

Dr. Antonia Coward
Candidate's Reflection
NVQ Awards Ceremony
Hilton Hotel
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From the onset it is important to mention that I am a fervent advocate of the Competency Based Education and Training modality and I usually facilitate training workshops for the TVET Council. Therefore I welcomed the opportunity to be trained in this programme.

The first and second phases of the training were not very challenging. However, the experience reinforced my belief that tutors, instructors and assessors should be mandated to engage in professional development activities yearly. Since my time under the microscope helped me to improve my assessment skills especially in the areas of planning, giving feedback and document keeping.

What presented me with major difficulty was compiling the portfolio. It would be remiss of me not to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth, thus you must be made aware that I complained throughout the portfolio development phase. As I usually tell my students, "When individuals are students they behave like students regardless of if they are teenagers, adults, or tutors." The role of a student is to complain and this I did daily, mainly because the process was extremely robust.

Being an educator for over 30 years my reply to students would be "this too shall pass". This latter statement has become a reality for me. Here I am today having successfully completed all the requirements for the NVQ-J.

Educators are proponents of the idea that learning and experience should lead to a change in behavior. Alas! A change has come, my students can expect more empathy, tolerance and compassion from me when they do not submit their portfolios on time, or when they complain about the work load involved in compiling a portfolio.

During the compilation process I experienced an array of emotions which included frustration, infuriation, and exhilaration, to mention a few. When I put the last page in the document a chorus of Hallelujahs was echoed. I do not want you to believe that the portfolio was compiled hurriedly and that is why I encountered problems. This is far from the truth. Cognizant that preparing a portfolio was not a process which can happen overnight, the task was completed in stages.

Throughout the process the TVET Council offered excellent support, and my assessor was always just a telephone call away. I am sure that Ms. Debra Hope's ears were often itching even before the telephone rang. I take this opportunity to commend her and the TVET Council for their outstanding monitoring process and a job well done.

During the final presentation of portfolios phase the assessors practiced what was taught. They left no stone unturned to ensure that the evidence collected was authentic and that there was a thorough understanding of concepts and principles. In some cases the presentation process was more intense than my experience was when I defended my dissertation during graduate studies. Although their persistence was not welcomed at the time, to some extent this was advantageous as it ensured that the six R's of assessment were transparent, namely robust, rigorous, realistic, relevant, recent and revisable.

In addition, the robust assessment process used by the assessors was effective in debunking the myth that is usually heard by many persons, that is, pursuing a Vocational Qualification is easy, 'a piece of cake' and any person, I almost said any 'fool' can earn this qualification with a breeze. Each of us here this evening can attest that the latter is indeed a grave misconception. Instead we can articulate that the process involved all the domains of learning, that is, what we knew, what we understood, what we could do, and it necessitated that we climbed the hierarchy in the attitudinal taxonomy. Similarly, the process allowed participants to engage in higher order thinking skills such as application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

My only disappointment was that a true competence-based approach was not possible that is, I could not move at my own pace since there was a common submission in date. I am aware and

can appreciate the dynamics that caused this however; I look forward to the availability of NVQ-B which I hope, should allow for varying submission dates which would be in keeping with the competency based philosophy.

In the final analysis the level 4 NVQ Assessment training was robust and proved to be an excellent and rewarding experience. It afforded me an opportunity to actually sit on the opposite side of the fence to complete this course as a student utilizing a modality that I have been advocating for over a decade. Today when I speak to students it is from an informed position, which allows me to say “I completed the NVQ-J and was successful, you can do the same”. More important, I have earned the right to become a member of the occupational standards, competency based NVQ assessment and training movement in Barbados.

Candidate Signature: A. Coward

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