IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL CERTIFICATE VOCATIONAL ASSESSMENT POLICY AT TSHWANE SOUTH COLLEGE IN GAUTENG
Introduction

Since S.A 1994 democracy, the education system has been one of the main service delivery areas that needed to be overhauled.

Provision of vocational training during the apartheid period was based on race thus provided unequal access to learning opportunities.

NCV launched in 2007 through the public FET Colleges.

Curriculum change in the DHET led to 35 campuses of the former Technical Colleges merging in 2002 to form 8 public FET Colleges in Gauteng.
Merger developed economies of scale and built capacity within institutions by merging smaller, weaker Colleges with stronger ones.

As a result of the curriculum change, the DHET has developed the NCV Assessment Policy, 2007.

Since then, there have been policy gaps presenting enormous challenges that continue to affect the implementation of this policy.

The research will examine what challenges contributed by the DHET and the Tshwane South Public FET College continued to affect the submission and integration of the public FET students’ ICASS and ISAT marks into their overall promotion mark, from 2007 to 2009 thus affecting compliance with the NCV Assessment Policy (2007)
This refers to:

Compliance with section 10(3) of this Policy which stipulates that, “The ICASS and ISAT marks are a compulsory component of the final promotion mark for all full-time and part-time students registered for NCV.”

Deviations from policy were:

- Lack of full submission and integration of students’ ICASS and/or ISAT marks with the examination mark in order to provide the final promotion mark.

- Allowing one component (ISAT) of the assessment mark to expire after three years whereas the other component (ICASS) is valid for one year only.

- Deviating from the policy to mark every NCV level final examinations externally and thus risking its credibility as an exit level qualification.
Policy states the following:

But students were allowed to register at a higher level even if they had only passed three subjects in the previous year, thus allowing them to do up to eleven subjects (four that they had failed plus seven new subjects at a higher level).

This made compilation of the ICASS and ISAT marks difficult for the students with such a big load in that they ended up without the required ICASS mark and therefore had pending results.

Consequently, many examination instructions have been issued to relax the policy in line with these issues.
BACKGROUND

- Political Factors
- Technological Factors
- Economic Factors
- Socio-economic Factors
- Policy/Legislative Environment
There have been deviations from the NCV Assessment Policy (2007) in relation to the management of the conduct and administration of assessments during its implementation process at public FET Colleges, such that memoranda of instructions were used in addition to this Policy. Public FET Colleges have received support from government in the form of grants for their recapitalisation process (National FET Plan, 2008). For example, an amount of R1,67 million was allocated for Gauteng only. The recapitalisation process was implemented between 2007 and 2009 with an expectation that it would benefit the Colleges by contributing, amongst others, towards the implementation of the NCV Assessment Policy (2007). Furthermore, memoranda of instructions continue to be issued to the public FET Colleges to allow for the NCV Assessment Policy implementation to proceed smoothly, which brings about deviations. As far as this research is concerned, no research information around the analysis of the NCV Assessment Policy (2007) implementation has been found. This situation suggests that there is a need to analyse the implementation of the Policy in relation to the management of the conduct and administration of assessment at public FET Colleges from 2007 to 2009. Tshwane South College was used for this purpose.
The purpose of this research is to conduct an analysis of the National Certificate Vocational Assessment Policy (2007) implementation, at Tshwane South Public FET College in Gauteng and at the Department of Higher Education and Training. This is in order to establish, using the descriptive and explanatory dimensions of research, what challenges continued to affect the submission and integration of the Tshwane South Public FET students’ ICASS and ISAT marks into their overall promotion mark, from 2007 to 2009, such that deviations in relation to the management of the conduct and administration of assessment from the NCV Assessment Policy (2007) occurred, resulting in memoranda of instructions used in addition to this Policy, during its implementation.
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Overall research question

What challenges can be identified that have continued to affect the submission and integration of the Tshwane South public FET students’ ICASS and ISAT marks into their overall promotion mark, from 2007 to 2009

Research sub-questions

What are the challenges that are associated with the submission of students’ ICASS and ISAT marks?

What are the challenges associated with the integration of students’ ICASS and ISAT marks into their examination marks?

What are the challenges associated with the release of the students’ final promotion marks?
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- **Research approach**

  A qualitative method of data collection was chosen which includes using face-to-face interviews as an instrument. A combination of **descriptive and explanatory dimensions** has been used.

- **Research Design**

  A field study design

  Uses Tshwane South FET College in Gauteng due to their availability to participate in the research.

