ultimately have to incorporate graduates into their workplace. As industry is a highly competitive community, pushing increased production through creativity and innovation, there are certain expectations that have to be met by the tertiary institutions. The expectation is that tertiary institutions have to keep up with the latest technological developments in industry.

Change occurs slowly and sometimes institutions and academic staff are so entrenched in old methods that they continue to operate in a certain way because that is how it has always been done. With external pressure being exerted on the managers of educational institutions, they in turn coerce teaching practitioners to bring about changes in their approach to teaching and learning and as a result, assessment. Eliot, cited in Heywood, (2000:380) sums up the need and importance of accountability as follows: "If teacher education is to prepare students or experienced teachers for accountability then it must be concerned with their ability to reflect on classroom situations. By 'practical reflections' I

mean reflection with a view to action". Therefore, it is not only the evaluation done by peers and outsiders that is important, but also the views of the lecturers themselves in relation to their own teaching practice. In fact, what is interesting about the above quote is that there is an implication that evaluation, done by outsiders, may not be as valuable as that done by the lecturers and students who are directly involved in the assessment and who may speak from an informed position.   In addition, there are often debates about what needs to be assessed and therefore consensus regarding this debate is often difficult to reach. The methods that were used to gather data as mentioned in Chapter Three generated diverse responses from the participants in the assessment.

According to Siebörger (1998:24) continuous assessment is characterised by assessments, which take place throughout the course of the learning process, rather than at the end of a period of learning. What should be kept in mind though is that "…tasks used to assess what students know and can do need to reflect the tasks they will encounter in the world outside schools, not merely those limited to the schools themselves" (Eisner, 1993:144). This becomes especially relevant in our educational context, which specifically trains students for a specific vocation. There should also be more focus on the process rather than just the solutions. In other words, tasks "…should reveal how students go about solving a problem, not only the solutions they formulate" (Eisner, 1993:145). Learning therefore needs to be seen as pyramid building, which involves many problem solving or developmental steps (small solutions) before the final step (big solution) can be reached.

The learning activity is made more dynamic and complex when there are multiple themes integrated into one major assessment. Integration can happen on different levels, not just

on the level of content and language. "For Dewey, the curriculum did not need to emphasize subject matter or the learner. It should do both … What is needed is a common education that integrates content with the learner's prior experiences; this leads to meaningful, new experiences" (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998:245). The background and prior experiences of the student should be an important consideration to take into account when designing learning tasks and assessment. This is especially necessary in the South African context where the culture and home language of the student are often marginalised in a traditional-type assessment.

According to Siebörger (1998:7) the actual assessment is not as significant as the process that is followed before and after the assessment. The build-up before the assessment prepares the student and, if well done, provides a framework for the student to work on the assessment. The feedback that follows the assessment, for both the student and the assessor, is equally important, providing additional learning opportunities. Although many assessments rely on group input, the student should still maintain individual ownership in these group assessments. "It is also a good principle to encourage learners to keep a record of their own progress" (Siebörger, 1998:10). In this sense the student then becomes responsible for his or her own development and learning and this may develop a sense of responsibility, autonomy and self-reflection.

Often students are not part of the process of designing and implementing an assessment. This could lead to the development of negative perceptions towards the assessment, especially if it is used as a tool for disciplining the students. As students are important

stakeholders in the assessment process, they should be part of the assessment process. Siebörger (1998:8) and Heywood (2000:374) both suggest that peer assessment contributes to the sense of responsibility that students experience for their own learning and that an awareness of their own performance is accentuated by having to assess the work of others. This ties in with Vygotsky's concept of learning in groups: "What children can do with the assistance of others might be in some sense even more indicative of their mental development than what they can do alone" (Vygotsky, 1978:85). When applied to tertiary level students, group work and peer assessment may be invaluable tools in the learning process.

2.4 FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

"**Formative** assessment gives information in order to help learners to grow and to make progress [and] **Summative** assessment enables you to tell how much a learner has achieved by a certain stage" (Siebörger, 1998:24). Both these methods are used in tertiary institutions but for large and complicated assessments students often need formative assessment to guide them through the learning process. This is particularly relevant for the process approach to writing and the submission of multiple drafts of written work. According to Lenner and Hanson (1975) the characteristics of constructive feedback depend on whether:

1. *It is descriptive rather that evaluative.*
2. *It is specific rather than general.*
3. *It is focussed on behavior rather than on the person.*
4. *It takes into account the needs of both the receiver and the giver.*
5. *It is directed towards behavior which the receiver can do something about.*
6. *It is solicited rather than imposed.*
7. *It is well-timed.*
8. *It involves sharing of information, rather than giving advice.*
9. *It involves the amount of information the receiver can use rather than the amount we would like to give.*

10. It concerns what is said and done, not why.
11. It is checked to insure clear communication.
12. It is checked to determine the degree of agreement from others.
Lenner and Hanson (1975)

From the above characteristics, it is clear that feedback cannot be done casually and that there are many emotions involved in the action and results thereof. Therefore, many lecturers shy away from formative assessment and see it as tiresome and time-consuming as they are often resistant to assessing the same piece of work over and over again. For students who are consumed with the obsession to "just pass" and not to improve towards a better piece of work, formative assessment can have similarly negative connotations.

It is important that students perceive the process of assessment as a fair process. Lecturers should try as far as possible to ensure that the assessment is valid and reliable. According to Lubisi (1998:91), there is no real difference between the way the word 'valid' is used on a daily basis and the way it is used in education. He urges us though to remember that " …with regard to educational assessment, however, … soundness or justifiability takes various dimensions – that is, there are many criteria through which validity can be assessed. An assessment can be more valid on one criterion and be less valid on another" (Lubisi, 1998:91). The factors that follow should be taken into account when evaluating the fairness of an assessment:

*1 The importance, length, size or **weight** of the assessment – does it match the amount of work which has been done?*
2 The choice of the assessment technique – does it match the way in which learners have been taught?
3 The instructions and/or questions given to learners – do all learners understand what they are expected to do or answer?
4 The method of administering the assessment – are the conditions appropriate; is there enough time; do learners have access to the resources that they need?
5 The method of marking – is it as objective as possible? Should the learners know how it is to be marked?
Siebörger (1998:13)

The above questions contain essential components to consider for any lecturer with a conscience, but not only just to consider, but also to act on the responses to these. The power relations that exist between student and lecturer and a lack of transparency about the entire process of assessment, can result in a negation of the above factors.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter emphasises the importance of changing assessment in a creative and dynamic way so as to adapt to the changing environment outside of the academic institution. It looks closely at the criteria and principles of a typically good evaluation as a means to enable a lecturer to make informed adjustments to an existing assessment. Of special importance is the role that accountability plays in relation to other stakeholders have in the assessment of students. Also mentioned in this chapter is how students learn through their interaction with others, for example from the community and from other students. The gathering of the information that is needed to evaluate the newsletter, in light of the aforementioned considerations, will be outlined in the next chapter on the methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

When the question arose as to what methodology to use, serious consideration had to be given to the merits and the disadvantages of both the qualitative and quantitative paradigms. Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2) offer a generic definition of qualitative research as being "…multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach … attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them". Therefore the data is gathered through interacting with the participants often directly and through using a wide range of techniques. This allows a depth and richness to the data as opposed to quantitative research, which can be measured '…in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:2).
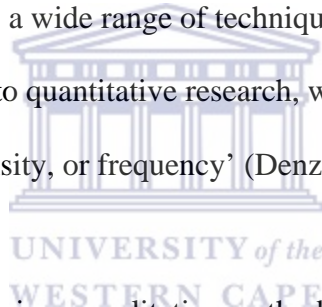
For this research, the main focus is on qualitative methods, as the views and opinions of the key stakeholders in the assessment are crucial. However, this method is also supported by quantitative data via a questionnaire survey. Using a multi-layered approach can assist the researcher in terms of checking the results of one method against the results of another. This approach also stimulates the generation of different types of responses from the participants.

3.2 POPULATION

During the research process, all the students in the study were registered first-year students at Peninsula Technikon, studying towards a National Diploma in Human

Resource Management. The staff members, who formed part of the integration teaching

team, were all first-year lecturers in the Human Resource Management department.

Their areas of expertise are Personnel Management, Business Management, English

Communication and End-User Computing. The community organisations that were

involved were all based in Cape Town, South Africa and were mostly homes for the

aged, community centres, schools for the handicapped, and so on. These organisations

operate independently or are partially funded by the government. The study was done

over a two-year period between 2002 and 2003.

3.3 RESEARCH TOOL: THE CASE STUDY

My main research tool was to make a case study of the newsletter assessment. A case

study calls for extensive data collection and draws "on multiple sources of information

such as observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials" (Creswell,

1998:62). The narratives of students, lecturers and other relevant parties were used to

identify linkages and contradictions.

The first newsletters were created in the classroom, where learners would make up a

company and construct a newsletter accordingly. In doing so, they needed to integrate

knowledge and skills from their units in the English Communication year programme

with their knowledge and skills in Human Resource Management. Later, in 2002, three

other subject areas were included. These were Personnel Management, End-user

Computing and Business Management (See Appendix A: Integrated Newsletter 2002).

The articles, which appeared in the newsletters, contained information relevant to the

content subjects. The computing section was the practical application of the structural and visual elements in the presentation of the newsletter. The individual lecturers were responsible for assessing the articles relating to their units, and as the English Communication lecturer, I assessed the language, style, and communicative competence of the articles. Most of the time the lecturers consulted with one another when they had any queries about the assessment.

As a result of the integration process, the team of lecturers who had engaged in the newsletter project had to consider how the learning outcomes were assessed, rather than just seeing the assessment as a likely end to the learning process. The newsletter changed from being a newsletter of an imaginary organisation to that of a real organisation. Students were asked to investigate organisations in their environment, particularly smaller community organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's), as these would be less likely to have their own newsletters. They could therefore consider, for example, women's organisations, crèches, work centres for disabled people, and so on. Students were tasked with creating a newsletter, which the organisation could use to promote itself by showing the community what it had to offer.

The first teaching activity was for students to collect samples of newsletters and to brainstorm different approaches to design and content. Then students had to be taught how to design questionnaires and to conduct interviews. Next students were taught about different management styles, organisational aims, doing organisational charts (organograms) and the effects of social and historical issues on organisations. Students,

working in groups, had to research these aspects of their host organisation, and write this information up individually in the form of an academic essay. The students were assisted with their writing by the use and development of mind maps and through successive formative assessments (not for marks) from their lecturers. Students could then use these formative assessments to improve their essays. The final essays were marked against criteria for structure and organisation, conceptual understanding and language. The final stage was for the groups to transform their essays into articles, including adding an editorial, in newsletter style. At the same time as students were researching and writing their essays they were also learning how to layout pages, scan photographs and use different formatting devices. Students were finally assessed on their ability to mimic the layout of a typical newsletter.

3.4 RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The following research procedure was implemented to gather data in order to build up the case study:

3.4.1 Qualitative Data

Literature review (2002-2004)

I considered the different theories in an attempt to decipher, explain and understand the responses of the students, the tutor and the integration team. A number of sources in the literature of assessment were accessed to inform my own teaching and learning strategies with regard to the assessment.

Student focus-group interview (2003)

Ten first-year students were interviewed regarding their experiences of the assessment.

The involvement of students was voluntary. Although students from the whole class were

invited only ten students showed any interest in attending the focus-group session. One

of my peers, the Personnel Management lecturer, also attended the focus-group session

and participated in the discussion.

The aim of the focus-group interview was to ascertain the feelings and ideas that students

had about the assessment. The oral method was used in conjunction with the

questionnaires, as many students were more comfortable responding orally than in the

written form. Another reason for the interviews was to exploit the wealth of responses

provided by oral narratives.

The questions that were posed in the focus-group interview with the first-year students

were open-ended. The focus-group interview was semi-structured. Although I had

prepared a set of questions (See Appendix C: Focus-group interview questions), there

were additional questions, which were generated as a result of discussion or interesting

comments made by the interviewees and the personnel management lecturer, who was

present in the interview.

The discussion was tape-recorded. During the interview, I made written notes of the

responses, which were later matched to the audio-recorded version and then transcribed

to facilitate an in-depth analysis of the responses.

Students' freewrites

Students were asked to submit freewrites on their impressions regarding the newsletter.
They were given broad questions and were asked to respond in writing to the newsletter
as a form of assessment, without concerning themselves with writing perfectly or neatly.
A time limit of five minutes was given to complete the free write and they were told to
write without stopping even if they ran out of ideas. The aim was to keep the students
writing until they thought of an idea. This encouraged the students to concentrate and to
focus on the issue, and this process yielded a rich source of information. I chose this
method of feedback as it stimulated the students to respond spontaneously. Their
responses were interpreted through identifying common themes with a focus on both the
positive aspects as well as the problem areas. To ensure confidentiality, students were
asked not to put their names on the freewrites.
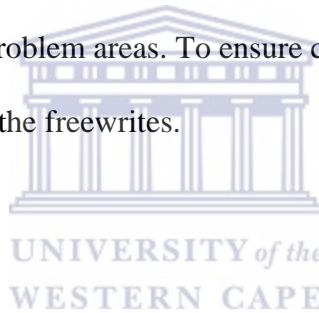
Tutor's report (2002)

The tutor who worked with the students on the newsletter reported her impressions of the
assessment and working with the students and lecturers. Her input was extremely valid,
as she had formed an important part of the writing and research process. The added
advantage was that she was not a lecturer and was therefore able to present a fresh
perspective. She handed in a written report (See Appendix D: Tutorial report on
Community Newsletter), which was done from her individual perspective.

Critical self-reflection (2003)

I reflected on my own involvement in the newsletter and reviewed my teaching methodologies. This information was gathered from my own reflections on the assessment (See Appendix E: Critical self-reflection), which I wrote down immediately after the assessment. The reflection was edited and then typed in Microsoft Word.

Peer sharing report back session

The lecturers participating in the integrated assessment met on 18 April 2002. The purpose of the meeting was to give brief feedback on the implementation of the new first-year HR programme. On the agenda of the peer session was the progress relating to the integrated newsletter assessment and the integrated test. The discussion was summarised into the following sections: integrated assessments, methodology, constraints and challenges, learning points and recommendations (See Appendix F: Minutes of Peer Report Back Session).
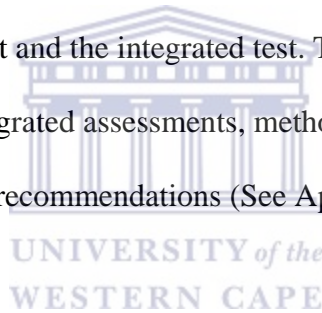
3.4.2 Quantitative Data

Student questionnaires (2002)

Data was collected from first-year Human Resource Management students (N=42) about their experiences of engaging in the community newsletter. The questionnaire consisted of statements presented by the researcher, to which the students were expected to respond (See Appendix G: Student questionnaires). Ranked responses were elicited from the questionnaires, which were distributed in the classroom and returned immediately after completion. The statements made in the questionnaire covered the following themes:

- Multidisciplinary and content: the testing of more than one subject in one assessment.
- Contextualisation and holistic understanding: Relevance of assessment and overall understanding of the field of Human Resource Management.
- Scaffolding the criteria and expectations: Use of stages in the teaching and learning process.
- Information literacy resources: Library workshops
- Application and transfer: Applying concepts learnt in class to the assessment.
- Tutorial support for writing and research support: Use of workshops and writing tutor.
- Computer skills and research skills: Evaluating whether any development had been made in these two areas.
- Drafting as process writing: Attitude of learners towards the process of submitting drafts.
- Language skills, drafts and text structure: Looking specifically and language learning and improvement.
- Quantitative feedback: The mark allocations.
- Research and referencing: Gathering of data
- Formative assessment: Providing feedback before the final summative assessment.

