(RESEARCH ARTICLE)

Thematic analysis in qualitative research on views of Tutors in health training institutions regarding students' assessment short course training offered by CEDHA

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Abstract

Introduction: Assessment has always been the final obstacle in any programme reform. Changing the old methods of Knowledge Based testing is a big step for health training institutions (HTIs), for that reason assessment can be seen as the touchstone of curriculum change from knowledge based educational and training (KBET) to competence based educational and training (CBET). The competence based assessment is diverse assessment method that focuses on evaluating individual ability to apply knowledge and skills and behaviour relevant to real life situation. the approach emphases on quality of learning and helps learners to identify areas of improvement

Objective: The study examined the views of HTI tutors on short course training in student assessment conducted at CEDHA in May 2025

Method: A qualitative method where open ended question survey approach was used and data were analysed using thematic analysis method

Results: Tutors in HTIs who attended short course training on student assessment at CEDHA in may 2025 reflected on the competence acquired during training, practical application of assessment strategies and the impact on improving the quality of student assessment at their workplace. They may also express views on the course's effectiveness, including the clarity of the content, the facilitation methods used, and the support provided by CEDHA during training

Conclusion: The study has provided deeper understanding of the views of the participants regarding the student assessment short course training offered by CEDHA

Keywords: Student assessment; Short course training; Competence based assessment; Thematic analysis

1. Introduction

1.1. Competence-Based assessment

Assessment has always been the final obstacle in any programme reform. Changing the old methods of Knowledge Based testing is a big step for health training institutions (HTIs), for that reason assessment can be seen as the touchstone of curriculum change from knowledge based educational and training (KBET) to competence based educational and training (CBET)

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In CBET, the main function of assessment is to guide and direct the learning process (formative) and to verify that the learner can really carry out the required workplace tasks. Assessment in CBET is used to monitor and finally confirm the development of competences in relation to the required learning outcomes, derived from the occupational tasks. It makes clear the level of competence that is achieved directly after finishing the course, but it also shows the ability to develop the required competences in the future, while at work. [1-6].

Two types of assessment can be distinguished: formative and summative.

Formative assessment measures the progress of a learner's development: which competences are sufficiently realized and what should be improved? Here the learner demonstrates his competences by doing assignments in the form of projects, simulation exercises, written/oral tests, observations and presentations. Each assignment is assessed in terms of product (the results) and process (the way in which the results are realized). The purpose of formative assessment is to determine if learning is taking place.

Summative assessment measures if a module has been completed successfully. The evidence may consist of collected data of various formative assessments and/or of the results of a final test. Collected data can be found in the portfolio (an observation report of a real practical task, tests or a written report of a debriefing session about an assignment made).The purpose of a summative assessment is to determine if the learner has the necessary competences for a certificate or diploma. [xx].

In a CBET-context, formative and summative assessments are highly connected.

Formative assessments help learners to prepare for the summative assessment. The connection between formative and summative assessment has the following implications:

- Methods of assessment must be used in a consistent way. The learner must know what to expect. This avoids examinations that are unreliable and invalid. For assessors it is necessary to gain experience in working with specific assessment methods;

- Transparency is important in CBET. Facilitators, assessors, the labour market stakeholders, and the learner have to know which criteria are used and how the assessment takes place; [1-4].

1.2. Student assessment short course

This short course training aimed at equipping the tutors in health training institutions with concepts and principles of students assessment specifically addressing the following areas; concepts of assessment in assessing students' achievement, assessment plan for teaching and learning, instruments for assessing student's achievement, tools for assessing learning, Construction of test item, moderating test items, invigilation of assessments ,marking scoring and grading , Managing assessment ,test item analysis for interpreting students' results, grading system and coordinating assessment [5-6].

The training was conducted for two weeks and was organized into classroom and practical sessions, where participants were given time to translate the acquired theory into practical. During the course participants continuously reflected upon their daily performance and at the end they gave their reaction about the course [5-6].

Objectives

To explore the views of the HTI tutors on student assessment short course conducted at CEDHA in May 2025

2. Methods

This study employed qualitative approach; open ended question survey was used to capture views of HTI tutors regarding student assessment short course training. A day before the end of the training, each participant was asked to write on: What is your reflection on this student assessment short course training?.

2.1. Study setting

This survey was conducted at centre for educational development in health Arusha (CEDHA), established in 1983 by Ministry of Health to equip teaching staff with educational, managerial and research skills for them to be better teachers and managers in HTIs. [2,4].

