

Towards a methodology for evaluating the equivalency of demands in vocational assessments between colleges/training providers

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Abstract

In many countries and contexts, vocational skills tend to be assessed via observations (or other evidence) of the practical performance of appropriate tasks. In the case of national qualifications, although the nature of the tasks may be broadly set out within the qualification's assessment guidance, colleges or training providers often determine the particular tasks used. This system allows for the assessments to be as authentic as possible. However, it is possible that aspects of the assessment contexts (e.g. task instructions and guidance, level of support provided by the tutor) could lead to differences in task demands between colleges/training providers. Unless any such differences are accounted for in assessment judgements, they could pose a threat to assessment reliability, and hence, to validity. This paper will describe the trialling of a possible methodology for comparing the demands of vocational assessments between colleges/training providers. Judges with relevant experience revised a framework of cognitive demands and then made paired comparisons of assessment materials from a vocationally-related administration qualification. Additionally, some tutors and students were interviewed to gain insight into the assessment contexts. The methodology was generally successful but difficulties and possible improvements will be discussed.