Assessment in Rwandan Higher Education: What is the situation at the University of Rwanda- College of Education?

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an overview of assessment in Rwandan higher education. It aims to highlight the importance of assessment in higher learning institutions in general, and particularly how the University of Rwanda-College of Education (UR-CE) views and applies summative assessment and formative assessment. Why assessment is needed; how it is administered; what are types of assessment questions deemed important for higher institution students, and what should be the influence of assessment on students' progress as learning is concerned? Taking into account the case of the University of Rwanda-College of education, this paper shades on assessment challenges at the college of Education and how they should be tackled. Different documents have been consulted to serve the purpose of this work. It has been discovered that despite some challenges to overcome, summative assessment and formative assessment are administered in Rwandan Higher Learning Institution, particularly at UR-CE following the guidelines provided by the Rwandan Higher Education Council.

Key words: Assessment, higher education, educational policy

1. Introduction and definitions

Assessment is viewed as "the process of gathering and evaluating information on what students know, understand, and can do in order to make an informed decision about the next steps in the educational process" Clarke (2012). This information can be generated through a variety of processes, tools and practices ranging from informal conversation between the student and the lecturer and through the use of formal tests. As Klapper (2007) claims, assessment is a topic that suffers from the fact that everyone has had first-hand experience of the process, and has therefore certain fixed views on it. He goes on to claim that we have all come through it, more or less unscathed, and this can make us reluctant to stop and reflect on whether we knew enough about what was going on when we were being assessed, whether the process was a fair one, and whether assessment measures were appropriate. This is according to the author, the principal reason why some of the methods of assessment in use

today in higher education have not changed substantially despite major developments in approaches to other areas of learning and teaching.

As higher education is concerned, Norton (2007) claims that assessment in higher education is a difficult area to write about as everyone has a view and many assumptions are commonly expressed such as 'assessment drives the learning', 'students are more strategic and marks-oriented than they were', etc. Since the focus of this paper is on the Rwandan context, the analysis puts much emphasis on how summative assessment(SA) and formative assessment (FA) are applied in Rwandan higher education; and particularly how the University of Rwanda-College of Education (UR-CE) applies SA and FA. In this regard, our critical analysis dwells on checking whether the application of SA and FA at UR-CE is in line with the guidelines set by the Rwandan Higher Education Council; the strengths and weaknesses of FA and SA at UR-CE; and the recommendations for best practices. Hence, this paper aims:

- To describe how assessment is conducted in Rwandan higher education, and highlight the importance of assessment and assessment practices in Rwandan Higher education in general, and UR-CE in particular;
- To point out challenges faced in assessing UR-CE students and suggest ways to deal with some of those challenges.

2. Overview on types of assessment

In education, the term **assessment** refers to the wide variety of methods or tools that educators use to evaluate, measure, and document, the academic readiness, learning progress, skill acquisition, or educational needs of students (Airasian, 2005). The author defines assessment as a process of collecting, synthesizing and interpreting the information that could help in decision making. In addition, Clarke (2012) views assessment as a process of gathering and evaluating information on what students know, understand, and can do in order to make an informed decision about the next steps in the educational process. This information can be generated through a variety of processes, tools and practices ranging from informal conversation between the student and the lecturer, and through the use of formal tests. In the same vein, Norton (2007) comments on assessment in higher education claiming that assessment in higher education is a *difficult area to write about as everyone has a view and many assumptions are commonly expressed such as 'assessment drives the learning', 'students are more strategic and marks-*oriented than they were', etc.

It is claimed that the most common terms used to distinguish between types of assessment are formative and summative assessments; the former being less concerned with making of high stakes judgments. Bonham &Boyd (2007), propose four purposes of assessments namely certification, quality assurance, student learning and lifelong learning capacity. Earl (2003) reduces them to three including assessment of learning, assessment f*or* learning and assessment *as* learning. Others agree that the limit between summative and formative assessments is unclear and that it all depends on the function the assessment is posed to serve.