2.2. Targeted population

All thirteen HTI tutors who attended student assessment short course training at CEDHA May 2025 were involved

2.3. Data collection method

All HTI tutors who attended short course training on student assessment were given plain sheet of paper to write on their views regarding the student assessment short course training, the participants' response scripts were collected the following day and they were numbered from one to thirteen for easy analysis

2.4. Data analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) was used to analyse qualitative data. Thematic analysis is one of the most widely utilized methods for analyzing qualitative data, offering a structured yet flexible framework for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within datasets.

It involves the identification of themes through careful reading and re-reading the participant views on course training on student assessment short. [7].The following steps were conducted manually:

2.4.1. Step 1: Familiarization

Researcher went through all thirteen collected participants scripts so as to know the data before start analyzing them .This involved reading through the text from all participants and taking initial notes

2.4.2. Step 2: Coding

Researcher highlighted sections of collected scripts by phrases or sentences and came up with shorthand labels or "codes" that described the script content.

The total of ten codes was identified, as shown below:

- Appreciation, Motivation, Acquired learning, Team work, Manageable group
- New friends, Facilitation, Organization, Extend training duration, Improve refreshment
- Application of the learned knowledge and skill

2.4.3. Step 3: Generating themes

Researcher looked over the created codes and identified patterns among them and combined several codes came up with themes that are generally broader than codes. Seven themes were generated out of the ten identified codes

Most codes were relevant and appeared very often in the data while some appear once and were not relevant therefore they were discarded; "extend training duration to three weeks" and "improve refreshment"

Five codes became themes in their own right while other codes were combined together to make sense.

Table 1 Codes and their themes

Codes	Themes
Appreciation	Appreciation
Motivation	Motivation
Application of the learned knowledge and skill	Application of the learned knowledge and skill
Acquired learning	Acquired learning
New friends	New friends

Facilitation Team work	Facilitation
Organization Manageable group	Organization

2.4.4. Step 4: Reviewing themes

Researcher made sure that themes were useful and accurate representations of the collected participant views by comparing themes against data set, and that; there was no missed information so the created themes really presented in the participants views on student assessment training .

So the codes "New friends" was changed and created theme "Networking" and "Facilitation" was changed and created theme "Facilitation method"

Table 2 Reviewed Themes

Created themes	Reviewed themes
Appreciation	Appreciation
Motivation	Motivation
Application of the learned knowledge and skill	Application of the learned knowledge and skill
Acquired learning	Acquired learning
New friends	Networking
Facilitation	Facilitation method
Organization	Training organization

2.4.5. Step 5: Defining and naming themes

Researcher then named and defined themes to have a final list of themes; defining themes involved formulating exactly what meant by each theme and figuring out how it helped in understanding the collected participants' views while naming themes involved coming up with a concise and easily understandable name for each theme.

Table 3 Defined and named themes

Reviewed themes	Defined and named themes
Appreciation	Thanked CEDHA and MOH for opportunity to attend this training
Training organization	The overall organization of the training
Facilitation method	Different facilitation methods used by facilitators during training
Motivation	Level of motivation after training
Acquired learning	Acquired knowledge and skill in student assessment during training
Application of the learned knowledge and skill	Application of the acquired knowledge and skill at working place to improve quality of training
Networking	Expand networking in training sector

3. Report

The results from an open ended survey question on the views of the thirteen HTI tutors who attended short course training on student assessment were analysed; there were five female and eight male, five were pharmacists, three nurses and five doctors. Their experience ranged from eight month to seven years .Almost all were from public HTIs.

Using thematic analysis the following themes were identified: Thanked CEDHA and MOH for opportunity to attend this training, The overall organization of the training, Different facilitation methods used by facilitators during training, Level of motivation after training, Acquired knowledge and skill in student assessment during training, Application of the acquired knowledge and skill at working place to improve quality of training and Expand networking in training sector,

3.1. Thanked CEDHA and MOH for opportunity to attend this training

The ministry of health through CEDHA has been offering short course regarding teaching and learning since establishment of the centre in 1983. CEDHA has accumulated experience in offering short courses, thus the participants who chanced to get the opportunity to attend short course at CEDHA enjoys that experience. The Ministry of health offers a competitive support to tutors through their HTIs to attend these short courses. The nature of the training, the experience and competitive of the support made the tutors who attend the training at CEDHA to appreciate for the opportunity [2,4].