  It involved key informant interviews with **four examinations managers at the College** as well as **two examinations and policy managers at the Department of Higher Education and Training**.
Data collection

- **Primary data collection**
  Interviews were used as an instrument for data collection in this research and permission was obtained from DHET, GDE and the College to conduct the research.

- **Secondary data collection**
  This was taken from policy and unpublished documents, books and reports after which it was linked to the literature review in order to identify common themes.

**Sampling method**

The research used **purposive sampling**, which is about selecting cases with a specific purpose in mind.
Creswell (2002) describes data analysis as a process whereby the researcher tries to make sense out of text as well as data.

Data analysis relates to examining data, sorting it into categories, evaluating it and comparing it, after which it is synthesized.

The experience of the respondents is described and reality is reported.
Validity

Neuman (2011) illustrates that validity is about the truthfulness of the data. It involves the giving of factual, honest and balanced accounts of social life by respondents from their point of view since they live it on a daily basis.

The member validation was also used, whereby the results obtained from the interviews were captured and taken back to the interviewees so they could pass judgment on the results in terms of their adequacy and accuracy.

Reliability

Reliability, on the other hand, is about verifying the results with other, divergent sources of data to determine their truthfulness.

The findings were taken to two managers at another College who are experienced in the management of the College curriculum and examinations, as well as another examinations and policy manager at the DHET, to check for their reliability.
Significance of the research

Once the research has given the analysis of the NCV Assessment Policy (2007) implementation, and recommendations considered by the DHET,

formal amendments to the policy could be effected such that all Colleges have a standard or a benchmark to follow in the implementation of this policy, for example, a decision made about the ICASS and ISAT marks of the students who could not accumulate marks due to absenteeism,

Revision of the number of subjects a student must pass in order to be promoted to the next level.

Inform policy and decision-making for planning purposes as well as to improve service delivery at the DHET and Tshwane South public FET College in Gauteng.
Research limitations and delimitations

According to Creswell (2003), this relates to determining the boundaries and exceptions to the research.

Arrangements for the interviews went well since no interviewee was taken out of class.

One of the DHET respondents (D5), could not stay long to complete the interviews due to a meeting that he had to attend even though an appointment was set up with him prior to the interviews.

Another problem encountered was lack of availability of the pending results statistics from DHET.
Ethical considerations

- This is about protecting the respondents from the consequences of the research results.

- The participants were allowed to take part without being coerced, and they could withdraw anytime they wanted.

- They were given the details of the purpose of the research and how it could benefit them.

- They were allowed to ask questions and were told that their responses may be kept confidential if they so wished.

- Before the research was conducted, the researcher requested interviewees’ authorities for permission to interview them at their workplace while making sure that their work was not disturbed.

- The interviewees also agreed that their responses may be made public but their identity would be kept confidential.
### Table 1: The codes for the respondents and the sites of interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Status of interview Site</th>
<th>Number of respondents per Site</th>
<th>Coding for each respondent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(A1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(B2) and (B3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(C4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(D5) and (D6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own, 2011
A. Challenges associated with submission of ICASS and ISAT marks

- Absenteeism by Lecturers
- Absenteeism by students
- Inadequate/irrelevant training of implementers
- Poor administration for the submission of marks
- Inadequate resources required for implementation (Lecturers and Students)
Table 3: Summary of number of respondents to the themes in question A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>B2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Absenteeism</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lecturers</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Training</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Administration</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Resources</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lecturers</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own, 2011
B. Challenges related to integration of ICASS and ISAT marks

- Poor administration for the integration of marks
- Absenteeism due to strike action
- Communication on policy implementation
### Table 4: Summary of number of respondents to the themes in question B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 Administration for integration of student’s marks</td>
<td>✓ ✓ B3 ✓ ✓</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Absenteeism due to strike action</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
<td>66.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Communication</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
<td>66.66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own, 2011
C. Challenges related to release of students’ Promotion marks:

- Poor administration related to the release of results
- No common Assessments
- Inadequate monitoring and Evaluation
- Incompatible technology at the College and DHET
- Lack of Motivation of students
Table 5: Summary of number of respondents to the themes in question C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Administration related to the release of results</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Common Assessments</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Technology at the Colleges and DHET</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>66.66%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Motivation of students</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>16.66%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own, 2011
Holstein and Gubrium (1995) have illustrated that when interviews are analysed, they are analysed such that experience of the interviewees is described and reality is reported or represented.