The data was captured on Microsoft Excel and an analysis of the data using the thematic approach (outlined in the themes above) was done. This method, which identified and grouped clear categories or themes, made it easier for the responses of the students to be identified and categorised in relation to the newsletter.

Peer questionnaires (2003)

The first-year lecturers (content and End-User Computing) lecturers, who were all employed by the Peninsula Technikon, were given questionnaires regarding their experiences, attitudes, feelings and suggestions for change regarding the newsletter (See Appendix H: Questionnaire to lecturers). All three lecturers submitted their questionnaires. I did not complete a questionnaire as I felt that it would duplicate many issues that I raise in my self-reflection. The questionnaires focused on the factors mentioned in Chapter Two, namely: the structure of the assignment, choice of assessment method in terms of work taught, instructions given to learners, resources and time and the method of marking (Siebörger, 1998:13)

3.4.3 Data Presentation

The quantitative research data is presented using the Microsoft Excel programme. This makes the calculation and presentation of data more accessible to interpretation. It is especially helpful to the researcher to be able to quantify the responses of the participants in accordance with the perspective themes.

The representation of the quantitative data is done using Microsoft Excel. The focus-group responses have been transcribed and are presented as an appendix at the back of the thesis. In the transcript, I have used (XXX) to substitute the names of the focus-group participants and the lecturers who are involved in the newsletter so as to protect their identity. I have numbered and typed (in bold) my statements and questions.

The integration tutor's report was submitted as a typed document, which has also been included as an appendix. The student freewrites also appear at the back of the thesis as an appendix. These freewrites have been numbered to facilitate referencing.
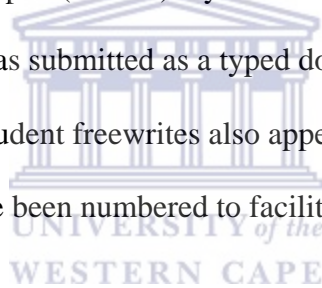
3.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have presented the various methods that I used for data collection. This has provided me with both quantitative and qualitative responses for interpretation. The next chapter deals with the interpretation of the data that was gathered. I have included the implementations of the changes in 2004, which are reflected in the last section of this thesis.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The data that was gathered, was summarised and organised according to the themes discussed in previous chapters, and according to areas of difficulty. These themes cover the following areas: content and language integration, the relevance of the newsletter in relation to industry, the issues involving group-work, the resources that are required for the newsletter, tutorial and workshop support, assessment criteria and outcomes, written drafts and formative feedback, tutorial and workshop support, and relationship or links with the organisation. The results of each section are arranged in the following sequence although each section does not always include all these result areas: student focus-group, student freewrites, student questionnaires, peer review, peer questionnaire results, tutorial report and finally my own self-reflection. Copies of the original freewrites can be found in the Appendices and are numbered from one – twenty-five for easy reference.

4.1 INTEGRATION OF CONTENT AND LANGUAGE

According to Hager, *et al*, (1998:57) integration occurs "…by having methods which assess a number of elements simultaneously". However, according to these results, it appears that there were communication problems between the lecturers on the integration team and this hampered the students' own understanding of the newsletter as an integrated assessment. As a result, although students understood integration, many students as well as lecturers still approached the assessment as a combination of separate subjects rather than a merging of these elements.

4.1.1 The focus group

The students in the focus group appeared to have a general idea of the concept of integration. The following statements made by students suggested this. They mentioned that integration is: "A whole lot of things combined" (page 1) and that it is, "A whole lot of things put into one" (page 1). One student saw integration as a "combination of all our subjects" (page 1) and another, "a task which involves all our subjects" (page 1). Students therefore clearly had a good understanding of how integration could be applied to their course (See Appendix I: Focus-group results).

4.1.2 Student freewrites

The student freewrites yielded many comments about the integrated approach to assessment. One student was of the opinion that students who do integrated assessments "Learn to look at things in general … [to have a] much broader approach … and not think narrow minded" (Freewrite one). This would be line with the CCFO's which have to be covered in all academic programmes. Another student "… liked writing the newsletter because it is something that will help you in the future." (Freewrite eight) This student obviously saw the long-term benefits of an integrated assessment in terms of future benefits.

The following statement reflects the creation of new knowledge through learning and working together. The student believed that an integrated assessment is used: "…to create something using various components" (Freewrite ten). Yet another student mentioned in the freewrite that working on the newsletter "was something different and unique in our

year programme" (Freewrite twenty-one) and also mentioned how enjoyable the assignment was (See Appendix J: Student freewrites). This statement would suggest that some students enjoyed and appreciated engaging in a variety of assessment modes.

4.1.3 The Questionnaires

The results of the questionnaires (See Appendix K: Summary of questionnaire data) showed that most learners recognised that the newsletter contributed to their knowledge about HRM and gave them a better understanding of their field. Forty-eight percent of students in the focus group agreed, and fifty percent of students strongly agreed that they had gained new information about human resource management. Thirty-three percent strongly agreed and forty percent agreed that they read and understood texts without applying reading skills. This suggested that the learners were not always conscious that they could apply skills learnt in one discipline (English Communication) to another (Personnel Management). All the students agreed that they had acquired additional computer skills and that they had gained a new skill that could be used to search for information for other assignments.

4.1.4 Peer review

An issue that was raised in the peer review was that even though they found "creative ways to synchronise and link their subjects", there ought to be a closer link between the content lecturers and the End-User Computing lecturer regarding assignments and computer support should run concurrently with integrated assessments. The integration team found that working on the newsletter provided them and their students with "a

holistic view of the whole first year programme". Lecturers also gained knowledge "of each other's subjects and teaching method and style" (See Appendix F: Minutes of Peer Report Back Session).

4.1.5 Peer Questionnaire Results

The lecturers found that the students "struggled with integrating Personnel Management with this assessment" (Questionnaire one) and that they could only clearly see the link between subjects "when the lecturers introduced it to them" (Questionnaire one) or "after explanations from the lecturers" (See Appendix L: Questionnaire to lecturers - Questionnaire three).

One lecturer felt that "lecturers involved in the integration of this assessment should stick with the programme as outlined in the year programme" (Questionnaire two). Another lecturer raised the issue regarding team teaching: "Improvements could be made in terms of better planning so that information is co-ordinated and synchronised before presenting it to the students" (Questionnaire one). Communication between the lecturers on the integration team was also raised. The lecturer mentioned that, "Lecturers should be communicating on a continuous basis to ensure that all in the team are kept updated on events regarding the assessment" (Questionnaire one).

4.1.6 Tutorial Report

In her report (See Appendix D: Tutorial report on community newsletter), the writing tutor held the view that "Students would benefit from being exposed to different

approaches so as to develop a holistic understanding of the content. To this end, different lecturers reinforcing ideas from different perspectives can challenge learners to develop their own opinions in relation to others. This would prevent one-dimensional thinking" (page two). Care needed be taken though that students did not associate certain lecturers with certain subject areas of the assessment as students may then compartmentalise their knowledge.

4.1.7 My Self-reflection

The results of my own self-reflection (See Appendix E: Critical self-reflection) produced the following thoughts about the newsletter: "There was limited time for meeting with my peers, developing material and for the evaluation of the ongoing progress and development of the assignment. I often lost contact with my peers and as a result we did not always speak with one voice in the classroom" (page 1) Therefore the consistency of the information presented in the classroom to the students was often jeopardised. "Students were often confused about the expectations of the individual lecturers" (page 1), who sometimes spoke about each other's subject matter in the classroom. Another obstacle that I observed in my freewrite on the newsletter was that: "Some students still thought in subjects. I was also often guilty of this as I struggled to move to an integrated way of thinking about the course" (page 1).

These interpretations of integration are in line with that of the Peninsula Technikon workshop report of the Trans-disciplinary Research Niche: Language and Content Integration project as discussed in Chapter One. This report mentions that: "Brain

research has shown that people don't think 'in the box' – they are trained to do so by being taught 'in the box'. The natural tendency is to think across disciplinary boundaries and to find links and connections" (2002:3).

4.2 RELEVANCE TO INDUSTRY AND HR

For some students there appeared to be confusion around their expectations of the demands and duties of HR practitioners in the workplace. Students also showed some understanding of the future benefits of doing the newsletter in the community as it afforded them an opportunity to practice what they learnt in the classroom. Although the newsletter was aimed at mirroring the possible demands of industry, students needed to make the connection for their own understanding of the workplace. The newsletter did not just test what the students knew and what they could do, but also embraced what they would encounter outside the academic institution. Eisner (1993: 144) supports this notion of assessment in Chapter Two where he states that tasks should reflect "the world outside schools, not merely those limited to the schools themselves".

4.2.1 Focus group

In the focus-group discussion, the question was asked about the relevance of the newsletter to the workplace. One student replied that: "…it depends what kind of company you belong to" (page 1). Another students responded with: "Aren't there like PR people that's supposed to do that. Does the HR have to do everything, like the ad., setting up all those things. Like a newsletter for your company. I don't know if the HR should be responsible for that" (page 1). These comments showed that some students did

not seem to have a clear idea of the expectations of industry. Many had a narrow view of the duties that they would be expected to perform in the world of work This assumption was further reinforced by the assertion of one student who asked: "If HR is responsible for this newsletter then who does IR [Industrial Relations] and training. Where do you find the time to attend events?" (page 1).

4.2.2 Freewrites

The freewrites showed that students believed that working outside the classroom was beneficial to their development in relation to their field of study and could prepare them for the world of work. One student found the community newsletter "more challenging and interesting … making students become wiser about the field … combining research from external environment with internal … the students can focus on both sides" (Freewrite two). Another wrote: "The newsletter was a new learning experience for me, and it helped me as an individual to use my skills and abilities in the outside world/environment" (Freewrite twenty-four).

The newsletter not only encouraged horizontal integration (between subjects at first year level) but also vertical integration (between the different levels at first, second and third year). This is supported by one student who wrote: "it gave us a brief preview of what it's going to be like if we are going to do in-service training and entering industry one day" (Freewrite six).

4.2.3 The Questionnaire

Forty-three percent of the students who completed the questionnaire 'strongly agreed' and fifty-seven percent 'agreed' that the newsletter helped them to have a better understanding of the field of human resources.

4.3 GROUP DYNAMICS

Students appear to have been divided on the issue of groupwork. On the one hand, students felt that they would have preferred to work on their own as some of their group members were not performing. On the other hand, students recognised that one should be: "open to other ideas … in a HR department, you're not going to do it on your own … You're going to get pieces from other departments as well … the group work with the newsletter was a good idea because the team work and the way we think, we don't think the same and when you combine different thoughts it comes out" (Focus group - page 3). This student echoed the idea that groupwork is a vital component of the industrial environment where employees often have to perform tasks in a team.

4.3.1 Focus group

Some students in the focus group perceived the group experience in a negative light. One student, who was frustrated with his group, wrote: "In the end we were clashing about what page is to become what … waiting for someone to give you feedback then that didn't work out. Whereas you're working alone … you're going to have your own perspective of what you want at the end … you're going to be more satisfied when you give in your assignment" (page 3). This contradicts Vygotsky's concept of learning in
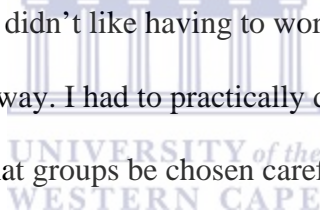
groups, as discussed in Chapter Two, where he implies that what students do in groups reflects their mental development better than the task that they accomplish alone (1978:85). In other words, as students are part of a larger society and cannot operate in the workplace without interacting with others, the true measure of an individual is not whether they can work alone, but whether they can work around and with others in society.

A more positive perspective came from another student in the focus group: "… I think group work was excellent … a newsletter must be diverse. It must meet and suit every individual within the company" (page 3). Another observed that: "Sometimes you need another person to help you along" (page 3). This would link up with Vygotsky's key aspects on human socio-cultural activity and the process of internalisation as stated in Chapter Two of the thesis. Gouws (1998:81) discusses the important part that people play in the development of others through activities.

Students were of the view that they had acquired certain skills by working in a team. One student also mentioned the following: "I worked with people I had never spoken to in class. You're forced to speak to that person. You're forced to understand that person. You're forced to cover the communication barriers, the language barrier … not everyone speaks English fluently and you have to understand. You have to adapt … and that was a quick learning experience" (page 10). Another student wrote that: "… there's always this conflict between the English and Afrikaans students … now they're all thrown together. All speak English" (page 10).

4.3.2 Freewrites

Diversity management, which is an essential skill for human resource managers, can foster good intercultural relationships between workers in their company. It is not always a good idea to have a group or team made up of only high achievers and intelligent members. According to O'Sullivan *et al.* (1996:59) "… teams with high scorers on mental ability tests … did not perform well in group tasks. They tended to be argumentative, difficult to manage and destructive … teams with similar personalities did not perform well". Similarly, too many weak group members can destroy a group with their lack of drive and commitment. Students were, however, aware that to create a new body of knowledge, they had to work together as a team.

One student complained that: "I didn't like having to work in the group that I did because they weren't helping me in any way. I had to practically do the newsletter on my own…. My only suggestion would be that groups be chosen carefully and the right organisation be chosen for your newsletter" (Freewrite nine). Two issues are prominent here: the choice of group members and the allocation of a community organisation. This needs serious consideration as the wrong group members or organisation can negatively affect a student's performance in terms of the quality of the final product and ultimately their mark. On the one hand, one student "…liked to do the newsletter report because we had to go out in the community and look for different organisations" (Freewrite twenty-five). On the other hand, one student preferred "…to have been given an organisation to go and visit instead of searching for one"(Freewrite seven).

At the time of this study, HRM lecturers were divided on whether to assign students to an organisation or to allow students to choose their own organisation. If students chose an inappropriate organisation, much time and energy was lost in an effort to reassign the students. Student teams could, as an alternative, negotiate with the lecturer when choosing their community organisation.

Although the freewrites produced some negative statements about working in a group, not all the comments were negative. One student mentioned that the community newsletter was "… fun to do, when busy with the research of it, compiling it, and by using my creative ideas with my other group members" (Freewrite twenty-four). Creativity is a term that crops up regularly in the freewrites and is another CCFO that is embraced by the assessment.
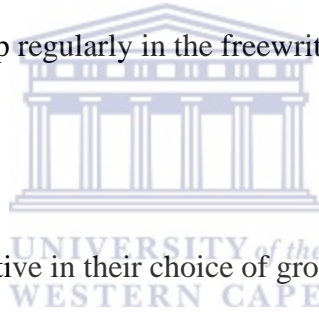
Those students, who were selective in their choice of group members, were happy with their group. As one student wrote: " … the newsletter was fun because you were able to work with other individuals to learn new ideas on creativity and to get to know them better. I enjoyed the compilation of each others article… and we were able to go out and find something to share with others… One also got to share your personal creativity" (Freewrite ten). This student uses the word "share" twice in the freewrite. This is significant because it reflects a community spirit of sharing the self with others and resists the notion that academic achievement is a solo journey of discovery.

For many students, groupwork also provided an opportunity to interact with other students and to test their knowledge and opinions against those of their peers. This can reaffirm their own individuality and identity and establish their place not only in the community outside the technikon, but also within their academic community. Therefore, students who work in teams, especially in their first year, can feel more part of the technikon student community than those who are isolated from their fellow students.