3. Purpose of assessing

According to Klapper (2007), traditionally, the main reasons of assessment have been: (i) to grade or rank students; (ii) to compare students' performance relative to each other; (iii) to pass or fail students; (iv) to facilitate student progression, in particular to ensure a prerequisite level of ability for further study, and (v) to contribute to final degree classification.

However, the above view has recently been broadened to encompass more diverse, teacher and learner-oriented conceptions. Nowadays, assessment is seen as something that should arise as naturally as possible out of the teaching process, rather than as something separate bolted on to a module (Klapper, 2007). The author goes on to point out that far from merely providing a summative, pass-or-fail judgment at the end of the course, assessment is now generally accepted as

a central feature of all learning and teaching, which not only provides important feedback to tutor and student, but also, in the process, helps to shape subsequent learning and teaching.

Klapper (2007) states that from the tutor's point of view, assessment provides information on the following: (i) Have the learning outcomes been met? (ii) How effective has my teaching been? (iii) How effective have the learning materials been? (iv) How have particular individuals performed? Do I need to do more to address their needs? (iv) How can I improve the course? On the other hand, the author goes on to claim that from the student point of view, the purpose of assessment seems to reside in (i) Lending direction and purpose to learning; (ii)Acknowledging success and thus maintaining motivation; (iii)Diagnosing faults and areas of weakness, and finally (iv) Providing constructive feedback on how to improve performance.

On a less idealized, more pragmatic view, assessment, especially in today's marketed higher education, is often the principal focus of students' attention, determining what they see as important and how they spend their study time (Brown et al.1997, cited in Klapper, 2007). Gibbs (1992, cited in Klapper, 2007) asserts that it is assessment considerations which frequently drive students and dictate their choice of options and learning tasks. The author highlights this in the following terms: '[…] assessment systems dominate what students are oriented towards in their learning. Even when lecturers say that they want students to be creative and thoughtful, students often recognize that what is really necessary; or at least what is sufficient, is to memorize' (Gibbs 1992, cited in Klapper, 2007).

4. Influence of assessment on students' learning

Assessment shapes students' learning because it gives the most obvious indication of what type of learning is valued in any education system (Boud, et ali., 2007). The issue of concern in considering the shaping role of assessment is not therefore with the strategic responses of students but with the standards of achievements and learning outcomes represented in the assessment material made available by the lecturer to the students.

Gibbs (2006) argues that issue of concern in considering the shaping role of assessment is not with the strategic responses of students but the standards of achievement and learning outcomes represented in the assessment material made available by the lecturer to the students. He also emphasizes that student learning can be poor largely because the assessment system does not work well, and changes solely to the assessment, leaving the teaching unchanged , can bring marked improvements. The author calls for an explicit consideration of all purposes of assessment in any system of education.

5. Types of assessment

We cannot establish a list of different types of assessment, without talking about their purposes because they differ based on their focus. Bonham and Boyd (2007) propose four purposes of assessments namely certification, quality assurance, student learning and lifelong learning capacity. In the same perspective, Airasian (2005) argues that teachers would use assessments to establish classroom equilibrium; to plan and conduct instruction; to place pupils; to provide feedback and incentives; as well as to judge and grade academic learning and progress. For types of assessment, Airasian (2005) suggests formative assessment and summative assessment. He further identified three areas of assessment namely early assessment, instructional assessment and official assessment. Similarly, Earl (2003) identifies three types of assessment, which are assessment *of* learning, assessment *for* learning and assessment *as* learning. However, researchers agree that the limit between summative and formative assessments is unclear and that it all depends on the function the assessment is posed to serve. In this paper, the focus is on formative and summative assessment.

5.1. Summative assessment or Assessment *of* learning

Summative assessment, also called terminal assessment or assessment of learning, is an assessment which takes place at the end of a course or an academic year (Petty, 2004). Its aim is to sum up what the candidate is able to do; to check the skills that a student has acquired and to grade students or place them in rank order (Petty, 2004).