Qualitative data analysis was used to analyse data as it is known to help verify a sequence of events leading to the research problem.

It is important to state that some of the findings in the previous chapter, confirm and are consistent with the findings released by DHET in:

- the Revised Guidelines for the implementation of Internal Continuous Assessment (ICASS) in the NCV Qualifications at FET Colleges
- as well as in the document produced in preparation for the workshop on: Driving academic quality through curriculum delivery in a post-school College environment.
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS CONTINUES

The categories for the data analysis discussion are:

- Absenteeism by lecturers and students
  - Lecturers:
    - laziness and strike action

Students have shown that lecturers’ lack of preparedness and inability to explain the content when teaching is one of the reasons students become demotivated and drop out of College Papier (2009).

Researcher’s view: Lecturer absenteeism leads to low productivity since there would be no ICASS or ISAT marks to submit to the DHET. Some have not embraced curriculum change as it is with any change management.
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS CONTINUES

- **Student absenteeism:**
  - *lack of credit* for the subject the students have already passed in Grade 12, mostly the fundamentals,
  - students get *demotivated by the length of the NCV Programme* which is one year long and they end up dropping out of College.
  - studying *difficult subjects* such as ICT cited in the previous chapter
  - Grade 12s *going back to study in a lower grade* (NCV level 2),
  - Those who had only passed Grade 9 found some of the *NCV programmes difficult as they had the impression* that a College was an institution whereby *they would only be expected to do practical work or skills courses and no theory at all.*
  - *bursary refunds* received by students soon after their fees have been paid was reported to *contribute to absenteeism.*
Students want to see success in their studies in order to stay on in an institution otherwise they give up and drop out Maharaj (2008).

Feedback to students regarding their performance should be given promptly, as that would help reduce student absenteeism or dropouts Maharaj (2008) and Papier (2009).

Lecturers recommend that the pass percentage required for NCV students be dropped to align it to that of schools Papier (2009).

Progression and certification criteria have been pitched too high and therefore contribute to poor performance and attrition among the students Papier (2009).

Poor performance and attrition among students was brought about by excessive workload from long syllabuses and requirements for assessment Papier (2009).

However, Orisatoki (2008) showed that class absenteeism was a negative result of drug use and it was partially blamed for the poor academic performance displayed by these students.
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS CONTINUES

Researcher’s opinion: If students do not attend their classes regularly, they will not attain the required ICASS and ISAT marks and therefore no marks as required by the DHET. The regularly attending lecturers will not be able to administer the assessments required for the compilation of the Portfolio of Evidence (PoE) from which the ICASS mark is obtained due to absenteeism.

However, the pass percentage could be lowered for the NCV students because the Colleges have not been able to recruit the kind of learners who can cope with the NCV curriculum.

DHET is also in the process of implementing the transfer of National Senior Certificate (NCS) credits to NCV as approved by the Umalusi Council on the 26th May 2011 for the following subjects:

- English Home Language and 1st additional language passed at 40% & above.
- Mathematics passed at 30% and above.
- Mathematical Literacy passed at 30% and above
- Physical Science passed at 50% and above.
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS CONTINUES

Researcher’s opinion:

- comparatively, the length of the NCV Programme will affect NCV enrolments because the NATED programmes which are one semester or a trimester long are still being offered at the College as it is with other Colleges.

- NCV programmes could also be designed such that a semester system just like at other DHET institutions e.g. Universities, could be introduced to give the students a chance to compile their Portfolio of Evidence for their failed subjects instead of conducting supplementary examinations which most students do not write or pass if they wrote.

- Students staying away from the College after receiving bursary refunds reflect the unintended consequences of policy.
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS CONTINUES

 Colleges should therefore put systems in place to withdraw students who do not attend their classes after a certain period has been prescribed.

 College should be trained on Recognition of Prior Learning System (RPL) help those out-of-school youth as well as members of the public who have, for example, been working in different industries for many years to be given credits for what they know.

 student absenteeism can be reduced if lecturers try and build good teacher-student relationships such that they know their students
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS CONTINUES

* Lecturers to make their lessons as interesting as possible so as not to give students an excuse for being absent.

* Credits should not be given for Life Orientation as it has an IT component which then makes it different from that of schools.