4.3.3 Results of peer questionnaire

One lecturer mentioned the group problems that he observed. These are differences in "personalities", different levels "of commitment", and an "uneven spread of skills" in the different groups (Questionnaire 3). This would lead to some groups being stronger than others. In some groups there were "students who tended to dominate other students (Questionnaire 3).
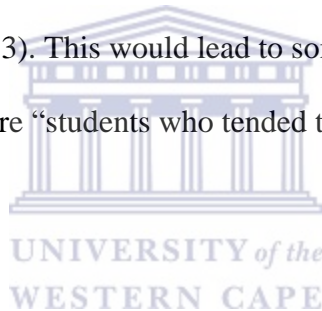
4.4 RESOURCES

Another concern was the lack of resources that were needed to complete the newsletter successfully. Students needed certain resources, for example access to computers with the correct programme and skilled laboratory assistants. Also of concern was the lack of colour printing facilities and transport to community organisations. Some students also experienced difficulties with saving their typed work as their computer disc space was too small. As a result, many of these resources were lacking or of an inferior quality. This is of serious concern and raises the issue of fairness. According to Siebörger (1998:13) when evaluating the fairness of an assessment, one should ask: "are the conditions

appropriate; is there enough time; do learners have access to the resources that they need?"

4.4.1 Student freewrites

In the first place, students found it difficult to compile their newsletter without the necessary software and training. The software package Microsoft Publisher, which is generally used for desktop publishing, was not provided as promised and therefore they had to develop their newsletter on an inferior computer programme, Microsoft Word. This can be gathered from the statements made by one student that there was a: "Lack of skills … to draw up a professional newsletter, or one with good standards … Most classmates did not produce what was expected" (Freewrite nineteen).

A second issue was the cost of transport. Students had to travel to the community organisations on their own in order to gather information about their selected organisation and its activities. Some students had to visit the organisation more than once. One of the students wrote in the free-write that "It was a lot of travelling, sometimes I didn't have money to go but I managed" (Freewrite four). Although this particular student should be applauded for finding ways to cope with the financial demands of the newsletter, a lack of finances may have caused negative attitude to develop towards the newsletter. The issue of transport also touches on other concerns like the safety of students when travelling into unknown areas.

Printing the final newsletter was also a serious concern. This is reflected in the following statements: "With the printing of the newsletter the technology at technikon did not work, that frustrated me" (Freewrite twelve). "On the last day of the newsletter, we waited in long queues in the printing department" (Freewrite twenty-two). According to Lubisi (1998:91), an assessment can be more valid on one criterion and still be less valid on another. Related to this is Siebörger's concern: "The method of administering the assessment – are the conditions appropriate; is there enough time; do learners have access to the resources that they need?"(1998:13). It seems clear from the students' statements that the infrastructure of the technikon, faculty or department could not deal adequately with the demands of the assessment in terms of the printing of the newsletter.

The level of assistance received was another issue. One student observed that the "Laboratory assistants were of **NO** assistance when we were given time off to complete this by ourselves" (Freewrite nineteen). Although first year students need to be responsible for their own learning, as required by the CCFO's, they also need to be guided and supervised at this level.

4.4.2 Peer Review

In the peer review, the team of lecturers identified the following major stumbling blocks to the success of the newsletter: "Not enough meeting time, corresponding lecture times for team teaching of the assessment; infrastructure [and] the development of lecture materials".

4.4.3 Peer questionnaire results

One lecturer stated that: "Students should either be limited as to the amount of photographs to be included in the newsletter or adequate provision should be made for the students to save the photos onto a CD" and that all students should have the opportunity "to print their newsletter in colour" (Questionnaire 2). These statements relate to the economic situation of some students who do not have access to resources outside the technikon.

4.4.4 Self-reflection

In my self-reflection I noted that: "The promised resources were often not provided and this caused a loss of motivation and insecurity about the success of the assessment" (page 1). This also caused unnecessary delays in our assessment programme. I was also concerned "… about the cost to the learners of printing the assignment" (page 1). The only place on campus where they could print their newsletter from a computer disc had closed down. This meant that students had to find other ways of printing their final document. Sometimes lecturers set assignments without any concern or planning relating to the availability of resources. Often it is not just a case of there being a lack of resources, but also the knowledge of both staff and students around gaining access to those resources that are available. I found the experience of working on the newsletter extremely challenging, but at the same time rewarding. It taught me that, "I can not expect students to perform a task that I can not do myself … [and] inspired me to experiment with technology so that I could resolve problems that the students had with

resources. It also provided with the opportunity to consider creative ways" (page 1) of approaching the assignment.

4.5 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA AND OUTCOMES

Chapter Two mentions many important factors that should be considered when evaluating the fairness of an assessment. Amongst these factors is the concern that students should know, how they are going to be marked, whether the assessment technique matches the way students have been taught or instructed, whether they are clear about what they have to do and does "The importance, length, size or weight of the assessment … match the amount of work which has been done?"(Siebörger, 1998:13). Lecturers gave the students mark allocations and detailed criteria for each section. Everyone who was involved in the newsletter seemed satisfied with the criteria and claimed that they were aware of what was expected. Surprisingly, not all the lecturers adhered to the assessment criteria when they were teaching and marking.

4.5.1 Focus group

The student focus group was satisfied that the criteria given on the handout was clearly set out but felt that not all lecturers marked strictly according to the criteria given. All evaluations/assessments should have definite and specific criteria, which should be discussed with learners. These criteria should be both curriculum directed as well as learner orientated (Carl, 1995: 123).

A student in the focus group remarked: "I think when we get an assignment and the lecturer tells us choose your group, the first thing we think is how much marks are we going to get. Are we going to get marks for it? We're not thinking are we covering communication barriers. Are we going to learn to work with other people? We're not thinking about this. We're thinking about how much marks are we going to get for this" (page 10). This comment reflects that, for a student, an assessment is a means of gaining marks. This is possibly in conflict with those of the lecturers who may view the assessment as a learning experience for students. The challenge to lecturers is to try and produce assessments that challenge and excite students so that they may learn from the assessment rather than seeing it as a means to an end. Eisner (1993:145) states in chapter two of the thesis that tasks should focus on how students solve problems and "not only the solutions they formulate".
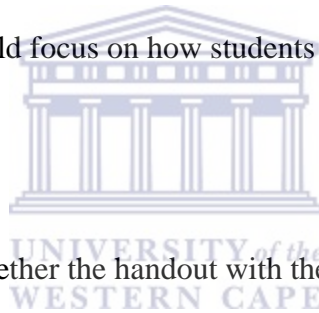
In response to a question on whether the handout with the marking criteria was clear, one student commented that, "… it was okay because … you got the grid. You were able to mark yourself down … so you were in a position where you can say: Okay, there I will be able to score some good marks. I can work on that" (page 11). As discussed earlier in this chapter, students should be informed, before the time, how the lecturer is going to mark their assignment or project (Siebörger, 1998:13).

4.5.2 Student freewrites

Some unplanned but positive learning opportunities, which were reflected in the student free-writes, were created as a result of the newsletter. Students gave some insight into

how engaging with the newsletter led to the acquisition of additional skills. As one student put it: "We learnt a lot of new things (creative and innovative)" (Freewrite twenty-one). Another student found it very exciting "to organise the unstructured information into a logical procedure" (Freewrite sixteen).

One student wrote that the newsletter presented the opportunity "to assess my abilities in using my creativiness as well as different programmes in using technology" (Freewrite three). As discussed earlier, creativity seems to be a popular area of concern for students and a component that is often neglected by lecturers when drawing up assessments. Creativity allows the students' own voice to be heard in the academic conversation that the student has with the lecturer via the assessment. "The best thing about it was going away from the academic environment and being creative" (Freewrite twenty-four).

Students were not always clear about the purpose of the assessment and what it was designed to achieve. This could be attributed to a lack of cohesion regarding the units in the year programme and the outcomes of the newsletter. According to one student, "Most classmates did not produce what was "expected"" (Freewrite nineteen). Expectations are linked to outcomes and provide a guide for both student and lecturer. The expectations of the lecturer should also match the students' capabilities and should not be pitched beyond the achievement threshold of the students. However the assessment should also challenge the student to reach a higher level of performance so that learning and development can take place. One student disliked the fact that there was a "lack of skills ... training to draw up a professional newsletter, or one with good standards" (Freewrite nineteen).

Therefore, lecturers should provide adequate interventions to assist students to meet the required outcomes of the assessment.

Time was another concern. One student mentioned that there should be "enough time for students to work on it" (Freewrite fifteen). The amount of time that is allocated for students to complete an assessment should be directly related to the level of effort and work that the assessment requires. If these two components are not matched, the quality of the newsletter is compromised.

The student teams were also responsible for the collection and recording of the information from their selected community organisations. One student observed that: "I liked the fact that obtaining information for the newsletter was completely up to us" (Freewrite nine). This taught them time management and to take responsibility for their own learning. A student wrote that the working on the newsletter: "gave me researching skills … questioning skills" (Free-write seventeen). These skills are part of the CCFO's that students need to achieve. In chapter one I list the CCFO's as proposed by the department of Education as of 16/9/96 (ILLACSIG, 1996:44).

4.5.3 The Student Questionnaires

The statistics show that most of the students who completed the questionnaires accepted that analysing the topic together with the lecturer in class provided direction on what to do with the newsletter.

4.5.4 Peer questionnaires

In response to the question whether the marking criteria had helped lecturers to mark objectively, the lecturers acknowledged that "the marking criteria were carefully worked out" (Questionnaire two) and that "explicit criteria [were] given" (Questionnaire one). All lecturers agreed that "with some adaptations" (Questionnaire three), the marking criteria can be used by other lecturers and will yield the same results (Questionnaires one and two).

All lecturers agreed that the choice of assessment technique matched the way in which learners were taught (See Questionnaires one, two and three). All teaching should be geared towards the assessment, as it is unfair to test students on a foreign concept that they did not have a chance to practice. According to the lecturers, all learners knew how they would be marked and that the marking was as objective as possible (Questionnaires one, two and three). Lecturers also confirmed that all the students understood the instructions and/or questions given to learners. One lecturer stated that those students who "required additional information" (Questionnaire three) were given support by fellow students and lecturers.

Although all lecturers agreed that the importance, length, size or weight of the assessment matched the amount of work that was done, one lecturer felt that "The newsletter should weigh more than 10 percent because there is a lot of effort/research/skill attached to it (Questionnaire two). According to the lecturers, the students were involved and played an

active part in decision-making and by giving their input (Questionnaires one, two and three).

According to one lecturer, "The students struggled with the piece on the HR functions [and] Management styles" and stated that "It was not useful to criticise the management style of an organisation in this type of assessment and these organisations have few HR functions"(Questionnaire two).

4.6 WRITTEN DRAFTS AND FORMATIVE FEEDBACK

After the essays were shown to the writing tutor in the workshops, students were required to submit drafts of their essays to the content lecturers for commenting. After these were returned to students, they were required to apply the comments so as to make changes to the essays with the idea of incorporating the information into articles for the newsletter. Students were generally dissatisfied with the lack of feedback from one lecturer. The lecturers were significantly silent on the issue of the written drafts, which led me to believe that this was an issue worthy of exploring in detail.

4.6.1 Focus group

The student focus group was not satisfied with the feedback of the first drafts of the essays. "I was … very disappointed when we got the individual essays back to see all of us got five percent … we took time and effort to put that thing together and yet not even a comment or where you can improve, nothing. So what was the point in doing it in the first place" (page 8). Only the group essays were marked formatively but the individual

essays were just awarded a participation mark of five percent. As a result, learners were unsure about what adjustments they had to make.

Another problem that was highlighted in the focus-group discussion was that the first drafts of the individual essays were not returned soon enough. One student stated that "We waited long and then at the end we had to rush through to get done" (page 9). Students also felt that they had put a lot of effort into the group assignment and were disappointed that even the students who put in minimal effort received the same mark as they did (five percent). Although students handed in a draft of the essays to their content lecturers, they felt that a final draft of the newsletter in black and white should also have been submitted to the lecturer for checking. Students were divided on the issue of being awarded a mark for the drafts. Some felt that a poor draft mark might negatively influence their final mark. As one student mentioned, "marks could determine whether you pass or fail" (page 6). Another student, on the other hand, felt that, "… it will actually work because then you as the whole group, three people, are going to work to a date because you know you're going to get some mark for it". Students seemed satisfied with the suggestion that the mark for a draft be awarded as "a participation mark but not to the actual assignment" (page 6) but that it be an individual mark and not the same for the whole group.

4.6.2 The Student Questionnaire

The questionnaire responses to the process writing approach were positive as ninety three percent of the students agreed that their results would be better if they could apply the

process approach. An interesting result of the questionnaire was the response from sixty-nine percent of the students who felt that submitting more than one draft did not really help them with the newsletter. This could indicate that although some students appreciated the value of the process approach, it did not really help them in the case of the newsletter to hand in drafts because of the absence of comments on the drafts of the one essay.

The feedback comments on the drafts were received favourably by most students (eighty percent) but sixteen percent did not feel that it helped with their final draft. According to the student questionnaires, most of the learners (seventy percent) wanted marks for every stage of the writing process. Perhaps the lack of a tangible reward for each draft could have led to this negative perception. This result contrasts with the finding that eighty-five percent of the students agreed (thirty-three percent strongly) that when an assignment is written, they should submit multiple drafts. So, although the process approach did not perhaps work as well as it could have with the newsletter, students still believed that drafting could work with other assignments.

One positive result of the drafts was that most students (seventy-nine percent) found that they had learned more about the content subjects by submitting more than one draft. Often when students get assignments back from lecturers they ignore the comments, and focus instead on the mark that has been awarded. With the draft process though, the students are forced to consider the comments to enable them to make meaningful changes to the assignment. Sometimes the comments also impart and enrich the student's

knowledge of the subject. Comments can therefore be seen as a conversation that the lecturer or tutor has with the student.

Another positive result of submitting more than one draft was that almost all the students (ninety-one percent) felt that they had learnt about language usage and the structuring of the newsletter. This is especially important considering the language profile of the students at Peninsula Technikon. Most of the students are not first language English speakers and the drafting process affords them the opportunity to improve their language before a final submission of their work.

4.6.3 Peer review

In the peer review of the assessment, the lecturers recommended that they should give students valuable feedback in the formative stages of the newsletter so those students can make the suggested improvements to their assignments (page 1). As I mention in Chapter Two, Lenner and Hanson (1975) are of the view that the characteristics of constructive feedback is that: "It is directed towards behaviour which the receiver can do something about … It involves the amount of information the receiver can use rather than the amount we would like to give [and] It is checked to determine the degree of agreement from others". If these characteristics are adhered to, many of the difficulties relating to commenting and feedback on student drafts can be alleviated.

4.6.4 Self-Reflection

A concern that I had was "… that each lecturer on the integration team assessed only his or her section of the assessment instead of the whole assessment. So the marking of the newsletter was not really done in a holistic way" (page 2). This is particularly significant especially as not all the lecturers formatively assessed the student's drafts. This showed a lack of consistency towards the marking of the newsletter and also a lack of respect for the student's drafts. The students noted these shortcomings as mentioned earlier. Another concern was that: "The delays in submission due to technical problems and the late return of essays caused the assessment to lose momentum" (page 1).

4.7 TUTORIAL AND WORKSHOP SUPPORT

The integration team organised many workshops for students as part of the intervention strategies that are designed to help students. Amongst these interventions that were implemented were writing workshops, library information tutorials, computer workshops and writing consultations. Generally speaking, students acknowledged that they found the workshops beneficial and a good learning experience. Some students requested more assistance and more focussed workshops.

4.7.1 Focus group

On the issue of academic support, a student in the focus group noted that all the lecturers "weren't participating in the newsletter event … (only) you had the workshops for us. He didn't have workshops. He didn't speak about it in class." (page 11). This statement shows clearly that some lecturers on the integration team did more work than others did

in the classroom and in the computer laboratory. One student also felt that the two computer laboratory sessions they had in preparing the newsletter were inadequate, and that they needed more computer guidance. This student mentioned that the lecturer could intervene more, for example: "… you're doing that … you can change this. You know, give some criticism and let us learn. Tell us how we can improve because we only had two sessions – the Friday and the Saturday and I don't think that's sufficient because the newsletter was a very big project" (page 7).