The participant P 10 had this to write:

"*On my opinion this is very beneficial course for trainers ….I have been graced with opportunity to attend teaching methodology and now student assessment here at CEDHA...to be honest I feel complete*"

3.2. The overall organization of the training

Student assessment training participants reported that the training was well organized in terms of: training schedule was well planned and all learning objective were well covered, the course materials and other logistics were well designed and were effective in supporting their learning. the course has clear content and structured and uses modern information technology to support its delivery like on aspect of facilitating the objective structured clinical and practical examination (OSCE and OSPE) assessment methods

The student assessment short course is a tailor made course derived from health personnel education program, a long standing long course which aims at equipping tutors in HTI with knowledge and skill in teaching and assessing students only offered at CEDHA and was established in about forty years ago[2,4].

The participant P13 had this to write:

"*I felt more relaxed during the course...I loved so much the size of the group and the ease to interact, cooperate and bond with one another. The training was well organized as we covered all the course objectives*"

3.3. Different facilitation methods used by facilitators during training

The facilitators employed different teaching methods during facilitating the theory and practical part of the training. They were able to provide constructive feedback to students during training these might have made the participants to reflect back to their on their own teaching practices and may has influenced them. Participant were given the theory session first before assigned task to do like constructing test items or moderating test items and all the practical sessions were well supervised[5,6].

The participant P12 had this view on facilitation:

"*I appreciate the teaching techniques used by facilitator during training, they train us with all the effort and make sure we understand all things intended in this training*"

The participant P13 had this to write on facilitators:

"*I felt the facilitators were good, jovial, friendly, committed and experienced to handle the course*"

3.4. Level of motivation after training

Construction competence based assessment requires a multifaceted approach, including standardized frameworks, evaluators training and the integration of technology. The training approach used in this training might have helped participants to overcome challenges they face in implementing student assessment strategies at their work place. It is expected that the student assessment course has changed their perception on student assessment and their role in supporting student learning [1,3].

A trainee P12, had this to share:

"*For myself I have learn a lot, I hope all of these will make me to be good facilitator …thanks to facilitators for their effort…I promise I will use the acquired knowledge in my carrier*"

Participant P8 also wrote:

"*I truly appreciate the dedication and expertise of the facilitators which made the learning experience engaging and impactful …The training has left us feeling motivated and inspired to apply what we have learned in our colleges*"

3.5. Acquired knowledge and skill in student assessment during training

After training participant demonstrated an increased knowledge and skill related to student assessment this was observed during construction and moderation of different test item in classroom assessment and in practical assessment , They were also able to invigilate, mark and score examination during practical sessions. The pre and post assessment revealed gain in knowledge for most participants [5,6].

A participant P10 when describing the skills he has acquired during training he wrote:

"*I started teaching without having attended the teaching methodology and student assessment short courses but after going through them I have learned a lot and added a lot to my thinking and skills. I strongly believe that I am a better teacher now than I was before these two courses*"

3.6. Application of the acquired knowledge and skill at working place to improve quality of training

The overall aim of the student assessment training is to prepare tutor to be able to implement the competence based assessment, which is challenge in most of the HTIs. The ministry expect that the graduate of this course will be able to implement the competence based assessment by using the acquire competence to create formative assessments, designing summative assessments, interpreting student data and provide feedback to students after assessment [8 9].

On the application of acquired competence, participant P13 had this to write:

"*I am grateful to have learned so much that I can apply to my place of work*"

Participant P2 also wrote:

"*This training has been a game changer on my ways of assessing students .I have honestly learned a lot that I am sure I will have positive impact even to the students under my guidance as their teacher*"

3.7. Expand networking in training sector

Most training involves connecting participants to professional colleagues or industry and so build relationships and expand professional network. It is valuable opportunity to learn from others, share insights and potentially open doors to future collaborations [1].

The participant P12 had this to write:

"*I met with new friends so that I increase my friend circle…who we can share different issues not only in teaching but also in life …Thanks I will miss you ALL*"

The participant P 2 also had this view about networking:

"*I have got the opportunity to laugh with people who were totally strangers at first but up to this day they are friends, people I could call and look up to…Am grateful*"

Limitations

The responses are qualitative in nature, making it challenging to generalize findings to a large population. Vague responses were generated from one participant like extend duration for the course and improve refreshment which call for more study

4. Conclusion and recommendation

The study has provided deeper understanding of the views of the HTI tutors regarding the student assessment short course training offered by CEDHA and recommend other HTI tutors to attend

Participant P10 wrote: "*It is my desire and wish that every trainer should undertake this course*"

Compliance with ethical standards

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