* The DHET has in accordance with the revised guidelines for the implementation of the ICASS stated that students would be required to achieve the following subminimum marks in line with the NCV policy requirements, and this would be enforced (level 2 only) from January 2012 for resulting and certification purposes:
  - All vocational subjects: 50%
  - Life Orientation and the first additional language: 40%
  - Mathematics and Mathematical literacy: 30%
Resources required for implementation

- Data shows lack of training lecturers as Artisans and to produce the ISAT marks, including financial constraints to buy equipment and consumables.

- Employees must be provided with the definition of steps that they must perform as they provide a service, because that will help them plan the facility and equipment which will best support their performance Dilworth (2000).

- In the FETI Symposium report (2009) by Papier, it is stated that, while it is important to have high level academic qualifications to enable lecturers to cope with the demands of NCV, they also need to understand the work place that the NCV programmes are preparing the students for.
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS CONTINUES

The findings show that newly appointed staff at the Colleges were not trained on how to compile ICASS and ISAT while trainee students were not trained on the IT system of the College to capture the ICASS and ISAT marks.

Most employees expect to receive systematic training when they first join their companies Snoyman (1991).

This was confirmed by the FETi Symposium report (2009) which illustrates that most problems at the Colleges emanated from lack of lecturer training. They either have no training or have had training aimed at school teachers.

The report further expresses an international view that lecturers need to understand both the practical work place application and the subject content of what they teach. In addition, some of the necessary features of lecturer preparation involve mentoring and supervision by qualified experienced mentors while continuous units for lecturers’ professional development are on offer throughout the year in order to keep their knowledge and skills up-to-date.
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS CONTINUES

Researcher’s view:

- **Orientation** for newly employed staff to be conducted.
- On-going content-based and methodology training must be given.
- Commitment on the side of the DHET to offer financial support for lecturers’ continuous training.
- The findings have also shown that training of lecturers on guidelines was necessary since there was lack of interpretation of assessment guidelines by lecturers.

- Proper mediation by managers regarding the application and interpretation of policy was necessary in order to ensure consistency in the application and interpretation thereof Cameron-Dow (1994).

- Lecturer respondents in Papier’s (2009) report have illustrated that subject guidelines were ‘vague and uncertain.’
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS CONTINUES

Researcher’s view:

- It has taken lecturers three years or more to become teachers or lecturers after learning the method of teaching, therefore they must be allowed time to learn the new method.

- DHET should take leadership throughout and be the change drivers by training the lecturers especially that not all lecturers have embraced the change in curriculum as is common in any change management process.

- A key informant, said that College submits ICASS and ISAT, only trying to adhere to policy whereas training of lecturers was a constraint. Therefore teachers Colleges must be opened as adequately trained teachers are needed.

- The results have also shown that there was lack of linkages with partners to provide training in terms of ISAT.

- Lues (2008) and Akojee (2010) have supported this when they said that higher education institutions should form partnerships with the public sector in order to help with human resource capacity-building and service delivery issues which seem to be the new struggle in South Africa.
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS CONTINUES

Researcher’s opinion:

Every person dealing with NCV needs to be trained so that they are acquainted with the new ways of doing things as well as new technology.

The findings have also shown that the College was still struggling to equip itself with updated materials and that meant there would be a delay in conducting the ICASS and ISAT resulting in no ISAT or ICASS marks being submitted to the DHET.

This is supported by the Umalusi Evaluation Report (2008) which confirmed that the cost of conducting an ISAT was high and that Colleges had complained about consumables that could not be replaced after conducting an ISAT.
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS CONTINUES

Researcher’s opinion:

_ident The College deploys staff who do not have experience in teaching to do their procurement for ISAT equipment._

_ident Procurement planning is important so that unnecessary delays in terms of service delivery in the classroom are alleviated._

_ident Allocations by DHET for the recapitalisation of the College was also sometimes done late or would be cut off due to recession such that the College would not be able to even grow the enrolments._

_ident Lack of resources on the side of learners may have been due to delays in the National Students Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) pay-outs which affected those students who genuinely depended on the Fund._

_ident Students not receiving any money from the bursary meant that they may not have been able to attend classes due to lack of transport to the College and therefore would not have any ICASS or ISAT marks._
The DHET should select ISAT that will not require expensive material especially for ISAT material that needs to be imported.

Inadequate administration

Fifty per cent of the respondents in tables 3 and 4 illustrated that Administrative issues contributed to the lack of ICASS and ISAT marks.