4.7.2 Student freewrites

The students were given workshops to assist them in the different areas of the newsletter. One student wrote: "What I found positive was that all our sessions we had to attend helped us a lot" (Freewrite twenty-one). This statement is an indication that some students needed and appreciated the academic assistance provided for them. Most of these workshops were not compulsory but were extremely well attended. It is not always easy to differentiate between how much assistance should be given to students and how much the individual should be made to do on their own. In terms of language difficulties, as in the case of many students at Peninsula Technikon, determining the level of assistance needed is even more difficult, as some students are skilled enough to work on their own.

4.7.3 The Questionnaires

The majority of the students (ninety-three percent) who completed the questionnaires seemed to benefit from the tutorial on topic analysis and could apply it to the assignment.

The response to the library tutorial was mostly positive (eighty-one percent) but nineteen percent of students felt that they could have coped without it. Most of the students (seventy-two percent) disagreed that they would have performed better without tutorials. Almost half the students (forty-five percent) agreed that they could have found information for this newsletter without attending the writing and tutorial sessions. Therefore the data gathering did not seem as much of an obstacle for the students as was organizing and using the information once it had been collected. This involved skills of shifting, selection, analysis, summarising, organising data and so on.

Most of the students (eighty-three percent) believed that the writing workshops helped them to do the newsletter. Most of the students (ninety-seven percent) were of the opinion that by doing the newsletter they learnt more about how to reference their sources of information. From these responses I can deduce that most students really appreciated workshops that helped them with their assessment. The writing and library workshops were especially appreciated.

4.7.4 Peer Review

The integration team felt that the tutorials should be closely linked to the workload and content of the course and not be focussed on isolated or extra tasks. They also agreed that lecturers should team teach so that students could make links between the lecture content and that of the tutorials. The team advised that the tutor should be familiar with the field of HRM and the requirements of the course.

4.7.5 The Writing Tutor

According to the writing tutor, "…all the lecturers involved in the integrated assessment were not equally involved in the lab." (page 2). The necessary computer skills were lacking when they were required. The students were highly enthusiastic and showed a great deal of motivation during the tutorial sessions. "This healthy atmosphere could be attributed to the visibility of the English lecturer as well as the lecturer's assistant, who both had a good knowledge of the programme, and handled queries as they arose" (page 2). The writing tutor also felt that more time was needed for tutorials to ensure the application and reinforcement of skills and theory learned in lectures. It should also be noted that "The relationship between student and senior student writing consultant is less formal and often less intimidating, than that between lecturer and students, and facilitates a positive affective environment" (Parkerson, 2000:129). Therefore, a tutor can be an invaluable resource in the classroom.
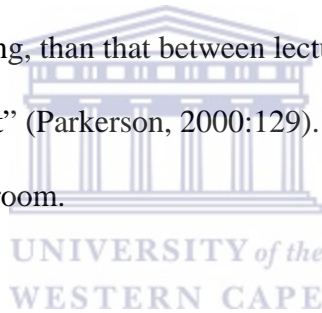
4.8 RELATIONSHIP WITH ORGANISATION

The newsletter requires students to interact with a community organisation so that they can gain information for their essays. The students reported both positive and negative experiences with the organisation. Some students indicated that they were under-prepared for this interaction and that some organisations were very protective or defensive about the organisation. Nevertheless, students learnt valuable lifeskills as a result of their visits to the organisations. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, Vygotsky views social interaction as an important part of the internalisation of knowledge and through their experiences

with the community organisations, students were raised to a higher level of knowledge (Gouws, 1998:81).

4.8.1 Student Freewrites

There were both negative and positive responses around the experiences that the students had with their community organisations. One student reported in the freewrite that: "…it was stressful, because we made appointment with the organisation, when we got there … they had forgotten about us" (Freewrite twenty-two). Some students battled when it came to applying the skills that they had learned once they had to work with the community organisation. One student in the freewrite said that: "Our interview was not successful" (Freewrite one) and yet another student had "trouble with interviewing, nervous… trouble writing down answers during interview" (Freewrite fourteen). Students were required to interview the director or the manager of the community organisation as they needed information about the history and background of the organisation. The tutor and the lecturers gave the students practical workshops on interviewing skills and interview questionnaire design.

The relationship between the students and the organisations was complicated by difficulties in communication. An assessment of this nature requires the full co-operation of both the community organisation and the student. One student wrote that, "People at the organisation are very busy… Our contact was vague… The contact thought we were investigating the place" (Freewrite one). This statement (and others) reinforced the idea that some community organisations had a culture of their own, which made them

suspicious of the motives of outsiders. Another student wrote: "The disadvantage was that people did not want to give sensitive information to you for example financial statements of funding … to make your assignment more factual." (Freewrite twelve). This statement showed that students were not always aware of the protocols of the organization, which was unlikely to provide sensitive and confidential information

Not all students had a problem with the interview. As one student stated: "It was great to do the newsletter especially the fact that we had to go to a company dressed-up and I actually had my first real interview with a person" (Freewrite thirteen). Another one wrote: "You see and learn how organisations operate in the environment and how individuals think within an organisation" (Freewrite twelve).

Several students agreed that the newsletter facilitated the building of new relationships outside the technikon, and that it also helped them to encounter accommodate different viewpoints. The experience of working in an organisation can thus be a preparation for the workplace. "It helped me to know lots of people and to go to places or areas that I never thought I would go".

The newsletter also raised students' awareness of the existence of the disenfranchised and under-privileged. One student claimed that: "It gave me a clearer view and insight into what people do for the less privileged. So often these people go unnoticed and this assignment gave recognition to these important people" (Freewrite nine). Another wrote: "What I have learnt is that we cannot imagine the poor people that are suffering and I feel

for them." This student showed that the experience taught empathy for those less fortunate. One student gave a list of activities that she viewed as positive. These are: "…going out to meet members of the organisation, playing with children, taking pictures with children, helping teachers and in the kitchen" (Freewrite fourteen).

4.8.2 Peer Questionnaires

One lecturer felt that "A copy of the completed (edited) newsletter should be sent to the organisation as a follow-up" (Questionnaire two). Although students were supposed to do this, lecturers did not follow through to check if all students did go back to the organisation with the completed newsletter. Some students though, "actually stayed in touch with the organisation" (Questionnaire two).

4.9 CONCLUSION
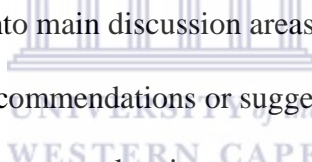
The findings suggest that although the newsletter is interesting and exciting it has a number of problem areas that require attention. These were mainly the communication between lecturers on the integration team, availability of resources, conflict in the student groups, commitment of all lecturers to commenting on drafts, adhering to set criteria and attendance at workshops and communication between the student, the technikon and the community organisation. Chapter Five deals with possible suggestions on how to improve the newsletter so that it can become a valid and reliable form of assessing business students.
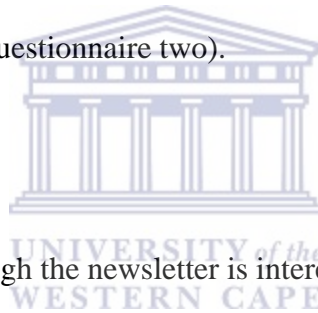
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The task of criticism is not an easy one but is one that has to be undertaken so that teaching practice and assessment design can change and/or improve in the interests of all key stakeholders in education. For the sake of teaching students how to be accountable, lecturers should reflect on classroom activities (Eliot, cited in Heywood, 200:380). As a result of these reflections and discussions in this thesis I can conclude that the community newsletter as a form of assessment for Business students has both strengths as well as areas that need improvement. These are summarized in this chapter, followed by recommendations for improving the assessment.

This chapter has been divided into main discussion areas, with accompanying summaries of each section, which end in recommendations or suggestions for the integrated team and HRM students. Many factors were taken into account to determine whether the newsletter, as an assessment, is valid or not. Most of these factors rated well but there were a few exceptions as mentioned at the end of chapter five. Only when these problem areas are addressed then can the newsletter be regarded as valid. Out of the five factors that should be considered when evaluating the fairness of an assessment, I consider two of these areas in the newsletter to be weak: "The method of administrating the assessment … [and] The method of marking" (Siebörger, 1998:13). Despite these limitations, the newsletter can be considered to be an effective means of assessing students. By implementing the suggestions in this chapter, lecturers and students are able to overcome the weaknesses of the assessment.

5.1 INTEGRATION OF CONTENT AND LANGUAGE

5.1.1 Summary of findings

Students generally understood what integration was and how it related to their HRM course. The integrated newsletter contributed to their knowledge and understanding of HRM. Students did not always consciously transfer their skills learnt in one subject to another although they did acknowledge that the computer skills could be applied to other assignments. The integration between lecturers was not always ideal, especially the computing, although it facilitated a holistic understanding of the different subjects. A lack of communication between lecturers can lead to conflict and an inconsistency of information that is presented to students. Lecturers who deviate from the programme can cause confusion and work overload for both lecturer and student. Tension also exists between thinking in individual subjects and the integrated programme. The time allocated for integration meetings, development of materials, evaluation of assessment and workshops was limited and restricted.

5.1.2 Recommendations on facilitating integration

Lecturers could invite a staff member who is experienced at integrated assessments to do workshops on the problem areas relating to integration. To resolve conflict and tension between lecturers on the integration team, the faculty management should ensure that there is a regular time slot that is allocated for meetings. These meetings should be planned well ahead of time and could be used for planning, feedback, workshops and assessing. The whole integration team should confirm all information on the assessment before it is imparted to students. Lecturers and students should also use technology to

maintain contact with each other, for example electronic mail or through the institutional

website. The website will enable lecturers to update information on a continuous basis.

5.2 RELEVANCE TO HRM

5.2.1 Summary of findings

Some students showed some confusion around the expectations of the workplace as well

as the duties of HR practitioners. Some students believed that working with the

community organisation was an opportunity to practice the skills that they had learnt in

the classroom. There was some understanding of the future benefits of doing the

community newsletter for example, as a preparation for industry. There was a general

consensus that the newsletter facilitated a better understanding of HRM.

5.2.2 Recommendations for understanding relevance

Lecturers should explain and emphasise the link between information dissemination (the

newsletter) and the role of the HR practitioner in terms of communicating with the

workers. A guest speaker from industry, who is a HR practitioner, could address HR's

role in disseminating information.

5.3 UNDERSTANDING GROUP DYNAMICS

5.3.1 Summary of findings

Most of the student teams viewed the conflict in their team as being very negative. Group

conflict emerged as a result of the poor performance of some of the team members. The

student teams can be seen as a reflection of what industry is like. The reality of the

changing industrial environment is that work teams are the new "buzz" word and that multi-skilled workers are in great demand. Groupwork stimulates creativity, improves communication skills and helps overcome language and cultural barriers. There appears to be a strong sense of sharing resources and ideas, which can be linked to the presence of a powerful community spirit. The choice of group members is important, as it is essential for the success of the group to have a group that is well balanced with a variety of skills and levels of capabilities. The choice of community organisation is an important choice for students as this choice inevitably impacts on the success of the newsletter.

5.3.2 Recommendations for improved groupwork

Lecturers should discuss the benefits of conflict and the idea that not all conflict is bad with their students. Students should be guided on issues relating to groupwork, especially how to overcome possible pitfalls and how to understand the different group roles. These issues could be dealt with in a workshop on group dynamics. Lecturers should plan for report back sessions where student teams give feedback on their group's progress. Students should write a performance report on their group members. This would encourage a sense of responsibility and accountability.

Students should be given an opportunity to choose their own organisations to work with, under the guidance of the lecturers. These choices should as far as possible be taken from a list that has been compiled by the lecturer. This would facilitate improved control over the project by the lecturers. However, lecturers should avoid rigidity and should afford student teams the opportunity to choose their own community organisations within

reason. Students should be cautioned by the lecturers to choose their group members carefully taking into consideration personality, cultural and other differences.

5.4 RESOURCES

5.4.1 Summary of findings

Microsoft Publisher was not loaded onto the computer system and students therefore had to use Microsoft Word (MsWord) to type the newsletter. This led to technical problems, as Ms Word could not accommodate the demands of the newsletter. A student raised the issue of costly travelling expenses involved in getting to the organisation. The facilities for printing the newsletter were inadequate. The laboratory assistants were not skilled enough to manage the students without the lecturers being present. The lecturers listed their main problems as being time for planning and timetable scheduling, so that each lecturer's lecture time could correspond to enable team teaching to take place. Both students and lecturers appeared to have a general lack of awareness about the existence and availability of resources on and off the technikon campus.

5.4.2   Suggestions to improve resources

Lecturers should explore the option of using institutional transport or investigate other means of funding to transport the students to the community organisations. As discussed in 5.1, lecturers should have a generic time slot in their timetable which they only use for integration meetings, team teaching, workshops, and so on. Lecturers should make sure that the laboratory assistants are skilled enough to give them the required guidance. It should be the responsibility of the lecturers to educate themselves about what resources

are available to students, for example the price of colour printing, before they implement an assessment. Lecturers could research a cheaper rate at the technikon printers for students if they print in bulk. Students should save their newsletter onto a CD rather than on a floppy computer disc. If the lecturers should get research funding for the project, this fund could then absorb some of the costs. It is unfair to students to demand high quality assessments without addressing the inadequacies in the resources.

5.5   CRITERIA, OUTCOMES AND EXPECTATIONS

5.5.1 Summary of findings

The lecturers were of the view that the criteria could be used as an assessment by other academics provided some adjustments are made, probably regarding the context. They also agreed that the marking criteria can be used by other lecturers and will yield the same results. All the students understood the handout on assessment, as the marking grid helped them to determine in which areas they could perform well. The lecturers who agreed that the criteria were carefully worked out and explicit confirmed this. Ironically, not all lecturers adhered to the criteria given to the students. According to the lecturers, students were informed of how they would be assessed and understood the instructions that were given to them. Lecturers and other students helped those who experienced difficulties.

Students showed more concern for the amount of marks that the newsletter was worth than on the value of the learning process. In other words, they focussed more on the end result of the assessment than on the process. There was a perception that the end product,

being the newsletter, did not meet expectations and that students lacked the skills to produce a good product. Some students commented on the time that was provided to complete the newsletter. The newsletter allowed a space for students to be responsible for their own learning because they had to visit the community organisations and collect information on their own.

There was some concern about the personnel management section of the newsletter where the students are asked to discuss the management style and the HR functions of the organisation. Although I agree that discussing the management style may be a sensitive issue, I think that all organisations, no matter how small, have HR functions. This would form part of the academic process where the students need to apply what they have learnt.

5.5.2   Recommendations

Lecturers should devise a time-plan of due dates and workshop times for big assessments like the newsletter so that students can apply time management. The students should be made aware of the additional benefits of doing a practical assessment as many of the skills can be used for other assessments. These skills can also be used in the workplace and as a marketing tool in their curriculum vitae. Students should be given time to absorb the details of the assignment and lecturers should then discuss the criteria and the outcomes with students. Students should be encouraged to give inputs relating to mark allocation, criteria, and so on. If students do not possess the necessary skills or expertise to complete the newsletter, then they should be given the training that is needed.

Lecturers as well as students should adhere to the criteria as presented in the assessment design. Students will become demoralised about the assessment and will lose trust in their lecturers if they perceive that the criteria are not adhered to. Any problems or difficulties with the assessment (like the management styles) should be discussed openly with lecturers in the feedback sessions so that the matter could be attended to. Lecturer should use an example of an organisation to discuss the HR functions so those students can be aware that even small organisations have HR functions.

5.6   THE DRAFTING PROCESS

5.6.1 Summary of findings

Students were mainly dissatisfied with the feedback or lack thereof relating to the written drafts. There was inconsistency in the way that the lecturers marked. Students wanted marks for every stage of the writing process. They felt that the drafts helped them to improve their understanding of HRM together with their language and the structure of their writing. However, many felt that the drafts did not help them with the compilation of the newsletter.