For generations, summative assessment has dominated most classroom assessment work, where the bulk of teacher time has been taken up with creating tests, marking and grading. It emphasizes on comparing students to national standards, and feedback to learners comes in the form of marks or grades. These kinds of tests provide little direction or advice for improvement. Typically, they do not give much indication of mastery of particular ideas or concepts because the test content is generally too limited and the scoring is too simplistic to represent the broad range of skills and knowledge that have been covered (Petty, 2004).

Summative assessment reflects the traditional paradigm of assessing educational outcome (Shute & Becker, 2010). It helps summarize learners' achievements at a particular time (Harlen, 2006). It is usually administered, after some major events, like the end of the school year or marking period; or before a big event, like college entry (Shute & Becker, 2010). Harlen and James (1997) indicate that the main purpose of summative assessment is to describe the overall learning progress at a certain point in time so as to report to a range of educational stakeholders including parents, teachers, school or others.

Summative assessment is needed but if it is the only type of assessment used, or even the one given dominant attention, it will act to limit the effectiveness of the overall system of assessment. One of its strengths is to generate reliable data that can be used to compare students' performances across diverse populations on selected learning standards and to inform educational policy (Shute & Becker, 2010). However, one of its weaknesses is its inability to inform students' progress toward the achievement of intended objectives since it focuses only on the students' learning product (Earl, 2003). In order to address such weaknesses, countries have turned to formative assessment as a crucial additional component of a balanced assessment system (Darling-Hammond & Pecheone, 2009).

5.2. Formative assessment or Assessment *for* learning

Black et al. (2004) argue that assessment for learning is any assessment whose first priority is to serve the purpose of promoting students' learning. It differs from assessment designed primarily to serve the purposes of accountability, or of ranking or of modifying student behavior, or certifying competence, which is summative assessment. In formative assessment, activities help learning if they provide information that teachers and students can use as feedback in assessing themselves or one another to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged. This shows that feedback is an integral part of formative assessment as it informs the next step in learning. This feedback is the most useful when it informs the student about how to improve the level of current performance. It is in this sense that the assessment can be seen to be formative, to help "form "the student's subsequent learning.

Therefore, the purpose of formative assessment is to provide feedback to learners while they are still learning the topic. That feedback is used especially by the learners to improve, because the formative assessment measures students' progress; but it can also assess the progress of the teacher (Petty, 2004). Cohen (1996) indicates that formative assessment serves in gathering information to diagnose the strengths and weakness of students; and from those diagnoses, an effective planning for the future teaching and development could take place.

6. Purpose of assessment in higher education

Klapper (2007) identifies five main reasons for assessment, and these are (i) to grade or rank students; (ii) to compare students' performance relative to each other; (iii) to pass or fail students; (iv) to facilitate student progression so as to check a prerequisite level of ability for further study, and (v) to contribute to final classification of degrees. The author goes on to point out that far from merely providing a summative, pass-or-fail judgment at the end of the course, assessment is now generally accepted as a central feature of all learning and teaching, which not only provides important feedback to tutor and student, but also, in the process, helps to shape subsequent learning and teaching.

6.1. Importance and value of assessment

Klapper (2007) identifies the importance of assessment on the side of the teacher and on the side of the learner. For the teacher, assessment provides information on (i) whether the learning outcomes have been met; (ii) how effective has the teaching been; (iii) how effective have the learning materials been; (iv) how particular individuals have performed and if there is a need to do more to address their needs; and (v) how the course can be improved. On the side of the student, assessment serves in (i) giving direction and purpose for learning; (ii) acknowledging success and maintaining motivation; (iii) diagnosing areas of weakness, and (iv) providing constructive feedback on how to improve performance.

In today's Higher Education, assessment is often the principal focus of students' attention; it determines what they see as important and how they spend their study time (Brown et al.1997, cited in Klapper, 2007). Gibbs (1992, cited in Klapper, 2007) asserts that assessment considerations frequently drive students and dictate their choice on options and learning tasks. This is highlighted in the following: "[…] assessment systems dominate what students are oriented to in their learning. Even when lecturers say that they want students to be creative and thoughtful, students often recognize that what is really necessary, or at least what is sufficient, is to memorize" (Gibbs, 1992, cited in Klapper, 2007:10).