Key informants said that the lack of those marks reflected an administration problem because the College was not up-to-date with the students’ database, resulting in e.g. dropouts and those who deregistered still reflected in the IT system. Students are then entered manually, they may have no test marks captured at the end of the year and thus receive pending results. They take this for granted because they come back to write the exams even though they know they do not have ICASS and ISAT marks.
Similarly, late entries contribute to the problem since students only register with the College and not with the DHET, as they should, for the examinations. They simply arrive for the examination and end up on the wrong list, registered for the first time, for that subject on the day of the examination.

Examination instruction 17 of 2008 states that: "No late entries will be accepted."

This was further confirmed by Memorandum 5 of 2009 addressed to campus managers regarding the NCV entries. It states that once examination entries and amendment deadlines have passed, Colleges would not be able to make further entries or withdrawals. Furthermore, since late entries contravene policy, the DHET reserved the right to refuse any late entry, and where approval is given there would be no guarantee that the delivery of student’s results would be on time for those with late entries and amendments.
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS CONTINUES

Researcher’s opinion:

Mismanagement of data sometimes leads to ICASS and ISAT mark-sheets being generated with names of some students who dropped out a long time ago although they have not been officially withdrawn from the College. The ICASS/ISAT mark sheets will therefore have blank spaces, with no marks reflected next to the students’ names, thus bringing about pending results because the DHET would not give them their final Promotion marks as per NCV Assessment Policy until the outstanding marks are submitted to them by the College.

In addition, those students who do not attend classes throughout the year and then bring about late entries should not be allowed to write examinations as they were not part of the class that was receiving tuition. They could be advised where they must register during the year if they would like to do distance learning.
The format that the College must submit to the DHET must be the same as that received by the College since that may speed up the process and reduce human error as well as improve on the turnaround time.

The researcher’s opinion is that no consultation is done in deciding on how the marks should be sent to the DHET. The College needs to be consulted in order to verify if they understand the templates or not. They could also plan with the College when they change their form of submission of ICASS and ISAT marks so that the College can also feel that they own the process and they are consulted about changes that affect them.

Furthermore, the findings have attributed non-release of the students’ promotion marks to lack of accountability from lecturers who do not submit the marks to their Administration, and then no follow-up is done from the College Administration and College management.
Liebenburg and Barnes (2004) have mentioned that service providers should not only look at quality in terms of what is contained in the academic programmes, but they must also look at it in relation to the levels of service that their customers (students) receive.

Pudi (2010) has also demonstrated that teacher-educators with a low self-concept will certainly fail in performing their roles, but once they find themselves successful and knowing their job, together with their inherent attributes, they will contribute significantly to the creation of a positive self-concept. The attributes mentioned include not only how much lecturers know, but also how effective they are in communicating their skills, knowledge, values and attitudes to the students.

In addition, the NCV Assessment Policy (2007, page 30) states that: “where a lecturer does not comply with the minimum requirements for ICASS or ISAT in the subject he or she is responsible for, and students are disadvantaged through no fault of their own, this constitutes an act of misconduct and must be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of the Employment of Educator’s Act and related policies. Such students will be accommodated in terms of fair administrative and certification practices and marks adjusted appropriately.”
The researcher’s opinion:

> Some lecturers may have overlooked the fact that students are their customers, and they form the core of their business which means ‘customer is king’. They are also delivering services to the students on behalf of government and it must therefore be done properly with the integrity it deserves, should they fail, they must be given support and work-related training to improve their competence.

> Furthermore, supplementary examinations results are always released late and then students are enrolled in May or June after the Preliminary schedules have been sent back to the DHET. These students’ registration details can only be corrected in July/August when the Preliminary schedule comes for the second time if registered for exams.

> Therefore, as suggested in the findings, supplementary examinations could be cancelled to allow for a semester system for NCV to be introduced since this will allow for proper registration of students at the beginning of every semester.
Alternatively, supplementary examinations could be moved to just after the November examinations as it is currently with Higher Education institutions within DHET so that students’ enrolments are not affected at the beginning of every year.

Most students who write these FET supplementary examinations are not registered properly as nobody knows where they should be placed.

Communication

Four out of six respondents in Table 4 have stated that communication was a contributing factor to the lack of integration of the ICASS and ISAT marks into the promotion mark. The findings have shown that the College did not know when an ISAT was going to be changed, and at some point it was changed mid-year in 2008. Thus for planning purposes and materials procurement, no-one would know what to do and this links up with ISAT being conducted and submitted late, close to submission date or after due date.
This is consistent with Maharaj (2008) who stated that communication was about two perspectives: one that relates to informing customers about the information that is relevant to them in a way that they will understand it, while the other perspective relates to listening carefully to what the customer is trying to put across so that relevant, appropriate information that the customer wants can be provided.