5.6.2 Suggested changes to drafting

Lecturers should make a decision about how to assess drafts and they should not deviate from what is decided. Awarding marks for drafts is problematic, as students then do not make the advised changes for the final copy of the newsletter. Instead of awarding marks for drafts, lecturers can ask students to keep research diaries, logs or journals of their research activities. They could then be awarded marks for this instead of for the written

drafts. This would encourage students to appreciate the value of learning as a process rather than focussing on the marks only. Lecturers should consider teaching their criteria to each other so that each lecturer is able to assess all the criteria. This would make the marking of the newsletter truly integrated. The integration team of lecturers should approach the commenting of drafts in a serious light. They should plan their due dates so that they have enough time to mark and they should give back the student drafts on time. Lecturers could also investigate sources of funding so that a writing tutor can be employed to assist with the marking of drafts. Students should not only submit drafts of the essays, but also drafts of the completed newsletter in black and white before it is sent to the printers to be printed in colour.
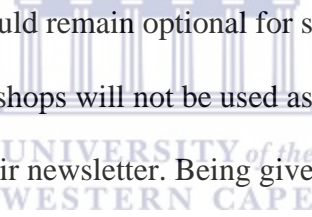
5.7 TUTORIALS AND WORKSHOPS

5.7.1 Summary of findings

Not all the lecturers were committed to attending and organising the workshops for students. Some lecturers did not link the newsletter to the work done in the classroom, and found it difficult to determine who needed extra help with the newsletter. The computer skills needed for the newsletter were insufficient. Students had a positive attitude towards the workshops possibly because these were contextualised and not generic. There were mostly positive responses to the workshops and students appeared motivated and enthusiastic. However, students felt that the skills needed for data collection were not dependent on these workshops.

5.7.2 Recommendations for writing tutor and integration team

The integration team should appear at all workshops and should take an interest in the assessment. If this type of commitment is not possible, then the newsletter should be revised to accommodate this. Lecturers need to be aware of the demands and expectations of their roles and these must be decided upfront. It may be wise to appoint an external chairperson to mediate and chair meetings so that there is some order and accountability on the part of the individual lecturers. The computer classes and tasks should relate to the outcomes of the newsletter. Students should be able to apply their computer skills that they learn in class to the newsletter. If additional computing skills are required, external expertise can be used to train the students.

The workshops and tutorials should remain optional for students. This will ensure that they remain aware that the workshops will not be used as a monitoring device but are organised to assist them with their newsletter. Being given the choice to improve their skills will give students the opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning.

5.8 LINKS WITH COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

5.8.1 Summary of findings

There were distinct communication barriers between the students and the community organisations. Some community organisations did not adhere to the meeting times with students. In some cases the organisations were sometimes reluctant to impart with information, organisation workers were too busy to assist the students, and students did not always respect the organisational culture of a particular organisation.

Where organisations accommodated them well, students learned how organisations operated and where the individual fitted into the organisation. Working on the newsletter, increased students' knowledge by introducing them to different viewpoints and cultures, which helped them to develop feelings of empathy and social responsibility. This created an awareness of the existence of people less privileged than themselves. At the same time, students struggled to apply some skills, particularly interviewing skills, once they were sent into the external environment.

Not all the students maintained contact with the organisation and gave them a copy of the completed newsletter. This is a serious display of unethical behaviour where the participant of a study is excluded from the results of that study. Students were also given access to information on the understanding that they would produce a newsletter for the organisation.
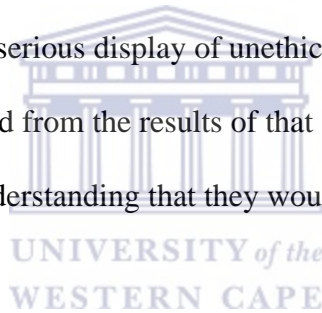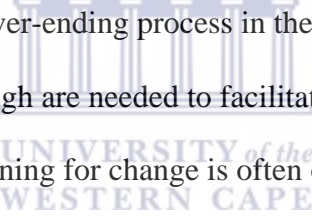
5.8.2 Recommendations

An assignment guide, outlining the relationship and expectations of both students and the community organisation, should be developed so that both parties know the rules, goals, policies, and so on. Lecturers may choose to approach organisations so that they can give their inputs. By involving the organisation more in terms of decision-making, suspicion will be minimised. Lecturers should spend more time on preparing students for the visit to the community organisations, especially in the area of improving their interviewing skills.

5.9 CONCLUSION

My philosophy regarding teaching and learning, as I mention in Chapter Two, is that lecturers should develop the curricula in an exciting and creative way (Carl, 1995:16). To accomplish this aim, it has been necessary for me to evaluate the newsletter so that I could improve on it. According to Kerfoot & Winberg (1997:16), this critical approach implies "that a critical understanding will lead to social transformation". I have applied both Carl (1995:123-124) and Siebörger's (1998:13) lists of criteria and questions to evaluate the newsletter. Most of the responses to these were positive. However, for the newsletter to be considered as a valid form of assessment, the suggested improvements would have to be implemented.

Curriculum development is a never-ending process in the same way as society is always changing. Certain resources though are needed to facilitate and accommodate these changes. The importance of planning for change is often only realised when the project or assessment has already begun, and then it can be too late. To this end, I have accepted the request to include my newsletter assessment in a pilot service-learning (SL) project at Peninsula Technikon. There is a distinct possibility that SL, which is a philosophy of teaching and learning, can be applied to the community newsletter. A short definition of SL is that it "is a teaching methodology that utilizes community service to help students gain a deeper understanding of course content, acquire new knowledge and engage in civic activity" (Stacey, Rice & Langer, 2004:1). According to this definition, the newsletter as an assessment that is based in community organisations, appears to fit snugly into this paradigm.

The Ford Foundation is funding SL at Peninsula Technikon and the Joint Education Trust (JET) and Community Higher Education Service Partnerships (CHESP) administer the funds. The newsletter project has been awarded a planning and implementation grant. As many of the problems that the newsletter has are of an economic nature, this project will alleviate the burden of finances needed for resources. Besides this, SL allows me to situate my assessment within a firm framework and philosophy. This SL project was piloted in 2004 and is currently being evaluated.

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APPENDIX A: INTEGRATED NEWSLETTER 2002
HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT 1
INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT FOR 10 MAY 2002
NEWSLETTER PRACTICAL

This newsletter is both a team and as well as an individual effort. Thus, you will do only a section of this practical in your group (only three members).

Imagine that you are members of a Human Resource Department in a company and you have been appointed to compile a newsletter to inform the staff about new developments.

- **Step one**
  Appoint group roles and tasks.
- **Step two**
  Decide on your company or business.
- **Step three**
  Make a mind map of the different focus areas that you wish to include in your newsletter.
- **Step four**
  Gather information for all the articles as well as for the additional written pieces. Make sure that you make a note of the references. Remember to consult a wide range of texts.
- **Step five**
- Organise your material and resources and then write your group article. Each team member must be involved in this step, especially with the editing and final draft of this article.
- **Step six**
  Each person writes their individual article and submits it to the team for editing and commenting. Remember to save your work and to keep more than one copy.
- **Step seven**
  Look at different newsletters to get an idea of style, layout and presentation. Besides those in the library, there are also different formats for example, in Microsoft Word (Newsletter Wizard) and Microsoft Publisher. Discuss these with your team members and then decide on an appropriate format. Remember who your audience is.
- **Step eight**
  Now you have to copy your written material into the chosen format.
- **Step nine**
  Include the graphics and any additional textual features.
- **Step ten**
  All team members should be involved in the final editing stage of the newsletter.
- **Step eleven**
- Submit your newsletter on 10 May 2002 before 14:00.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR NEWSLETTER

Overall presentation and format [20]	**Mr Gwija** **Creativity, layout, style and presentation:(8)** • Correct tabulation • Font size and style • general layout • graphics • spell and grammar check • page and article numbering • line and word spacing • headings • alignment of text **Ms Scheepers** **Additional features: (4)** • Cartoons • Letter(s) to the editor • Messages of congratulations (awards, births, marriages, etc.) • Announcements of deaths, retirements, future events, etc. **Ms Scheepers** **Relevant and appropriate additional written pieces: (8)** • Note from the editor • Advertise and promote an event organised by your HR department			
Group article: (based on unit 1.7) [40]	**Ms de Louw** Clear and concise content & good, logical argumentation **(30)** **Ms Scheepers** Correct language and spelling **(10)**			
Individual article: (based on units 1.4, 1.6 & 1.9) Each article (one per team member) must cover a different unit. [40]	**Mr Jattiem** Relevant, original and interesting content. Evidence of research shown through accurate referencing. **(30)** **Ms Scheepers** Accurate language and spelling **(10)**			
Total percentage	**100%**			

APPENDIX B: HRM YEAR PROGRAMME UNITS 2002

UNIT NO.	MODULE ONE: The Human Resource Function: Individuals & Groups in Society	TIME FRAME	DATES
1.1	Introduction to Human Resource Management	Weeks 1 & 2	28 January – 8 February
1.2	Show a critical awareness	Weeks 1 & 2	28 January – 8 February
1.3	Demonstrate a knowledge of and produce word processing documents using base functions	Weeks 1, 2, 3 & 4	28 January – 22 February
1.4	Demonstrate a critical awareness of the self as a physical, mental, intellectual & social being	Weeks 3 & 4	11 February – 27 February
1.5	Access, process, use & present information	Weeks 3, 4 & 5	11 February – 1 March
1.6	Understand human, mental & physical development, health & sexuality & their consequences	Weeks 5, 6, 7 & 8	25 February – 22 March
1.7	Manage individual & team performance	Weeks 6, 7 & 8	4 March – 22 March
1.8	Demonstrate the ability to use Electronic Mail software to send and receive messages	Weeks 5, 6, 7 & 8	25 February – 22 March
1.9	Demonstrate a critical understanding of diversity, change & development in societies	Weeks 9, 10, 11 & 12	25 March – 26 April
1.10	Engage with meaning, organisation & structure in text	Weeks 9 & 10	25 March – 12 April
1.11	Engage with aesthetic, cultural & social values in text	Weeks 11 & 12	15 April – 26 April
1.12	Demonstrate ability to use the world-wide web	Weeks 11 & 12	15 April –26 April
INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT	ALL UNITS (NEWSLETTER)	SUBMISSION DATE:	10 MAY

APPENDIX C: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

FOR

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER 2002

1. What is your concept of integration?

2. How relevant do you think that newsletter was to the actual workplace?

3. Could you comment on the link between the newsletter and the workplace?

4. What do you think about doing the newsletter as an individual assessment rather than a group one?

5. What kinds of skills did you think you brought to your group?

6. Can you give me some feedback on the technical support for the newsletter?

7. How do you feel about getting marks for your written drafts of your newsletter?

8. What is your opinion about the performance of your group members?

9. How clear were the criteria set out in your handout?

10. How did you find the summarising of your essay into the newsletter article?

**APPENDIX D: TUTORIAL REPORT ON
COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER**

1. INTRODUCTION

Ms Coleen Jaftha was approached by the Human Resource Management Department lecturer, Ms J. Scheepers, to evaluate the writing and language needs of the first year Human Resource (part-time and full-time) and Small Business Management students, and to implement a support programme to address these needs.

2. EVALUATION OF NEEDS

A needs-analysis was done in order to assess which areas needed attention. The following methods were used to gather information:

    2.1   **ESSAYS:** The essays of the students were evaluated to pick up on the common difficulties experienced by them.

    2.2   **DISCUSSIONS WITH STUDENTS:** The students were approached informally to find out where they felt that more support would be needed in order to increase their understanding of the work, and not increase their workload.

    2.3   **DISCUSSION WITH ENGLISH COMMUNICATION LECTURER:** The lecturer was approached to ascertain where she felt the learners would benefit from more support.

    2.4   **CLASS OBSERVATIONS:** Before the tutor started the tutorial process, she visited the classroom to observe and become acquainted with the learners.

3. IDENTIFICATION OF SKILLS NEEDED

The following areas were identified:
- Essay writing (see appendices A & B)
- Summarising and editing
- Newsletter formats
- Computer skills (MS Word)
- Oral prsentation skills
- Article writing
- Report writing
- Data capturing (spread sheets and statistical analysis)
- Proposal writing

4. SUPPORT STRATEGIES

In response to the needs-analysis, the workshops were organised to address the above areas (See Appendix A)

5. OBSERVATIONS

As a result of the support process, the assistant has made the following observations:

5.1: WRITING CENTRE: All the lecturers involved in the integrated assessment were not equally involved in the lab.

5.2: COMPUTER SKILLS: Some students did not have the necessary computer skills when they needed it. Some part-time students who were not registered for End-user were not on the system.

5.3: MOTIVATION STRATEGIES: The students showed great enthusiasm and were highly motivated during the sessions. This healthy atmosphere could be attributed to the visibility of the English Lecturer as well as the assistant, who both had a good knowledge of the programme, and handled queries as they arose.

5.4:APPLICATION OF THEORY AND SKILLS: More time is needed for tutorials to ensure the application and reinforcement of skills and theory learned in lectures.

5.5: MULTIFACETED APPROACH: Students would benefit from being exposed to different approaches so as to develop a holistic understanding of the content. To this end, different lecturers reinforcing ideas from different perspectives can challenge learners to develop their own opinions in relation to others. This would prevent one-dimensional thinking.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- There ought to be a closer link between the content lecturers and the I.T. lecturer regarding assignments.
- Computer support should run concurrently with integrated assessments.
- Part-time students should be included in support programmes.
- Based on the above observations, tutorial programmes are recommended to commence at the beginning of the year and not at the middle or end. Tutors would cover all the issues mentioned above. These tutorials should be closely linked to the workload and content of the course and not be isolated extra tasks.
- Lecturers and tutors should work together closely on meaningful assessments.
- Lecturers should be visible in the tutorial room. This does not imply that lecturers should be present at all the tutorial sessions but that they should team teach so that students can make links between the lecture content and that of the tutorials.
- Tutors should be trained in the field so that they are prepared for the demands of the course.
- Lecturers should give students valuable feedback in the formative stages so those learners can make the necessary adjustments to improve their assignments.

WORKSHOP AND TUTORIAL SCHEDULE

DATE	HOURS	ACTIVITY	NO. OF STUDENTS
19.07.02	9am-1pm (4 hours)	Essay writing workshop	9
26.07.02	2pm-5pm (3 hours)	Editing workshop: Computer lab	16
02.08.02	2pm-6pm (4hours)	Newsletter formatting: Computer lab	30
03.08.02	9am-2pm (5 hours)	Newsletter (MS Word): Computer lab	13
10.08.02	9am-1pm (4 hours)	Referencing, summarising	
15 08 02	2-3.30	Telephone skills	
02.09.02	5.20-7.50	Oral presentations (not sure)	HR PT
09.09.02	5.20-7.50	Report structure (not sure)	HR PT
16.09.02	5.20-7.50	Report structure Feedback:first drafts	HR PT
30.09	5.20-7.50	Feedback (Literature reports) Structure (Complete report) Peer assessment (Complete report)	HR PT
01.10	10-12	Spreadsheets	Hrm ft
01.10	14-15.15	Proposal workshop	SBM
02.10	8.25-9.45	Proposal workshop	SBM
02.10	10-12	Spreadsheets	Hrm ft
03.10	10-12	Report structure and brainstorming sources to approach for discussion of findings	Hrm ft
4.10	9-12	Report structure (Application) in Writing Centre	

APPENDIX E: CRITICAL SELF-REFLECTION

The newsletter was extremely challenging, but at the same time, a rewarding experience for me. It taught me the following:

- I can not expect students to perform a task that I cannot do myself.

- It inspired me to experiment with technology so that I could resolve problems that the students had with resources.

- It also provided me with the opportunity to consider creative ways to approach the assignment.