6.2. Assessment *as* learning and self-regulation

Assessment as learning promotes learning achievements. Earl's (2003) definition of effective assessment highlights the typical features of assessment as learning, describes how it works and its benefits to students learning. It mainly shows that self-assessment is at the core of an effective assessment culture. Effective assessment empowers students to ask reflective questions and consider a range of strategies for learning and acting. Over time, students move forward in the learning when they can use personal knowledge to construct meaning, have skills of self-monitoring to realize they don't understand something, and have ways of deciding what to do next. Students, as active, engaged, and critical assessors, can make sense of information, relate it to prior knowledge, and master the skill involved. Students are their own best assessors.

In a balanced assessment system, assessment tasks for students should include all the three type of tasks: Summative assessment tasks, formative learning tasks and self-monitoring tasks (Keppel & Carless, 2006). Students 'acquisition of the evaluative expertise is the prerequisite for learning achievement (Sadler, 1989). Research has related formative assessment to self-regulated learning (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). During any learning students must regulate or manage their own learning processes (e.g Bruning et al. 2011) and students with effective regulatory processes can regulate their self-improvement and have greater potential to become effective lifelong learners (Zimmermann, 2012). Relating formative assessment with self-regulated learning distinguishes formative from other forms of educational assessment (Clark, 2012).

According to Clark (2012) formative assessment is designed to continuously support teaching and learning by emphasizing the meta-cognitive skill and learning contexts required for self-regulated learning; planning,

monitoring and critical yet non-judgmental reflection on learning, which both students and teachers use collaboratively to guide further learning and improve performance outcomes. Clark goes on to suggest that, unlike a test or tool, formative assessment is a process with the potential to support learning even after formal schooling, by developing learning strategies which are transferable to a variety of graduates 'situations across their whole life-span. Clark's statements suggests that through formative assessment students can achieve higher learning levels and develop the lifelong learning habits that are crucial in a rapidly changing world that requires readiness to rapidly learn new skills and develop new knowledge.

However, most researchers seem to agree that, in most institutions, the assessment approaches that promote higher order learning have been overshadowed by the dominance of summative assessment (measurement) of learning achievement (e.g. Boud and Associates, 2010; Carless et ali. 2006; Gibbs and Simpson, 2004).   As will be demonstrated in the next section, the Rwandan higher education assessment context has similar limitations from both policy and practice viewpoints.

7. The Context of Assessment in Rwandan Higher Education
The government of Rwanda has stressed the need to have higher education graduates equipped with the critical skills necessary to realize its dream to establish a knowledge-based economy. Capabilities such as lifelong-learning and critical thinking are Rwandan's key strategies as referred in the Second Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy EDPRS 2 (Ministry of Education, MINEDUC, 2010); and the Higher Education Council (HE) National learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (HEC, 2007).
One of the expected outcomes of EDPRS 2 is to release graduates who are prepared for the job market with the required critical skills referred as "Catalytic Skills" (MINEDUC, 2010). Stressing on this need to ensure graduate's self-assessment and self-regulative skills; HEC (2007) recommend that al student will also be provided with opportunities to engage in personal development planning, to ensure that they are aware of their own strengths and able to recognize the areas which they can improve further. EDPRS 2 recognizes the importance of the development and assessment of essential (cognitive and non-cognitive). Higher order-skills required for the productivity and employability of the youth and the country's economic development.

7.1. The National Vision and Mission of Higher Education in Rwanda
The government of Rwanda stressed the need to have higher education graduates equipped with the critical skills necessary to realize it dream to establish a knowledge-based economy. Capabilities such as lifelong and critical thinking are recurrent in Rwandan's key strategic orientation official documents such as the second Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS 2) (Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, MINECOFIN, 2013), The educational Sector Strategic Plan (Ministry of Education, MINEDUC,2010), and the Higher Education Council's National Learning, |Teaching and assessment Strategy (HEC, 2007). For example, one of the expected outcomes of EDPRS2 is to have graduated who are prepared for the job market with the required critical skills referred to as "catalytic skills" (MINEDUC, 2010).   Stressing the need to ensure graduate's self-assessment and self-regulative skills, the HEC (2007) recommends that all students will also be provided with opportunities to engage in personal development planning, to ensure that they are aware of their own strengths and able to recognize the areas in which they can improve further. Likewise, EDPRS recognizes the importance of the development and assessment of essential (cognitive and non-cognitive) higher order-skills required for the productivity and employability of the youth and for the country's economic development.