Cloete and Wissink (2000) also stated that communication can either be one of the preconditions or an obstacle for a successful policy implementation.

Researcher’s opinion:

DHET has previously indicated that ISATs would expire after three years for each NCV level.
DHET also dispatches the ISATs to the College too late in the year from April onwards when it should be dispatched in the previous year when Colleges develop their Operational plans so that they can plan properly for procurement. This relates in particular to new ISATs since they are issued every three years.

The findings illustrated that there is lack of communication between the students and lecturers as neither report to one another when they are going to be absent from College.

Maharaj (2008) supported this when he stated that for as long as there is good communication between students and staff in an institution, an organizational culture could be developed in order to help with the student retention.
The lecturer may have arranged to give tests on the day and then the students do not arrive. Even when they know that they have missed an assessment, they do not explain their absence to the lecturer who may try to give them another opportunity in line with policy. The lecturer ends up with blank mark-sheets and, because the lecturer wants to be honest, they allocate a zero mark for such students. Zero is not allowed by DHET as a mark for students, and if this is allocated to students, they receive pending results.

In addition, communication around assessment guidelines especially on ICASS is inadequate as the findings have shown that the guidelines are not specific regarding the type and number of assessments to be conducted. For example, how many practical, assignments or tests should be conducted per subject since their levels, weights and depths are not the same, depending on the subject.

This is supported by Hofmeyr (1993) who states that there should be a meaningful participation of the targeted candidates so that their aspirations, suggestions and attitudes are not overlooked in decision-making. Cameron-Dow (1994) has demonstrated that an effective communication must prevail within the organization as well as proper mediation by managers regarding the application and interpretation of policy. This will ensure consistency in the application and interpretation of the organizational policies.
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS CONTINUES

If lecturers give assessments of different weights i.e. not standardised, at different times then it shows a lack of communication in terms of agreements on what needs to be done. For example, one lecturer would give a take-home assignment while another gives a long test within the same NCV Level.

The findings have suggested that lack of standardization of assessments delayed the administration of assessments since the lecturers needed time to interpret and communicate to one another about the weights that they must assign to the ICASS and ISAT.

Furthermore, standardization in terms of the number of subjects that any of the students must be allowed to do at any level was said to be inconsistent in relation to the management of ICASS. A key informant added that students think ICASS and ISAT are both for three years and therefore do not put much effort into ICASS. They would then be shocked to hear that ICASS was valid for one year only. The lecturers with students who failed, for example two subjects, find it difficult in terms of compilation of their ICASS marks together with that of additional new subjects that are now at a higher level. The system can then not expect students with such a big subject load to pass.
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS CONTINUES

Martin (2006) indicated that designing and implementing common assessments, as well as deepening collaboration among teachers, having professional conversations around data interpretation while allowing teachers’ practices to be informed by data, helped improve students’ scores in three years after aligning their schools’ curriculum.

Researcher’s view:

Common assessments bring about communication among the lecturers as they keep on updating one another about the progress of their work. They get to clarify areas of the curriculum that are not clear for one another and thus impacting positively on what is imparted in class.

But in terms of the number of subjects that students must pass to proceed to the next level, it does not seem like it is communicated enough to students how taking so many subjects in one year would affect their success at any College. The policy must therefore be implemented as is.
Quality Assurance:

Fifty per cent of the respondents in Table 5 expressed concerns about inadequate monitoring at the College. The findings revealed that, for the ISAT, there was an inadequate control of what was done, how it was done, moderated and assessed from the DHET and College management.

Owen(2007) illustrates that Monitoring Evaluation forms part of quality assurance and total quality management thrust. It includes the collection, analysis and reporting of data on the key elements such as inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts.

The researcher’s opinion is that there are educators at the College who have been appointed into management posts, whose duties include, among others, putting systems in place to ensure successful policy implementation at the College.
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS CONTINUES

Data has reflected in some cases, that a lecturer did not submit the (ICASS) marks for the whole class to the administration office at his campus, only to realise when students complained about their results.

Data also shows that, in Vocational subjects with two ISATs (one ISAT for an elective and the other for 2 subjects). If a student has no marks for the programme ISAT, the student gets pending results for three subjects while managers are not doing anything in terms of disciplining the lecturers about it.