Working on the integrated task posed many obstacles:

- There was limited time for meeting with my peers, developing material and evaluation of the ongoing progress and development of the assignment.

- I often lost contact with my peers and as a result we did not always speak with one voice.

- Learners were often confused about the expectations of the individual learners.

- Some learners still thought in subjects. I was often guilty of this as I struggled to move to an integrated way of thinking about the course.

- The promised resources were often not provided and this caused a loss of motivation and insecurity about the success of the assessment.

- The delays in submission due to technical problems and the late return of essays caused the assessment to lose momentum.

- I worried about the cost to the learners of printing the assignment.

- I was concerned that each lecturer on the integration team assessed only his or her section of the assessment instead of the whole assessment. So the marking of the newsletter was not done holistically.

How do I solve difficulties with the newsletter? What suggestions do I have?

I'm not sure how I am going to solve all the problems but here are just some ideas:

- ❖ Some kind of funding to support resources is needed

- ❖ I need to improve on the integration part of the newsletter (marking, setting up of the assessment, team teaching) – Everything that we decide on should be put down in writing

- ❖ Make sure of the theoretical background/basis for doing the newsletter

- ❖ Planning should be more structured and realistic

Note: This document is the edited version of a freewrite done by J. Scheepers on the community newsletter project.

APPENDIX F: Minutes of Peer Back Session (held on 18 April 2002)

1. **Present**

   All first year lecturers

2. **Integrated Assessments**

   2.1 Newsletter

   Lecturers need to determine how the assessment is to be assessed. Due dates should be spread out to allow the different lecturers to do assess the essays.

   2.2 Integrated Test on 21 June 2002

   The subjects that would be involved in the test were confirmed as being: personnel Management, English and Statistics.

3. **Methodology**

   The teaching methodology that needs to be implemented to prepare students for the integrated assessments was agreed to be: team teaching.

4. **Constraints and challenges**

   4.1 Meeting time

   Lecturers agreed that there was not enough time for planning, reflection, restructuring and that they sometimes lost contact with each other. Corresponding should be time-tabled for team teaching of the assessment.

   4.2 Infrastructure

   The areas that needed to be resolved were:

   Availability of resources (lab. space and printing)

   The development of lecture material (text books, works sheets and so on)

5. **Learning points**

   Found creative ways to synchronise and link subjects

   Developing a holistic view of the programme for students and lecturers

   Knowledge acquisition of each other's subjects and teaching style and method

   Learnt to draw on external sources (research and material development)

6. **Recommendations**

   ❖ More structured time is needed for planning of ontent material, team teaching and research

   ❖ Resources: A special budget is required for materials development

   ❖ The classroom should be closer to the Business Faculty, instead of on the other side of campus, so that students feel part of the HR discipline

   ❖ Improve link between the content lecturers and the End-user computing lecturer.

   ❖ Computer support should run concurrently with integrated assessments

   ❖ Students should be given valuable feedback on drafts so that improvements can be made

7. **Closure**

   The meeting closed at 14:00.

APPENDIX G: STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Purpose: to gain feedback on your experiences of the practical so that improvements can be implemented.

Instruction: Simply tick [√] the block that indicates how you feel about each of the following statements. Your responses will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and you can remain anonymous.

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
1. By doing this newsletter, I gained more information about human resource management.					
2. I now have a better understanding of the field of human resources.					
3. The topic analysis provided direction on what to do with the newsletter.					
4. The library tutorial helped me to find and understand articles for this assignment.					
5. I read with understanding without applying reading skills.					
6. The writing workshops helped me to do the newsletter.					
7. The computer sessions have given me a new skill that I can use when I have to search for information for other assignments.					
8. I could have foumd information for this newsletter without attending the writing and tutorial sessions.					
9. I learnt about the content from submitting more than one draft.					

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
10. I learnt about language usage and the structuring of the newsletter from submitting more than one draft.					
11. I believe I would have done better without the assistance of tutorials.					
12. Submitting more than one draft did not really help me with this newsletter.					
13. I should earn marks for every stage of the writing process.					
14. By doing this newsletter, I have learnt more about how to reference my sources of information.					
15. I will end up with a better result if I approach the writing of an assignment as a process.					
16. When an assignment is written, I should submit multiple (more than one) drafts.					
17. The feedback/comments written on the drafts helped me to improve my final draft.					

APPENDIX H: QUESTIONNAIRE TO LECTURERS

The community newsletter assessment incorporates English Communication, Business Management, Personnel Management and End-User Computing at first year level. It is necessary to evaluate the newsletter so that improvements and/or adjustments can be made. Please respond to and provide comments on the following statements:

1. The newsletter enabled you to assess the outcomes of module one and module two.

----

2. The students could clearly see the link between subjects.

----

3. Students showed an understanding of the different content areas.

----

4. The final newsletter corresponded to what was envisaged by you.

----

5. The marking criteria helped you to mark objectively.

----

6. The marking criteria can be used by other lecturers and will yield the same results.

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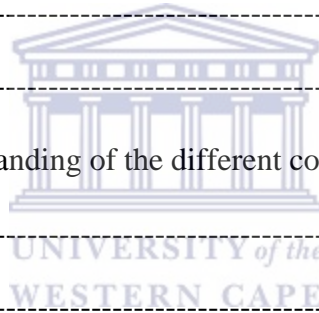
7. The different types of evaluation that were used in the assessment were relevant.

----

8. Students had meaningful learning experiences as a result of the newsletter.

----

9. The assessment accommodated the individual differences and needs of the student.

----

10. The students were involved and played an active part in decision-making and giving their input.

----

11. Learning beyond the scope of the assessment was encouraged.

----

12. The assessment gave rise to new learning opportunities.
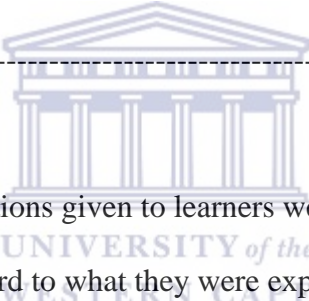
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13. The feedback that was communicated to the learner was thorough and was a true reflection of the worth of the product.

----

14. The importance, length, size or weight of the assessment matched the amount of work

that was done on the newsletter.

----

15. The choice of assessment technique matched the way in which learners were taught.

----

16. The instructions and/or questions given to learners were understood by all the

students especially with regard to what they were expected to do.

----

17. The method of administering the assessment (for example, whether the conditions

were appropriate; if there was enough time; whether students had access to the

resources that they needed) was acceptable.

----

18. The method of marking was as objective as possible.

----

19. The learners were aware of how they would be marked.

----

20. Please mention any comments/suggestions/improvements in the space below.

Thank you for your co-operation. J. Scheepers

UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

APPENDIX I: STUDENT FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

1. What is your concept of integration?

"A whole lot of things combined"

"A whole lot of things put into one"

"Assignments are okay with integration, but the tests …"

"A combination of all our subjects"

"A task which involves all our subjects"

2. How relevant do you think that newsletter was to the actual workplace?
"As an HR manager … in a company …"

"Okay, it depends what kind of company you belong to"

"Aren't there like PR people that's supposed to do that. Does the HR have to do everything, like the ad., setting up all those things. Like a newsletter for your company. I don't know if the HR should be responsible for that"

3. Meaning in terms of the layout, the technical stuff?
"Um … maybe the article for the newsletter … but not the whole of the newsletter"

4. I think it depends what kind of company? Maybe Mrs de Louw can respond?
"I would agree with you. In a large company where they can afford a PR obviously, but still small to medium companies you would in all probability as an HR person get involved in the newsletter and if you don't know what a good layout looks like, or what different sort of technical things there are to use then obviously you don't have any way to judge whether the newsletter is good or not. And even if you are outsourcing the task at least you know what a newsletter should look like. This is I think very relevant for HR."

5. But the fact that you are asking that question indicates to me that perhaps it wasn't clear, the link between the newsletter and the workplace. Perhaps you can comment on that.
"Because I thought to myself. If HR is responsible for this newsletter then who does IR and training. Where do you find the time to attend events and to ….

6. Would the person maybe have just written the articles and the ………

7. Do you see these links with industry?   You were working with certain units at that time. I needed content.
"Yes I think it does link because of the modules we were doing."

8. The topics were relevant but you were …..

"No, no. I think it's relevant."

"We were doing…… We linked it to the workplace….. All the issues that HR covers… then it will be relevant…"

9. ……. Somebody mentioned communication

"I think we were moving towards that …

"The group also plays a role … we had nine pages … everything is … So we just handed it in … and we could … so there … the understanding wasn't 100% of the group work…"

10. … group essay and the individual essay … from academic text to newsletter text. What happened there?
" … four pages long … I didn't know hoe to get that whole thing into a one-page article. Then you did have that workshop and it did help a bit but I don't know."

"It was very difficult for me to cover all the … because you still want to get the best … the point through. You still want to say this is how AIDS in the workplace and how you want to say at the end … and … you still want to get everything through … if it was very difficult to set, give a statement, give an answer and you know ….."

"I think some of us wrote our essay in reported speech … and you know to go from reported to …"

11. So there were some language problems?
"Yes"

12. What if you had done it on your own? Because remember there are three individual … Now what if you were … workshopped in the lab. … you get two topics … event and essay.
"Are you saying …"

13. How would you have coped? Do you … than as a group assignment?
"If we had …"
"I know it was wrong of me to include the two people's names but I couldn't let them get zero but I basically …"
"I think I coped because I basically had to do … by myself"
"It was stressful because there was a whole confusion between Publisher and Word. I started in Word but I don't know what happened to that and then I started on Word… You work on one PC … make changes and then…"

14. As an individual assignment?
"Yes"
"I sincerely think it will work because you got your point"
"The one guy I don't know who…
"In the end we were clashing about what page is going to become what … waiting for someone to give you feedback then that didn't work out whereas you're working alone … You're going to have your own perspective of what you want at the end and if its going to take you all your time you're going to be more satisfied when you give in your assignment and if you're going to get assistance its going to be even better. I think working alone is going to work."

15. What do the other think about working alone?
"The only concern will be the cost because it's very expensive"

16. But remember … if you're working alone it will be less minus two pages.
"But in the newsletter we did we had other articles like the add-ins, like the ads, and reminders and horoscopes, some people did cartoons. That also we did.

"For me I think group work was excellent because different ideas … a newsletter must be diverse. It must meet and suit every individual within the company. So I thought like there's a lot of things that I sat with but when XXX came and okay I like that you know. You go off the thing of what you think and you make the newsltter diverse including other people's ideas views"

"And you are more open to other people's ideas"

"open to other ideas. And you are not going in an HR department. You're not going to do it on your own. Alone. The newsletter. You're going to get pieces from other departments as well. What I thought was really great. We wrote our peformance appraisal. XXX came up with a nice word, then XXX came up with an idea and so mix it together and we blend it in. So I think the group work with the newsletter it was a good idea because the team work and the way we think we don't think the same and when you combine different thoughts it comes out."

17. But can you honestly say that all the three people in your group can do a newsletter on their own now or their own newsletter? Did one person take the responsibility…can all the three people …?
"I do think they can. Everyone is capable of doing what they're able to do. Sometimes you need another person to help you along like you said with assistance. So with assistance everybody can … is able to do it on their own by themselves.

18. So what if you keep the group but you have no group article. You only have three individual articles?
"That's what I wanted to say now. In a sense we had to work on our own like it's a group thing but there was a part where every individual within the group had to do his own thing with his article so I think there was like individual but you have the group so teamwork. So it's a two-way thing. XXX wasn't like … She did her thing on her own and then she'd come read it to us and like … help. There was a point where you had to go home and do your own thing and you had to go home and s… there was that kind of thing"

19. So it was individual and combined? I was just thinking in terms of the overload because if you have the three individuals and then the rest of the stuff …
"But the time was okay except for the extensions. It was okay. We got it back like marked and um we could have worked on it so it wasn't like in a month like you have to be"

"The group worked on their articles together but each worked on a newsletter but each one produces a newsletter on their own?"

"Newsletter good as a group and … and can do it as an individual basis"

20. "I'm just asking if we keep it as a group assignment and drop the group article but have individual and just have….
"But then how are we going to fish out the people who's not working?"

"Because they won't you individual. You will see the marks. You all have different marks. In some cases it's the same but in most cases its different. Some people failed it and some passed but they're in the same group because they didn't perform in the individual article. That's what she's saying. You still have to work on your own and perform."

21. But I'm saying was it too much to do the group and the individual?
"Perhaps keep it as a group"

"Maybe I'm wrong. By the time we got the newsletter we never worked with too many people in our class yet. So we chose someone that we didn't know if that person was going to work or not. They did work together nice in a group. I'm sure if we also had a group that would co-operate then we'd also feel they way they feel today. You understand. But that time when we had to get group members for the assignment we didn't really know what everyone was capable of in the class yet. I think it was a bit early."

22. So groups shouldn't happen too early on in the year?
"Yes"

23. So you should move from individual to group?

"Yes. Maybe that's also what I wanted to say. We've been …. We work excellently together in a group. We know… I know what Candice wants and Fiona and we interact and communicate regularly. We're always together and we know what our goal is. Other people may have a problem because they're working with people they've never worked with before and maybe if I worked with them and I thought we'll work excellently together then I find out that it won't work then I'll be … then'll regret working in a group because then I will be able to work better. It depends on your group members and the time of the year."

24. What kinds of skills did you think you brought to your group?
"Everybody has a bit of creativity. They're like: What are we going to do? Okay. I'll do the horoscope. I like making up things so I thought, imagination. Everybody should have imagination. So I said to them: Boring stuff is not going to attract the reader so you're going to read. You sit there. It's boring and you're not going to read anymore. You're just going to give a dull mark. I know I'm not the perfect writer but I know I have good writing skills and creativity and but then again some people tend not to read and if they don't read they can't write. You know what I mean. So in the group there's people who sit weeks and weeks. They write and write but there's no creativity and stuff behind the essay whatever. I can sit and I can write and I can write that's why I think I have good writing skills."

25. What did you bring?
"Imagination perhaps. Some creativity."

26. And you?
"Creativity"

27. Think broadly.
"Colour. Delegating … you do this and that. Don't forget. I was like the diary of the group. XXX don't forget to print this … "

"I think my writing skills. I can be very critical at times and if they came with something . If Fiona came with something she thought was excellent and everything, she took the whole night to write that thing and then she comes and I read it and then I tear her whole apart because I can…. We can change that sentence and make it more sensible or add something to make it more interesting or to attract the reader or something then I will. I don't know how they feel at times but sometimes I feel bad for doing that to their work but I just want them to be right. I feel that something can be changed or improved then I'll tell them and help them…"

28. And you?
"Creativity…. How can you put this? Where can you put this picture?

29. Visual fit …
"Mine is almost similar to … because it was just … um two years ago we had to design a magazine and I actually brought that whole idea into the newsletter. I had past experience in designing the thing and then … ja… computers. Where do I get this … Do I want lighter or darker or that hat kind of stuff."

"First of all I didn't have any group to work with. It became so frustrating … demoralising … My motivation levels … There were times … The skills that I brought to the group was leadership skills … I told the two females in the group … deadlines … and one never pitched for class and the one was a temporary visitor and there were times when I'd call them at night. Please be at tech. tomorrow. We need to talk. We need to work on this assignment and then one of them maybe pitched up. Then I'd ask them for the work, the articles because I told them … not interested in this assignment … so I gave them small tasks to do you know their personal/their individual assignment. Please finish it so I can include it into the newsletter and then they come with half a page or written and not typed out and then I just thought: This is not going to work … I know for a fact I am creative and I'm very artistic but I'm not flamboyant in writing. I'm not a good writer."

30. I think we discussed team work and the team … I can always get some notes from this. Ms XXX … some feedback? … um. You know, you did drafts for the content lecturer and it came back … right … and then we had those people coming to talk toyou … and then you had to do the newsletter after some intervention from me but now do you think at that point that you would have liked to have handed in a fiirst draft of the newsletter, like a black and white draft for checking?
"Yes"

31. Why?
"So that you could tell us this doesn't look .. a bit kosher … can you put this picture somewhere else or can you put something else over here … because that doesn't fit here … put it behind this."

