HOD 3 INTERVIEW

**SECTION B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**Would you kindly share your understanding of the concept of absenteeism?**

Okay for me, it means not being on time. For example, saying we say our period for a particular subject is to start from 7:45, and a student arrives later than that, that in itself is late coming in or you asked me about student absenteeism that would mean a student who would not attend classes, for example, but then we need to define them in terms of the magnitude. So, you would say, a student’s maybe or may not be as strict as it would be where we just look at one particular day. A student who is absent for a continuous period of time that becomes a problem. Which would then be looked into and possibly looking into disciplinary steps if they don't work and then ultimately probably have to de-register that students. In the case of lecturers or staff in general, absenteeism would mean if a lecturer is absent for a period of 15 days for two weeks, in particular, without any indication of the reasons there of, in other words, that in its self becomes abscond and therefore that is gross absenteeism, it maid results to disciplinary measures if not dismissal.

**Your experience of absenteeism amongst the NCV students in college what is your experience?**

There is gross absenteeism of students and there are reasons thereof. For example, students would not come to school because they claim that they don't have transport money. Or that in the case where they claim they don't have transport money that could be because they are NSFAS beneficiaries and perhaps they have not been paid their travel allowances and therefore they stay away, or there could be other reasons. Maybe the students are not finding any joy in class or a particular lecturer is not meeting their expectation or it could be because the lecturers themselves absent themselves from class, and therefore students end up losing interest and they simply stay away.

**From your experience, what factors have you found to be influencing absenteeism amongst the NCV students?**

Like I said, issues of NSFAS travel allowance, lack of interest because of the conduct of lecturers who stay away from classes or some students may not find the lecture to be at par with them or they are not giving enough to the students. Or it could just be certain students who simply do not take their studies serious.

**What have you found to be the effect of absenteeism amongst the NCV students?**

Well, generally, whether it's NC students or even online students, the effect will be about their ability to qualify for final exam because if you absent yourself from school as a student, chances are that you may not really understand your work, and therefore that will translate into performance in your various assessments that will ultimately not qualify for final exams, that’s the one thing, the other could be that students who absent themselves from school and they are NSFAS beneficiaries. They would run the risk of losing their NSFAS funding not because only they may not have qualified for exam or they may have failed exam but because of the required percentage of attendance, which is 80% for students and if they don't meet that quota, and it's picked up and reported, and NSFAS has the right to withdraw the funding.

**If I may probe, what could be the other effect of absence might be to the lecture or to the students. Hence you have stated the one that might affect students, what about lectures**?

In the case of lectures, obviously lecturers are just like managers or senior lecturers and HOD, they have to account for the performance of their students. And therefore in the instance where a high number of students did not perform well, in two ways either they did not qualify to write the exam. Which means you've got a substantial number of students who, quote unquote, dropped out. Or, at the end of the process, most students do not actually pass their final exam and therefore they fail the particular subject. The lecturers’ performance will be affected negatively. And remember also, it's not just about that particular year, in the case of NCV, it will eventually translate into a low numbers of students who complete their qualifications on time. In other words, the throughput rate will be low and ultimately, that would affect our certification rate.

So the number of students who actually end up getting certificated for either levels two, three, and ultimately level four will be low. That would affect lectures performance, the college outcomes and It will also affect the Department of Higher Education in terms of their own performance targets. On a greater scale it will affect colleges in respect of funding because the number of students who complete their qualifications. Let's start first with the progression rate, the number of students who are able to pass a particular year of study, ultimately get to affect the funding level. And also, remember also the performance of the college overall, whether it's because of NCV or report 191, would have a reputation impacts such that the colleges’ ability to accept most students would be constrained and therefore that would affect funding because the college is funded on the basis of numbers**.**

I personally, come early to work to prepare for my lessons and to avoid being late to due to traffic that is caused by load shedding and also preventing students who miss classes claiming that lecturer A was not available and they decided to leave the campus and never came back.

**From your personal perspective, how do you support NCV students that show signs of absenteeism?**

Okay, remember in the college we have support departments or support staff. On the academic side, our responsibility is to track the level of absenteeism and where we deem it necessary that an intervention should be provided that is when we involve the students support services department, which is one of our support departments. And in that case, they would then make contact with the guardians, whether it's their parents, or legal guardians to report the matter, and to seek their intervention or support. So that at the level of the parents or the Guardians, the student can be engaged with the hope that the behaviour will then change for the better.

**How does the College Address the elements of absenteeism amongst NCV students?**

Okay, so you've got a number of options, one of which is that it depends on the effects of your intervention, right? If you speak to their parents or even speak to the students themselves, and the behaviour changes positively then there's no reason to worry further, but in the case where that does not happen. The college has the right to de-register that student with or without their consent, or with or without their parent's consent. But then it has an effect on the student, not necessarily on the college in the sense that the student tends to lose money and the years as well, but with the college there's not much you can do further, except to deregister the students so that he/she doesn't have a negative record on our ultimate outcomes. Remember, if the number of students is high and the number of students who are absent from school are high, that in itself becomes a total dropout rate and so it affects the college negatively. So the college has the right to prevent that by a way of de-registering the students.

**How do you think student absenteeism can be addressed in TVET colleges in general?**

I think that if we stick to NCV for example. I think the college may not necessarily be able to address it in the sense of stopping it. Because, remember, the college depends on NSFAS, as to when the allowances will be paid.

We don't have a control on that. Particularly now, unlike in the past, where now NSFAS deals directly with students. So in other words, once the college has assisted the student with the application for NSFAS and it goes through successfully, the College of course will get their share in terms of the 20% of the fees, but the student will then get an allowance and students are now receiving allowance through E-wallet, which means they get it directly from NSFAS, so the college doesn't have control over that and such that students who don't receive their allowances, their travel allowances or even accommodation and meal allowances one time and they absent themselves from school as a result the college doesn't really have much control over that.

At the level of the principal, you would possibly influence NSFAS by making them aware of the impact thereof. But we cannot change how they do things, however, as a college it can be controlled in a way of our intake. The kind of students you will attract to an extent because remember, with NCV, we enrol students at level four who have passed a minimum of grade 9. So automatically you've got a challenge because the kind of the calibre of students that you are attracting, is one who is not mature enough. So chances are that they may not make it.

Remember, the greatest number of students that we have or are able to have in the college not only in the campus would come from other provinces, and therefore chances are that those students will be away from their parents or guardians. They'll be staying in a room in a flat in a township somewhere, they have to travel and they are on their own therefore they can do their own thing. So if they don't want to come to school, nobody will be able to track that and police them and so, so they have that kind of freedom and which then impacts on the college because there's not much we can do as a college, because we don't even have a residential place of our own where we can house students at a fee. But what I mean in terms of the point of intake, you can then begin to try and accept a more mature student for example, where our college is not there yet, but I know for a fact having worked for another college, the majority of students who were accepted when I was still there, were students who have passed matric, so, the level of maturity is higher chances of them absconding from class is lower. And therefore the outcomes in terms of performance, tend to also be higher. We can do that as a college. Except, you know, given the fact that we are not allowed to turn anyone away, but we can try and control it by giving first preference to students who are more mature in terms of age, in terms of their level of education, and therefore, we can have a better chance of limiting such problems as absenteeism from class.

No, I would like to thank you. We have come to the end of our interview, thank you so much for giving me this opportunity.