The mission assigned to higher education in Rwanda reflects more ambitious and complex learning achievement expected from students. This desire to achieve higher learning levels created new challenges for education shareholders, mainly teachers and students, to consider their respective activities in and outside classrooms, including their use of assessment.

7.2. Assessment Policy Framework
According to HEC (2007), through its National Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy places assessment at the heart of student learning quality when it encourages the use of formative assessment and

summative assessment. The purposes of assessment are to help staff and students monitor and improve learning, to provide a mea and ensure of student achievement and help assure academic quality and standards". Likewise, the Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement and the Maintenance of Standards in Higher Education Handbook (HEC, 2007) provides a description of the direction of assessment and the conditions under which of their purpose, whether diagnostic, formative or summative , and have clear published criteria for marking.

However, further analysis of HEC's vision of assessment reveals a strong inclination towards mostly summative assessment purposes of quality assurance and certification with little reference to the typical practices of formative assessment for learning. For example, HEC (2007) defines assessment as an "academic work done by students and marked by academic staff-both formative and summative". The assessment strategy statement (HEC, 2007) defines assessment as an "academic work done by students and marked by academic staff-both formative and summative: "Formative assessment is designed to help learners learn more effectively giving them feedback on their performance indicating how it can be improved". It also stipulated in HEC (2007) that assessment should be appropriate for measuring learning outcomes. Assessment should be carried out professionally at all times and take into account the extensive knowledge which exists about testing and examination processes. The same trend is also typical of the current higher education regulations (HEC, 2013). The regulations highlight the procedures of examination and grading while insisting on the quality, transparency, validity, and reliability important aspects of formative assessment such as self-assessment and the use of assessment to promote higher-order learning and teaching.

It turns out of that, these policy documents presents assessments tools for measuring learning achievement and for quality assurance. They emphasize what should be done by external assessors, leaving aside what students could do in the assessment process. In fact, they do not explicitly consider developing students 'self-evaluative skills, known for their potential to produce more complex, higher level and good quality learning.

7.3. Education System in Rwandan Higher Education
Over the last decade, Rwandan higher education has undergone a number of changes that have had particular effects on how teaching and assessment, and eventually learning are practiced. These changes include modularization of in class size. Arguably, the modularization, which has been in place since 2008 (Mugisha, 2010) has had the major and most direct influence on teaching and assessment, and ultimately on the learning process and outcomes. The introduction of the modular system aimed at increased involvement of students in the learning process according to the Rwandan High Education Council: "We have been using the teacher-centered type of teaching where the lecturer provides the students with everything hence giving the students no chance to do their own research. But this new system will allow participatory learning for the students (The Executive Secretary of the Rwandan Higher Education Council, cited in Kwizera, 2010).

7.4. Research evidence on higher education assessment in Rwanda
A few empirical studies on assessment in higher education institutions in Rwanda indicate a pervasive of assessment of learning over assessment for learning and student self-assessment (Mugisha, 2010; Nyiratunga, 2007); Rwanamiza, 2004), a situation which does not promote complex learning. A case study by Rwanamiza (2004) reveals that formative assessment had been poorly practiced in higher education and that students turned to rote learning to obtain higher marks and partly due to rote teaching. These findings were echoed in later study by Nyiratunga (2007). Likewise, Mugisha (2010) reports that the prevalence of summative assessment for grading in Rwanda Higher Education institutions limited chances of developing higher order thinking skill and led to surface learning. This is simplified by Mugisha (2010), where he argues that students learn to ensure that they pass the course/subject/module instead of mastering the learning outcomes.