32. You know you're talking layout and things like that …
"I know but we know … but some people were confused about the letter from the editor. Must it be on the first page … must it be on the last page. Where? Which article comes after which …"

"I think to hand in a first draft would have avoided us to have some … I remember our first … You couldn't read because of printing and stuff. So if we had a first draft all that technical things would have been sorted out. Then we just had to reprint. Make some adjustments. Reprint on colour and then hand it in."

"Ja … it would have showed us what problems we had …"

"Before .."

33. I'm back to resources because we're talking about formatting, adjustment, graphics, things like that. In terms of the resources … I know it wasn't up to scratch but just for the record, can you give me some feedback on the technical support?
"My general view of this whole … of resources is that some resources are promised like .. you guys are going to work on Personnel Manager … Publisher will be available and then when you want to work on the stuff … then there's just nothing and then you'll have to do the alternative. Then you pick up problems and all of a sudden then you hear problems arises then …"

"And we didn't have background or classess that told us your margin should be there and there and there. The day that I printed my asssignment and just before, I was going to give it in … Mr XXX looked at it and he told me he's going to deduct marks for a thin black line that was there where you fold your page. There was a thin black line. He said that was wrong. I mean we didn't know that he was going to deduct marks for things like that. I thought he's going to deduct marks for things like … format, line spacing … not for margins and stuff like that."

34. So you think the criteria for some of the things meaning – what you are going to be assessed on wasn't clear …
"Yes"
… and explained to you, and you weren't given enough support in terms of the criteria?"
"I think Word can't support the newsletter because once I printed my newsletter it was on one stiffy. Once I printed my newsletter, the whole thing erased. But I already had a printout because I thought because I don't know what happened to my stiffy because there was too much information … pictures … and … and the work just disappeared.

35. It's good that you mention this. It's very important.
"It didn't only happen to you. It happened to someone else also in the class."

36. Publisher … that what it was supposed to be ..
"But I don't think we were penalised on stuff like that, like XXX just said now, like on Word, like the lines. Okay like my margins. Word tells me that my margins are straight but once I print, the whole thing then I see this thing like moved. I didn't know you can make a mistake by the copiers because, I

mean you put the paper in and it prints the same thing but now, when I had my copy A3 copy, and I saw this thing move to the centre … the fold … and Mr XXX told me he's going to penalise me for that because my margins are not right …"

37. So there was a lack of lab. support while you are working on it. You would prefer …
"Like Mr XXX being around like okay, you're doing that … you can change this. You know, give some criticism and let us learn. Tell us how we can improve because we only had two sessions – the Friday and the Saturday and I don't think that's sufficient because this newsletter was a very big project and two days I don't think was enough.

38. So you need more lab. time as well
"and more assistance"
and more assistance in the lab while you're busy working?
"I never had a chance to work on Publisher. Now what if industry requires me to work on Publisher and I'm not sure my qualification will tell I've got Publisher experience."

39. No. The Publisher was what I wanted for this assignment and it was promised. It was something to make the assignment easier for me. I asked for Publisher.
"Although Publisher was not part of year programme it would only have been to our benefit to work on it."

"The other thing was very frustrating when all of us were writing on Publisher and couldn't really move forward because of … we had to … had to do it on that."

"I nearly cried when my disc was faulty. That was a new disc and I asked the lab. assistant at IT"

40. Do you think you should get marks for drafts?
"No. I would strongly disagree with that because anything can happen between that … I would rather say evaluate the final product because anything can happen with the group and then your first draft have to be in a certain date and then you have to hand in that thing because you need that points. That marks could determine whether you pass or fail."

41. And you don't think it will put pressure on …
"I think it will actually work because then you as the whole group, three people, is going to work to a date because you know you're going to get some marks for it. …. Must be in on Friday. Isn't going to be more motivation especially when you're struggling with people in your group. You can actually tell them .. this is going to affect your marks."

"Yes, and after your first draft, before I get to my final draft, I have to do something in-between so you can still go to the lecturer and discuss with the group and do minor adjustments."

"With that draft thing also. The woman, XXX, that came to us. She has newsletter experience … I would actually think you know if we, with that draft, go to her and ask her: What do you think we can do here and so on you know. She has experience in it."

"I got an idea um. I agree with XXX with the … I still stick with my stance. I would suggest that the first draft be marked on percentage like five percent, like given a mark not for an assignment but a participation mark but not to the actual assignment."

"Like you did with Ms XXX assignment … the deduction … you gave a participation mark."

42 But remember that was individual …
"it was. I think it will work but you give part of it you know why then your participation marks to the individual members."

"I know about some institutions … if you do group assignments at the end you have to write down each group members name and then to it you must write down what percentage they have contributed towards the assignment and then they had to sign next to it to tell the lecturer or the person evaluating/marking the thing so that the person can see that he or she has to give the group member marks according to their percentage."

43. Do you think it will work for us?
"Yes. I think that can especially with the cases like XXX if that will work. Because other people got marks for work that he did and that's not fair. You have to be awarded for your input."

44. What about something similar because I'm not sure if some people will be around to sign their …?
"If they don't sign, they don't get a mark."

45. What I was thinking of was where we're really pursuing and investigating self-evaluation, peer evaluation. What do you think about handing in a paragraph for each person in your group? Like a report? So for example, you hand in your group assignment but each person hands in a: member one, member two, member three didn't pitch for meeting. If two people are saying the same thing one can guage how much. How mean we also know from the attendance. We can see who are the people in the group who is not performing. We go to the labs. We walk past. We see you sitting there alone. It leaves an impression. You get that assignment, you know.

"That would help because like, in a case like this, you as the lecturer don't know that those people were not working and I'm evidence that he was doing it on his own. The only thing they did was give their stiffies to him with the data so that would actually help because he could have said but I did this thing on my own and then the leturer would know how to mark those people.

46. Did we assign you into those groups?
"No"

47. You chose your own. It would have been better if we'd assign you. Do you think it would have been better if we had to let you draw out of a hat?
"No. ….because how we going to learn to work with other people."

"Because I know there's some people who look up to XXX and XXX because they always say …Why they're always together. There's some people who want to work with them. No, no not for marks, whatever, but they want to get to know you people but you guys you keep on being together. You're tight-knitted."

"Because we know we got a good thing going."

48. But in the workplace they're not going to work with each other and you might just experience some culture shock when you have to work with some other people. Which is perhaps … some where you choose and some where you don't choose but I don't know if its your class …

49. They played …
"We experienced that … the lecturers chose for us. I worked with people that I had never spoken to in class. You're forced to speak to that person. You're forced to understand that person. You're forced to cover the communication barriers, the language barrier not um. Not everyone speaks English fluently and you have to understand. You have to adapt um and that was a quick learning experience.

50. So I think it works both ways. On the one hand its good academically to work with strong people and the other hand you might sell yourself short if you don't do it with other people as well. So working with what you know and going into the unknown.
"because I know there's always this conflict about the English and Afrikaans students. They never used to be like … now they're all thrown together. All speak English. Now the English speaking …"

"But not everyone's the same."

"No … I can get along with anybody."

51. You will notice that some people from the beginning of the year and you look at them now. There's a lot of changes in terms of speaking to other people. So it takes more time for some people to mix. For other people that's natural.
"I think when we get an assignment and the lecturer tells us choose your group, the first thing we think is how much marks are we going to get. Are we going to get marks for it. We're not even thinking are we covering communication barriers. Are we going to learn to work with other people. We're not thinking about this. We're thinking about how much marks are we going to get for this.

52. Individual learning. You actually don't plan to learn those other skills of mixing. You don't think about this. The criteria of the handout. Was the handout very clear of the newsletter? Step one, step two, Step three … Would you have wanted it written out?
"I think it was okay because you will be able… you got the grid. You were able to actually mark yourself down. No, okay … maybe I'll get that. So you were in a position where you can say: Okay, there I will be able to score some good marks. I can work on that. What do you think you know."

"But it's like all the lecturers weren't participating in the newsletter event – like – they would just get the … Mr XXX … You had the workshops for us. He didn't have workshops. He didn't speak about it in class to us. I think Ms XXX … she also gave us feedback of the assignments so we didn't get anything from him – no participation – He just said: I'm doing a newsletter with you guys an like you can come."

"There's was some confusion about Mr XXX assignment."

"He took long to mark those."

"He took long to mark and when he gave it back it back to us."

"Because we got information from him and then another lecturer tells us no we have to do it like this. There was a whole confusion also."

"No, no. He didn't never marked it."

"He just gave you five percent."

53. I think that bringing in a tutor at that point perhaps would have assisted you in terms of the writing. Someone specific…

"I know I also did that unit that you did, about AIDS, about drugs, about health and diversity and the self."

"I think the self also linked up with one of the topics also heh."

"I was like very disappointed when we got the individual essays back to see that all of us got five percent. I was like you know … we took time and effort to put that thing together and yet not even a comment or where you can improve … nothing … so what was the point in doing it in the first place."

"Those comments actually help. Because I remember in Ms XXX one that she gave us back. She gave us straight out: This does not fit in your essay. Whereas it made it easier for us to get it into that summary, into one page. Then when it came to Personnel Management I had a big problem because I

didn't know – Is this relevant because there was nothing indicated – and then maybe if we could've like feedback with the lecturer and maybe have a tutor to assist you with that specific …"

54. Especially with the writing …
"I think that I arranged a consultation with Mr XXX and I showed him what Ms XXX like, you know, guided me and he said: Ms XXX is not supposed to do that."

"Seriously, it happened."

"The other thing I found out was that when I looked at other people while they were editing they're all stressing. Looking at that sentence"

"Paragraph, highlight and delete."

"They didn't like let it flow. They just picked out. That's what they did. They didn't summarise the thing. They just took out bits and pieces. So that's another downfall."

56. Did people actually use the summarising skills, the mindmapping and the …
"Why did we have to use the summarising skills if we didn't know if it was good enough or … That's the feedback that we got from the lecturer. I mean … so you don't want … five percent… It doesn't matter."

"We understand that the lecturers have all these assignments to mark but I mean it's … to be fair to us. We waited long for that."

**"Because the newsletter was postponed because of that."**

"We waited long and then at the end we had to rush through to get done."

"The other thing … the postponement of the assignment, it was demotivating us to get actually to the graphics of …"

"It had to be in May and then we handed it in August."

"So … for us it was as assignment you got this thing here. You need to do it but you can't because of Publisher."

57. Thank you for your time.
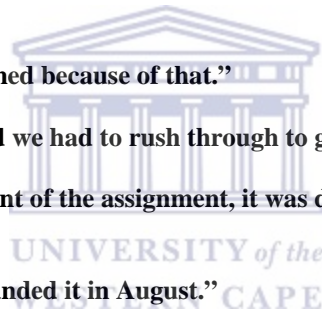
APPENDIX J: STUDENT FREEWRITES

FREEWRITE ONE

Positive side

Learn about individuals in the community which were more disadvantage than ourselves.

Appreciated my own standard of living and what my parent do for me.

Learn to look things in general at much broader approach. And not think narrow minded.

Learnt more about group members.

Negative

People at the organisation are very busy.

Our interview was not successful.

Our contact was vague. When asking too many question, will become distant.

The contact thought we were investigating the place.

Recommendation

The student should acquire skills to handle people in the community. To get them to trust them and to get the required information.

FREEWRITE TWO

I think the newsletter was a great experience to have or write because to do something like that more challenging and interesting is making students become wiser about the field. It was more creative when it comes to computer skills things like layout etc. For the time it should be like combining research from external environment with internal for that the students can focus on both sides.

FREEWRITE THREE

To me, it was really great, and very challenging experience.

The most what I've liked about it was to assess my abilities in using my creativeness as well as different programmes in using technology.

The hecticness about it, was the pressure since it was my first year in tertiary institution, that led me in not reaching my best potential.

FREEWRITE FOUR

It was very existing, but also boring also

I have learn a lot for e.g. how to do (write) a newspaper

Sometimes my stuff did not wanted to go into coloms

Sometimes the organisation did not want to give information.

It was a lot of travelling, sometimes I didn't have money to go but I manage.

What I have learn is that we cannot Image the pour people, that are suffering and I feel for them.

FREEWRITE FIVE

I think for me, it was great to do the newsletter especially the fact that we had to go to a company dressed-up & actually had my first real interview with a person.
Another thing is that we had to write down everything that we were supposed to do, the time etc. It was existing.

There was nothing negative about the newsletter
I would appreciate it if I can do it again just once more
I was so fortunate to work with retarded children

FREEWRITE SIX

It was a nice thing because it gave us a brief preview on what it's gonna be like if we going to do in-service training, and entering industry one day.

FREEWRITE SEVEN

learned from it as we went to visit people in an old age home. It was fun to go out and research about it, but it was a little stressful.

Prefer to have been given an organisation to go and visit instead of searching for own one.

FREEWRITE EIGHT

It was an exiting experience

We got to know the old people in our community and they enjoyed the attention.

I liked writing the newspaper because it is something that will help you in the future.

The group that I worked in only two of us worked.

FREEWRITE NINE

What did I like about the newsletter:

 didn't like

 frustrated

 suggestions

I liked the fact that obtaining information for the newsletter was completely up to us. Physically going to an institution of your choice and interviewing the people in charge. It gave me a clearer view and insight into what people do for the less priviledged. So often these people go unnoticed and this assignment gave recognition to these important people.

I didn't like having to work in the group that I did because they weren't helping me in any way. I had to practically make the newsletter on my own.

My only suggestion would be that groups be chosen carefully and the right organisation be chosen for your newsletter.

FREEWRITE TEN

I thought the newsletter was fun because you were able to work with other individuals to learning new ideas on creativity and get to know them better. I enjoyed the compilation of each others article to the newsletter and we were able to go out and find something to share with others. What I did not like with the going outside part was the fact that you had to use some of the time you had which you could have used to concentrate on other activities such as other subjects.

One also got to share your personal creativity and being able to create something like that by using various components. And I think that such activity should be done sometime in one's life as a boost to do assignments.

FREEWRITE ELEVEN

On my side I learnt so much, I can say a lot about writing a newsletter. It was very interesting. I don't have any negative side about it. Yes I did learnt a lot in computer classes but there were things I didn't know until I had to do a newsletter.

Doing a newsletter made me proud of myself seeing and knowing that I can be a newspaper or an article writer. You had to do too much research that is very important. Giving other people a message that you want to give to the public and you learn to be a writer.

As much as I wanted to be an author I now know that I can be and I will be. Thanks to the lecturers of Human Resource Management especially to MS. Scheepers because today as I am sitting here right now I feel proud of being who I am.

Hope and Wish writing a newsletter will continue because it is teaching about so many things you thought and you think you know + knew but unfortunately just fooling yourself.
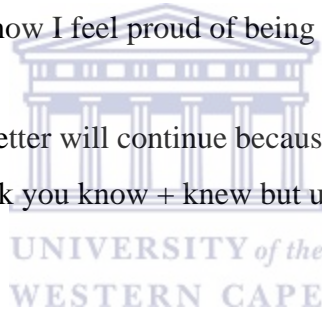
FREEWRITE TWELVE

The newsletter was a new experience to me. The advantage was that you meet new people and new views of life. You see and learn how organisations operate in the environment and how individuals think within the organisation.

The disadvantage was that people did not want to give sensitive information to you for e.g financial statements of funding etc. to make your assignment more factual. They are community organisations. With the printing of the newsletter the technology at technikon did not work, that frustrated me.

FREEWRITE THIRTEEN

The newsletter for me was a good thing to do. I think it's a bit to easy though, it should be a little more difficult. Just kidding, it was fun to do. I think more emphasis should be placed on creativity.