Steyn (2000) and Thompson (2005) have in contradiction to the practice at the College encouraged lecturers in line with the principle of continuous improvement in Total Quality Management, that they should do some reflection since that would serve as a tool for their work’s quality assurance and therefore an assessment of an impact of their teaching on students’ learning.
In addition, Cameron-Dow (1994) has indicated that punitive measures must be meted out for those who do not implement policy as expected, by instituting disciplinary action against them, giving them counselling and then warning, leading to limited promotional opportunities. He states these must be given at the onset of the wrong action, although proper supervision must be given.

The issue of wrong subject codes was confirmed by the Examination Instruction No. 5 of 2009 where new subject codes were issued for three subjects in three programmes.

Gillenson (1985) stated that that Technology was used in data administration at Colleges. In his data administration survey, he outlined challenges experienced by Data Administrators as being heavy workload, lack of management support, understaffing as it was difficult to find qualified staff, and lack of understanding of data administration by management.
It is the researcher’s view that, since the College needs to maintain students’ enrolments and other related examinations data, they have to collect and record it as a database in the College computers for management and decision-making purposes at the DHET. The findings show that there are problems related to technology and the processing of students’ Promotion marks that need further investigation. Services from IT specialists need to be used such that they investigate and correct the incompatibility of the IT systems.

Data has revealed that the IT system at the College (Coltech) was mostly offline such that if marks had to be sent electronically, then they were delayed.

This is consistent with the definition by Coetzee (2008) when he refers to technology as methods as well as techniques with which goods and services are produced.

Lecturers become unproductive regarding data management because of lack of proper management of the IT system at the College. It is suggested that if an IT system is not working, then it must be changed to a better one as compatibility in such a situation must be beyond doubt. Students will then receive their results on time after their examinations once all other problems have been eliminated.

In addition, the IT system that does not accept zero as a mark, is another area affecting the compilation of the students’ promotion mark which needs to be corrected.
This is contrary to the NCV Assessment Policy (2007) which states that if students were absent from an assessment and did not give a valid reason for their absence, then they must be given a chance to do the assessment. But if they still do not make themselves available after they were made aware that they had another chance to do the assessment, then they must be allocated a zero mark.

The researcher’s opinion is that if policy is implemented as it is with regards the zero mark, then there would be no problems related to blank spaces on the mark-sheets and therefore no pending results will be issued since allocating a zero mark would bring some finality to the marks and the students will be issued with their results.

However, an examination instruction was issued to the Colleges stating that no student must be given zero since the DHET system would reject it.
Data shows that lack of submission and integration of students’ marks at the DHET was also associated with lack of ISAT marks for repeaters who already have an ISAT mark being retrieved from the DHET’s IT system, yet they received the ISAT marks three years ago.

Researcher’s view:

Since an ISAT is carried over to the next year until it has been used three times when it expires. The ISAT should therefore be programmed into the College and DHET IT system to retrieve when the students’ ID number or name is punched into their system. The DHET could also make a provision (column) on the preliminary schedule for the repeaters’ ISAT marks to be inserted at the beginning of the year.
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Policies are developed in order to address challenges in societies especially when there is a need for an intervention. Therefore a policy is developed with good intentions even though there can be barriers to its implementation as well as unintended consequences.

Conclusions of the thematic areas

Absenteism by lecturers and students
Absenteism of lecturers for whatever reason, brings about a challenge at the College because it exacerbated student absenteeism.

- Issues other than lecturers’ strike action that have been stated as reasons why students absent themselves from the College to the detriment of their ICASS and ISAT marks, are lack of accommodation around the College, receiving bursary refunds, being demotivated because of difficult subjects or lack of credits for subjects completed already, late entries registrations, and calendars that are not aligned with those of schools.
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Students also make policy implementation impossible if they do not attend classes because it has to be administered with them.

It can be concluded, that absenteeism by lecturers and students for the reasons mentioned, affects submission and integration of students’ marks into examination marks such that the final promotion mark is not released.

Resources required for the implementation process

Most of the respondents have highlighted inadequate materials resources and training of the policy implementers, for example shortage of competent staff to run the IT systems, data administrators and lecturers as human resources. Inadequate equipment, bursaries for students as well as funds for operations were also mentioned as the resources required for policy implementation. It can thus be concluded from the findings that resources were provided but they were not adequate as tools with which ICASS and ISAT could be conducted to enable change management and therefore NCV Assessment Policy implementation.
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Administration at the Tshwane South FET College and DHET

The Students’ database forms the core of the administrative functions since students and teaching are the core business of the College. It can thus be concluded, considering the findings around administration, that data management both at the College and at the DHET was inadequate and that there is a need for the students’ data to be continuously updated after each registration with the two institutions communicating the changes to one another in a timely manner.