Also a recent study by Mbabazi et ali. (2012) report that Rwandan students 'ill preparedness for the learning demands of higher education as one of the major barriers to quality learning. In related study Nyiratunga

(2007) compared assessment practices in writing modules at the University of Witwatersrand (Wits) in South Africa and the National University of Rwanda (NUR). The comparison revealed some concerns about the key characteristics of assessment with lectures to seek assistance, and the little consultation that did occur was often concerned with a challenge about the awarded mark. The findings also reported students 'complaints over the lack of feedback by the lectures on their papers and simplistic nature of feedback, with more emphasis on surface language errors and less on content and organization. Nyiratunga also reveals the lack of students 'active reflection on their learning as part of the assessment of the module at NUR, unlike the situation at Wits.

These practices seem highly likely to compromise the promotion of the complex level of learning expected of Rwandan graduates. In the study by Mbabazi et al. (2012), higher education teachers reported that Rwandan students displayed too much dependence on the teacher, which they saw as one of the five major barriers to quality learning. Rwandan students 'characteristics and other four barriers (poor preparedness for higher education, poor reading culture, unfamiliarity with deep learning approach) are inconsistent with the main feature of the expected self-regulated learning and lifelong learning habits.

8. Assessment and the Paradigm Shift
The mission assigned to Rwandan higher education requires a "paradigm shift" in the way we conceive of education assessment. Assessment from most higher education students; teachers and policy makers' perspective has been geared to grading, certification, and quality assurance. The current dominant paradigm is largely summative so that student learning, and to some extent teaching, is grade-given.

A summative assessment-dominated system is therefore inappropriate if students are to develop more effective learning skills such as metacognitive skills and lifelong learning habits.   In the context of higher education system characterized by large classes and frequent summative assessments associated with modularization, it would also seem necessary to involve the students in the assessment processes more directly. If the students in the current higher education system are educated in the processes of self-assessment

For an effective assessment environment, an appropriate regulation system must be put in place. At all levels, from departments and faculties within institutions and up to national level, assessment policies should be designed to explicit describe each level's approach to the expanded approach to educational assessment. Such policies should be reflective of the principles that include explicit provisions and time for formative assessment. The policies should also describe the procedures of collecting and recording a range of evidences of students 'learning progress and achievements as well as their use by different stakeholders. A range in policy of this nature also has strong implication for the arrangement of teaching, including for modularization, module content, timetabling, and the design of assessment tasks.

9. Assessment at the University of Rwanda- College of Education (UR-CE)
According to Rwandan Higher Education Council, the core principles of assessment in Higher learning institutions are described in the following terms:
(i)Assessment will be valid (assessment tasks will assess what is intended to be assessed and be fit for purpose). All modules have learning outcomes, which are what the assessment is to test. These learning outcomes cover knowledge/ understanding, cognitive skills, practical skills and personal/transferable skills. The Assessment for each module must cover all these objectives, and it must be clear what a given assessment task covers and that it is appropriately designed to do so.
(ii)Assessment will be reliable (assessment processes and procedures will be accurate, consistent and trustworthy and their broad outcomes will have the full confidence of all parties). Internal and external moderation are important here.

(iii)Assessment will be explicit (assessment tasks, processes and procedures will be accessible, clearly explained to and understood by all stakeholders including prospective and current students, funding agents, academic and related staff, professional bodies and employers) (HEC, 2007:5).

9.1. Formative assessment versus summative assessment in UR-CE

The college of Education is part of the colleges under the University of Rwanda and follows guidelines and regulations form the Higher Education Council. Hence, in its general academic regulations, the University of Rwanda claims that the purpose of assessment is to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Modules are assessed by coursework and by a final assignment or examination at the completion of the module whereby assessment by coursework may include assignments, test, quizzes and practices carried out during the teaching weeks, where grades are provided before the final examination (UR, 2015).