FREEWRITE FOURTEEN

Positive.

going out to meet members, organisation, playing with children

taking pictures with children, helping teachers in the kitchen and feeding children

Attending the event.

People were very friendly, we felt very welcome.

Negative.

Pressure from Jackie & Miss Jafta, for the interview date etc.

Travelling arrangement, going to the place everytime

Typing of newsletter, printing.

Layout of newsletters

Finding a proper organisation

Phoning organisation.

Trouble with interviewing, nervous etc.

Trouble writing down answers during interview.

Had to go back, for more questions on different titles example H.R Functions.

FREEWRITE FIFTEEN

<u>Likes</u>

What I liked about the newsletter was the whole idea. Now I know how to structure it, editing of it. The most interesting part was to go out there to do some research especially in the community, you get to know the views of other people comments etc. It helped me to know lot of people and to go to places or areas that I never thought I would go.

Comments.

Give enough time to students to work on it. Do let them relax because it help them to remain in the topic or not losing concentration. And they can become journalist one day.

FREEWRITE SIXTEEN

I was enjoyed to do newsletter because we had time to make a research direct to the organisation, I learned how to help people in the community, although was not easy, because I found that there was a problem of communication breakdown but was exciting. Other thing was exciting was to organise the unstructured information into logical procedure.

FREEWRITE SEVENTEEEN

What I liked

It gave me researching skills & questioning skills

It allowed me to participate in the development of the community

It made me to appreciate community work

What I did not like

The reason why we did it was not clear at times

I had to convince group members, how important it was.

Experience – It was a very nice exercise to do. I would suggest that it should be continuous like student should write a newsletter of their own community every month starting from social news to sport news. This will improve their writing skills and reporting skills.

FREEWRITE EIGHTEEN

In good things can say that it was so nice to write a newsletter. I get more information on how to write it. Writing a newsletter makes me proud of myself. I would like to say hanks for Mrs Scheepers to help us on how to write a newsletter because today I can write my own newsletter.

FREEWRITE NINETEEN

<u>Dislikes:</u>

Lack of skills & training to draw up a professional newsletter, or one with good standards.

Lab assistants were of NO assistance when we were "given time off to complete this by ourselves."

Most classmates did not produce what was "expected".

<u>Likes:</u>

Results obtained by my group were appreciated (I think well deserved).

<u>Suggestions:</u>

Have more lab time with student & have "professional" to assist in these times ⟶
NOT lab assistants

Thanx

FREEWRITE TWENTY

The community Newsletter was enriching experience.

Meeting new people and sharing the contributions of the organisations to the community

is very helpful and interesting to some.

Enough time should be considered in constructing the letter.

It was a reasonable a good exercise and a experience that will never forget.

FREEWRITE TWENTY-ONE

<u>**What I liked about the newsletter**</u>

I enjoyed working on the newsletter, reason being that it was something different and unique in our year programme. We learnt new things about how to actually compile a newsletter.

What I found positive was that all our sessions we had to attend helped us a lot.
We learnt lots of new things (creative & innovative)

It felt good to have compiled a newsletter for a NGO and these newsletter were then given to them.

I liked my group members, everybody contributed in the group towards the newsletter.

FREEWRITE TWENTY-TWO

Newsletter was very exciting, we got a chance to visit institution, to find out about their organisation, you pulled that info into action, which we got creative.

The other part that it was stressful, because we mad appointment with the organisation, when we got there we founded out that they have forget about us.

On the last day of the newsletter, we waited long ques in the printing department.

The newsletter took a lot of our time, but I think it should be done, because you get a chance to stand up for yourself by asking questions and they correct you in some errors. The organisation we went to was so kind, they offered to look at our newsletter, and they corrected it in some errors.

FREEWRITE TWENTY-THREE

For me it was a great experience and a good challenge. I learn how to do Interviews, how to be professional and to be creative on how to gather information.

FREEWRITE TWENTY-FOUR

Newsletter (How you felt)

The newsletter was a new learning experience for me, and it helped me as an individual to use my skills and abilities in the outside world/environment.

I found it fun to do, when busy with the research of it, compiling it, and by using my creative ideas with my other group members.

It was nice going out in the community, showing them that you as a student want to gain more knowledge in what there organisation provides for the community, and by offering our help.

The best thing about it was going away from the academic environment and being creative.

One negative point was that it had to come to an end.
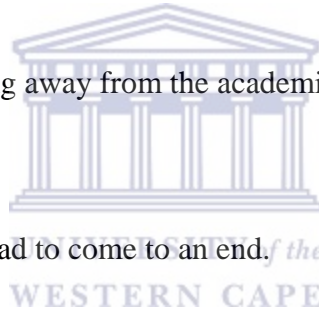
FREEWRITE TWENTY-FIVE

I liked to do the newsletter report because we had to go out in the community and look for different organisations.

The disadvantage was you could see how much people are races and how badly adults treat students.

But I was lucky that the people I chose was very friendly he helped our group

I think that there should be more assignments like that I loved to do that.

We also saw how much volunteers the organisation needs + in what circumstances most people live.

APPENDIX K: STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE DATA
Human Resource Management 1
Questionnaire - summary of data
NEWSLETTER

			strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree	don't know	totals
Q1 multidisciplinary content-based	By doing this newsletter I gained new information about human resource management	data	21	20	0	1	0	42
		%	50%	48%	0%	2%	0%	100%
Q2 contextualisation holistic view	I now have a better understanding of the field of human resources		18	24	0	0	0	42
			43%	57%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Q3 scaffolding criteria and expectations	The topic analysis provided direction on what to do with the newsletter		12	27	3	0	0	42
			29%	64%	7%	0%	0%	100%
Q4 info lit resources research	The library tutorial helped me to find and understand articles for this assignment.		13	21	7	1	0	42
			31%	50%	17%	2%	0%	100%
Q5 application and transfer	I read with understanding without applying reading skills.		14	17	9	1	1	42
			33%	40%	21%	2%	2%	100%
Q6 writing support	The writing workshops helped me to do the newsletter.		16	19	5	1	1	42
			38%	45%	12%	2%	2%	100%
Q7 computer skills and research transfer of skills	The computer sessions have given me a new skill that I can use when I have to search for information for other assignments.		30	12	0	0	0	42
			71%	29%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Q8 research writing support	I could have found information for this newsletter without attending the writing and tutorial sessions.		9	10	13	10	0	42
			21%	24%	31%	24%	0%	100%
Q9 drafting content	I learnt about the content from submitting more than one draft.		15	18	4	3	2	42
			36%	43%	10%	7%	5%	100%
Q10 language skills drafts and text structure	I learnt about language usage and the structuring of the newsletter from submitting more than one draft.		18	20	1	0	3	42
			43%	48%	2%	0%	7%	100%
Q11 tutorials support	I believe I would have done better without the assistance of tutorials.		8	2	20	12	0	42
			19%	5%	48%	29%	0%	100%
Q12 drafting	Submitting more than one draft did not really help me with this newsletter		5	8	19	7	3	42
			12%	19%	45%	17%	7%	100%
Q13 quantitative feedback	I should earn marks for every stage of the writing process.		12	16	11	1	2	42
			29%	38%	26%	2%	5%	100%
Q14 research referencing	BY doing this newsletter, I have learnt more about how to reference my sources of information.		19	22	1	0	0	42
			45%	52%	2%	0%	0%	100%
Q15 process writing	I will up with a better result if I approach the writing of an assignment as a process.		21	18	0	1	2	42
			50%	43%	0%	2%	5%	100%
Q16 Drafting process writing	When an assignment is written, I should submit multiple (more than one) drafts		14	22	6	0	0	42
			33%	52%	14%	0%	0%	100%
Q17 formative	The feedback/comments written on the drafts helped me to improve my final draft.		23	12	3	1	3	42
			55%	29%	7%	2%	7%	100%
			256	272	91	38	15	672
			38%	40%	14%	6%	2%	100%

APPENDIX L: PEER QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS NO. ONE

1. The newsletter enabled you to assess the outcomes of module one and module two.

   Yes - adequately

2. The students could clearly see the link between subjects.

   Not unless the lecturers introduced it to them.

3. Students showed an understanding of the different content areas.

   Only after being taught about it in class.

4. The final newsletter corresponded to what was envisaged by you.

   Not really – resources were not as available as planned – this restricted the quality of the end product

5. The marking criteria helped you to mark objectively.

   Yes – explicit criteria was given

6. The marking criteria can be used by other lecturers and will yield the same results.

   Yes – because of explicity
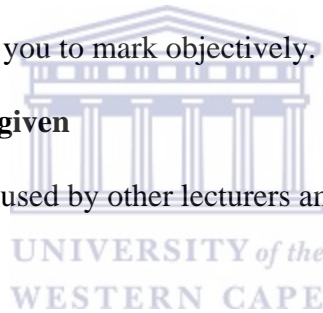
7. The different types of evaluation that were used in the assessment were relevant.

   Yes – in line with reqd. outcomes

8. Students had meaningful learning experiences as a result of the newsletter.

   Yes

9. The assessment accommodated the individual differences and needs of the student.

   Yes

10. The students were involved and played an active part in decision-making and giving their input.

Yes

11. Learning beyond the scope of the assessment was encouraged.

   Yes

12. The assessment gave rise to new learning opportunities.

   Yes

13. The feedback that was communicated to the learner was thorough and was a true reflection of the worth of the product.

   Yes

14. The importance, length, size or weight of the assessment matched the amount of work that was done on the newsletter.

   Yes

15. The choice of assessment technique matched the way in which learners were taught.

   Yes

16. The instructions and/or questions given to learners were understood by all the students especially with regard to what they were expected to do.

   Yes

17. The method of administering the assessment (for example, whether the conditions were appropriate; if there was enough time; whether students had access to the resources that they needed) was acceptable.

   No – time constraints and resource availability impacted on quality of end product

18. The method of marking was as objective as possible.

Yes

19. The learners were aware of how they would be marked.

    Yes – this was 'negotiated' with students

20. Please mention any comments/suggestions/improvements in the space below.

    Team teaching – improvements could be made in terms of better planning so that information is co-ordinated and synchronised before presenting it to students.

    Lecturers should be communicating on a continuous basis to ensure that all in the team are kept updated on events regarding the assessment.

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS NO. TWO

1. The newsletter enabled you to assess the outcomes of module one and module two.

   Yes

2. The students could clearly see the link between subjects.

   They struggled with integrating personnel management with this assessment

3. Students showed an understanding of the different content areas.

   The students struggled with the piece on HR functions Management styles. It was not useful to criticise the management style of an organisation in this type of assessment and these organisations have few HR functions

4. The final newsletter corresponded to what was envisaged by you.

   Yes

5. The marking criteria helped you to mark objectively.

   Yes, the marking criteria were carefully worked out.

6. The marking criteria can be used by other lecturers and will yield the same results.

   Yes

7. The different types of evaluation that were used in the assessment were relevant.

   Yes, formative assessments were useful to the students

8. Students had meaningful learning experiences as a result of the newsletter.

   Yes, the students learned a lot about community development and some of them actually stayed in touch with the Organisation

9. The assessment accommodated the individual differences and needs of the student.

Yes, all the products were different. One could see the student's personality in the finished newsletter

10. The students were involved and played an active part in decision-making and giving their input.

    Yes, there were many opportunities for students to give input.

11. Learning beyond the scope of the assessment was encouraged.

    Yes students were encouraged to learn about how communities work and realise their social responsibility

12. The assessment gave rise to new learning opportunities.

    Yes, the students learned how to construct a newsletter using valid information.

13. The feedback that was communicated to the learner was thorough and was a true reflection of the worth of the product.

    Yes

14. The importance, length, size or weight of the assessment matched the amount of work that was done on the newsletter.

    The newsletter should weigh more than 10% because there is a lot of effort/research/skill attached to it.

15. The choice of assessment technique matched the way in which learners were taught.

    Yes, the learners knew exactly how the assessment would be conducted since the lecturers were very structured

16. The instructions and/or questions given to learners were understood by all the students especially with regard to what they were expected to do.

Yes, formal team teaching sessions were arranged for the dissemination of information.

17. The method of administering the assessment (for example, whether the conditions were appropriate; if there was enough time; whether students had access to the resources that they needed) was acceptable.

   Needs re-examining

18. The method of marking was as objective as possible.

   Yes, it was

19. The learners were aware of how they would be marked.

   Yes they knew exactly what would be assessed

20. Please mention any comments/suggestions/improvements in the space below.

   - **The newsletter should be conducted over a longer space of time**

   - **The lecturers involved in the integration of this assessment should stick with the programme as outlined in the year programme**

   - **Students should also be allocated enough time in the programme to visit the organisations**

   - **Students should either be limited as to the amount of photographs to be included in the newsletter or adequate provision should be made for the students to save the photo's onto a CD.**

   - **A copy of the completed (edited) newsletter should be sent to the organisation as a follow-up.**

   - **Provision should be made for the students to print their newsletter in colour**

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS NO. THREE

1. The newsletter enabled you to assess the outcomes of module one and module two.

    Yes

2. The students could clearly see the link between subjects.

    Yes – After explanations from the lecturers.

3. Students showed an understanding of the different content areas.

    Same as for # 2 above.

4. The final newsletter corresponded to what was envisaged by you.

    Yes – after some prompting and guidance

5. The marking criteria helped you to mark objectively.

    Yes

6. The marking criteria can be used by other lecturers and will yield the same results.

    With some adaptations

7. The different types of evaluation that were used in the assessment were relevant.

    Yes – for each separate subject and for each specific outcome

8. Students had meaningful learning experiences as a result of the newsletter.

   **Yes – especially life skills and management skills**

9. The assessment accommodated the individual differences and needs of the student.

    Yes, group work allowed for different talents, skills.

10. The students were involved and played an active part in decision-making and giving

    their input.

    They were free to incorporate suggestions and ideas

11. Learning beyond the scope of the assessment was encouraged.

Yes
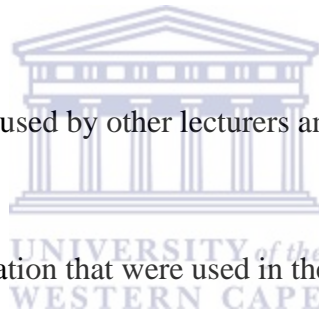
12. The assessment gave rise to new learning opportunities.

    Students were confronted with new realities and allowed them to explore new aspects of their subject areas

13. The feedback that was communicated to the learner was thorough and was a true reflection of the worth of the product.

    Yes

14. The importance, length, size or weight of the assessment matched the amount of work that was done on the newsletter.

    Yes

15. The choice of assessment technique matched the way in which learners were taught.

    Yes – very appropriate

16. The instructions and/or questions given to learners were understood by all the students especially with regard to what they were expected to do.

    Slower learners required additional explanations were provided by fellow students and lecturers.

17. The method of administering the assessment (for example, whether the conditions were appropriate; if there was enough time; whether students had access to the resources that they needed) was acceptable.

    Deadline had to be extended for assessments – Resources not always available when required.

18. The method of marking was as objective as possible.

Yes - very

19. The learners were aware of how they would be marked.

    Yes – clear and objective criteria were provided

20. Please mention any comments/suggestions/improvements in the space below.

    1. **Problems were encountered with:**

       A. **Timing of visits to organisations and the actual time for the group to meet.**

       B. **Due dates for handing were not adhered to for technical reasons**

       C. **Group problems:**

          - **Personalities**

          - **Level of commitment varied**

          - **Uneven spread of skills – some groups were strong on skills and experiences, while others had none/few.**

    2. **Students gained new knowledge and experiences with Life-skills and Time Management.**

       They developed respect for diversity i.e. Culture, language, gender etc.

       Students also gained valuable knowledge and skills in project management.

    3. **Problems also with students who tended to dominate other students in the group.**

    4. **Students had difficulty in summarising information into suitable newsletter articles**