The findings have revealed that the timing of supplementary examinations and the lifespan of ICASS and ISAT marks affected the timely registration of students. It can thus be concluded that lack of proper administrative practices and data management at the College as well as at the DHET affected the submission and integration of student marks into the promotion marks.
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Communication among those involved in implementation

- The findings have shown that communication between the College and the DHET and between the lecturers and College management has not been given the required recognition. This occurs when lecturers do not communicate to management when they are not going to arrive for lessons and when policies are developed without them being consulted, hence for example they do not know how to interpret the Subject Guidelines. It is concluded that communication within the College and between the College and the DHET has not been addressed while protocol (to include the Provincial Department of Education) has not been adequately followed for Colleges to be guided and to receive the necessary policy information.

Quality Assurance

- The respondents have highlighted that monitoring and evaluation around curriculum issues is not adequate at the College, from the internal managers to the managers at the DHET. It is thus concluded that all curriculum managers who should be involved with monitoring and evaluation have not done so adequately to make sure that service delivery at the College takes place according to the standards set by the DHET.
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Management Information Systems

The respondents have indicated that there is data lost between the College and the DHET due to the incompatibility of their IT systems on inter-phasing. The College is often off-line and this also affects the submission of the ICASS and ISAT marks. **It is therefore concluded that there are challenges around subject codes and Information technology that affect the submission of the ISAT and ICASS marks being integrated into the students’ final Promotion mark, which in turn affected the timely release of students’ results.**
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings have revealed that at the College, absenteeism by both lecturers and students, lack of students’ motivation, lack of common (standardisation) assessments and inadequate resources are the challenges that brought about the non-submission and lack of integration of ICASS and ISAT marks into some of the students’ final Promotion marks.

However, the challenges experienced by both the College and the DHET were inadequate training of those involved in policy implementation, lack of communication within the College as well as between the College and the DHET, technological challenges, lack of proper administration, inadequate monitoring and evaluation of curriculum issues by the College, the Provincial and National Departments of Education.

Based on these findings, it is concluded that deviations from Policy during its implementation process occurred since change and knowledge management issues had not been properly addressed, thus affecting the submission and integration of students’ ICASS and ISAT marks into their promotion marks.
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

Implementation of a change management process

It is recommended that a rigorous change management process be implemented to address issues of NCV Assessment Policy (2007) advocacy.

However, the NCV Assessment Policy (2007), needs to be reviewed and amended particularly in relation to the evaluation of students without ICASS and ISAT marks, the lifespan of the validity period for ICASS and ISAT marks, as well as the timing of the supplementary examinations. In addition, quality assurance would also be addressed through the change management process as it looks at the inputs, processes, outputs, outcomes and impact of an intervention. Therefore for an adequate NCV Assessment Policy implementation, managers must consider the extent of resources in terms of budget allocations that they make in order to achieve the output, the outcome and impact of the policy being implemented. In the process, gaps identified must be communicated to the College and be closed.
Knowledge management:

Knowledge management (KM) is about finding out what knowledge an organisation possesses, enhancing that knowledge and applying it in the organisational activities to reach the organisation’s objectives. The College has trained staff members who should also manage the enrolments data by managing their IT systems, and this cannot happen without management support.

It is recommended that the critical success factors by Sunassee (2002) be adapted to the College and DHET environment, for use in the implementation of a knowledge management process in the College. This process will help address the issues of inadequate data administration and management information systems in the College and at the DHET.

Data lost on inter-phasing of the College and DHET IT systems is not desirable, therefore getting expert help in line with the College and DHET IT systems’ incompatibility may help eliminate the problem, while an investment in the IT systems that are similar between the College and the DHET could be the solution.
Recommendations for further research

⛶ NCV students are the core business of the FET Colleges and without them at the College, policy implementation and therefore policy objectives would be difficult to achieve. The research has shown how important and necessary their commitment is regarding assessments, since these assessments form components of their final promotion mark.

⛶ It is thus recommended that further research around the causes of NCV students’ absenteeism be conducted in order to understand why they do not commit to fully attend classes since this will enable them to build their PoEs and ISATs to constitute components of their Promotion marks and therefore an achievement of their qualifications.