To clarify the above, at the College of Education, apart from assignments given to students in different ways and classroom presentations, invigilated CATs (Continuous Assessment Tests) have to be administered to students. An invigilated CAT is set by lecturers involved in the module, modulated by a lecturer in the same subject   and when it takes place, it has to be invigilated the same way as final exams are invigilated. Moreover, for a module weighting 10 credits, one invigilated CAT must be given while for a module weighting 20 credits; two invigilated CATs must be administered.   According to the article 90 of the academic regulations, continuous assessments, invigilated CATs included make up 50% of the module score and the final examination make up 50% of the module score as well. CATs, classroom presentations and assignments of different types fall under formative assessment since students get their feedback while final exam can be put in the category of summative assessment

As the students' feedback on their assessments, pass mark for any module are concerned; the articles pertaining to these in the academic regulations state the following:

- ✓ Students will normally receive feedback on their performance in coursework before the next assessment on the same module (Art 87);
- ✓ A module is passed if its specified learning outcomes have been achieved. The assessment of each module shall generate a single mark between 0 and 100% expressing the extent to which the learning outcomes have been achieved (Art 88);
- ✓ The pass mark for all levels shall be on 50% and no supplementary shall be allowed. However, special examinations within the same academic year may be considered on merit of individual cases (Art 89).

9.2. Criticisms

There are many challenges in line with delivering module content, setting CATs and exams, marking and providing feedback to students. Challenges are also indirectly justified in different ways. Among others, as criticism is concerned, one can highlight the following:

9.2.1. Lack of feedback

While the article 87 of the academic regulations, put much emphasis on providing feedback to students on performance in their coursework before they get other ones or even do the final examination, it has been observed that in some subjects students don`t get the feedback on time as it is suggested. Others do not even get their scripts to go through them and get to know where they had scored few marks so that they can improve of the aspects treated in the question, they are instead given final results. For final examinations, students do never get their booklets. Only those who are not satisfied with their results can claim for remarking after paying some amount of money,

which is not facilitative for many students who strive to sustain their lives here while studying as they do not get government allowance.

9.2.2. Setting question papers
Despite the fact that students do not get feedback of exams done which could be a base for them to find out where their weaknesses lie for improvement, one can also say that even the composition of some items of exams and invigilated CATs are not worth taking into account questions that should be given to University students. In the invigilation we make, it has been observed that some lecturers set true/false questions, multiple questions and gap filling questions; and such question items dominate the paper. This is sometimes done even for students in final levels who should be given open-questions to allow them exploit their creative abilities and show how they can respond to different problems in educational settings.

9.2.3. Students-teacher ratio
Rwandan Higher Learning Education System has been characterized by the increase of number of students at all levels. The implementation of EFAL (Education For All) has resulted in big numbers of secondary school enrolments, which also resulted in increased higher education involvement rates. This has in turn led to large classes in higher education especially for the general or cross-cutting modules. Hence students have limited time to prepare and complete their assignments and other summative assessment while teachers have limited time and small space to provide formative feedback to students. As Gibbs (2006) highlights it, formative assessment practices, and focused attention on self-assessment are less likely to take root in such circumstances.
One cannot finish without sharing some of the reasons advanced by lecturers for these challenging problems. There are among others, time constraint in setting exams, marking schemes and marking and the crucial aspect of big number of students' scripts to mark.

10. Conclusion
With the mission of high education of promoting higher order and lifelong learning habits for all students and assessment proving to play a critical role to accomplish this mission. Higher Education Council (2014) declares that maximizing the potential of assessment to promote complex learning requires Rwandan Higher Education administrators, teachers and students to rethink assessment trough the lenses of its primary mission. Assessment policy and practices should be reconfigured in the framework of a balanced assessment system that caters all the three main assessment purposes (assessment as learning; assessment for learning and summative assessment). In the proposed paradigm, particular attention should be put on assessment practices and tools that help students to regulate their learning process. The current mindset is dominated by summative assessment of learning. To enable the shift and the balance of all assessments there is need for deepening teachers and students 'skills and knowledge about assessments that promote learning. The in-service training or professional development of faculties and department' members should address this issue. Professional learning teams could be established to try out formative assessment ideas within specific subjects in form of action research projects. Further research should also consider developing and evaluating assessment tools. The University of Rwanda in general and the UR-CE should strive to solve problems that hinder lecturers from providing relevant and constructive formative assessments and summative ones.

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