



# An assessment strategy for the employability of HRM graduates in South Africa



## Authors:

Tendency Beretu<sup>1,2</sup>   
Warren P. Charles<sup>1</sup> 

## Affiliations:

<sup>1</sup>Department of Human Resource Management, Faculty of Business and Management Sciences, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town, South Africa

<sup>2</sup>Department of Human Resource Management, College of Economic and Management Sciences, University of South Africa, Cape Town, South Africa

## Corresponding author:

Tendency Beretu,  
tendency27@gmail.com

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**Orientation:** The unemployment problem in South Africa has been explored from both supply and demand perspectives, but there is a gap in understanding industry expectations on graduate competence and market readiness.

**Research purpose:** This study investigates a labour market-driven assessment strategy to evaluate the employability of Human Resource Management (HRM) graduates in South Africa.

**Motivation for the study:** The study aims to ensure that graduate assessments align with industry needs, enhancing employability through industry-based methods.

**Research approach/design and method:** A case study design was used, selecting a university offering HRM qualifications and 196 employed HRM graduates. Supervisors of these graduates provided feedback on the alignment between university assessments and graduate performance. The study used a pragmatic approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data collection.

**Main findings:** The data from 196 supervisors revealed eight key themes: assessments were seen as inappropriate, lacking industry focus, too general and needing industry collaboration. Respondents also suggested industry responsibility in assessments, linking students to industry, emphasising solutions to industry challenges, and calling for industry-based standards. Most respondents viewed current assessments as inaccurate indicators of graduate capabilities.

**Practical/managerial implications:** The study recommends adopting an industry-centric assessment approach to improve graduate assessments. This alignment could enhance graduate fitness for employment and the value they add to the industry.

**Contribution/value-add:** This study helps to align university assessments with industry expectations, increasing HRM graduates' employability and ensuring assessments reflect the capabilities needed in the labour market.

**Keywords:** university assessment; employability; graduates; labour market; human resource management; labour force readiness; capability mapping; skills gap; industry needs.

## Introduction

Assessments in higher education serve as a measure of key behavioural and psychological competencies essential for societal well-being. Equally important is to ensure that assessments are valid and reliable, accurately reflecting competencies required by the labour market (Albay et al., 2024; Matorevhu, 2023). Two questions are worth analysis: (1) Do the assessments measure the exact competencies that matter in the labour market and (2) to what extent are the assessments reliable as an indicator of graduate competencies? These two questions are important within the general discourse of higher educational reform and the unemployment situation globally and nationally. Global unemployment rates are expected to increase from 5.1% to 5.2% (International Labour Organisation [ILO], 2024), while in South Africa, the rate of unemployment in the fourth quarter of 2024 was 32.9%. The unemployment rates for graduates in South Africa are generally better but still high (11.8%) when compared those who are not graduates (39.1%) (STATS SA, 2024). These statistics show a general high rate of unemployment both globally and nationally. These general employment challenges also, specifically, reflect the situation for HRM graduates who face other specific challenges such as their strategic role and skills requirement in the digital age. With high unemployment in South Africa, several questions concerning the supply side as well as the demand side of labour come into consideration. The demand side of labour relates to the availability of employers and jobs to absorb graduates; the

supply side relates to the availability and quality of the labour force. The present study is aligned with the labour supply side about the quality of human resources management graduates and how to improve their quality and relevance for labour market absorption. In the study of Sims et al. (2023), it is noted that there are present indications that assessment is shifting from 'assessment of learning' to 'assessment for learning' and 'assessment as learning'. 'Assessment of learning' is when graduates are assessed on what they have learned while in 'assessment for learning' graduates are assessed to inspire them to continue learning as opposed to 'assessment as learning' where assessment is considered as part of learning (Sims et al., 2023). This study seeks to advocate assessment as an 'assessment for employment' as a view aimed at mitigating the scourge of unemployment in South Africa. The present assessment of higher education students in South Africa recognises Bloom's taxonomy of knowledge, skills and attitudes as the basis for developing assessments (Hu & Venketsamy, 2023; Sobral, 2021). While this is often the practice in several countries, this study seeks to suggest that these competencies may require to be more oriented to the needs of the labour market and how this can be attained. As a result, the study adopts the lens of Bloom's taxonomy to propose a labour market-driven assessment strategy for the employability of human resource management (HRM) graduates in South Africa. The specific objectives of this study were: (1) to determine whether present assessments for HRM graduates for a selected university measure the exact competencies that matter in the labour market and (2) to explore the extent to which university HRM assessments are reliable as indicators of graduate competencies.

## Literature review

As provided in Sims et al. (2023), models and methods of assessment are often informed by certain ideological and philosophical views about society and its individuals. In the view of Santoso et al. (2023), assessment philosophies tend to vary across regions and nationalities owing to the unique circumstances faced by citizens. In making this assertion, it is considered that philosophies of teaching, learning and assessment are informed by national experiences, culture, environment, geographical location and so on. Despite these arguments, Ngene (2023) identified the major philosophies of educational practice which influence assessments, and these include behaviourism, pragmatism, cognitivism and progressivism, humanism as well as constructivism. The behaviourism philosophy contends that learning is demonstrated by a change in behaviour and this behaviour is observable. Assessments in respect of this philosophy are in the form of mastering facts, drills and practice (Ariwidodo, 2023; Ngene, 2023). Additionally, positive responses are an indication of behaviour change, and they are rewarded during assessments. Pragmatism and progressivism when applied to education are based on arguments that learning should be practical and centred on discovering things. The curriculum in progressivism should be child-centred and based on

experience and investigations (Melesse & Belay, 2022). As a result, assessments following this model may include child-centred practical methods that are based on doing. Idealism is an old philosophy that was chiefly advocated by Plato and Socrates and is based on the argument that reality is in the mind (Ellis, 2024). The ideas of things that are in the mind are real and true. It is believed that teaching and learning are processes that are based on engaging the mind (Ariwidodo, 2023; Ngene, 2023). As such the idealist assessor believes in mind-based strategies. In humanist philosophy, learning is seen as a good thing, and it should be done for the good (Santoso et al., 2023). Learning allows students to gain knowledge, to realise their full potential and it is good for their development as it allows them to get a job, acquire wealth and become a contributor to development. The teacher, therefore, should allow learners social development through promoting interactions and fostering full attainment to become successful in society. The utilitarian philosophy is based on restructuring and rebuilding society. Education is seen as a way of building society through imparting values, skills and knowledge that construct the society (Pilkhwil & Manral, 2023). As such, schools are seen as agents of social reform and education is society-centred rather than child-centred. Lastly, the cognitivist philosophy is centred on strengthening the thinking and reasoning capability of learners through reason-centred methods such as problem solving, mental challenges, quizzes and puzzles (Santoso et al., 2023).

Assessments within the behaviourist approach follow a pedagogical process of lecture notes, repetition, sequencing and reinforcement (Hadi et al., 2023). Learners are expected to show mastery of facts through behaviour change. Pragmatism-based assessments involve giving learners many practical activities so that they can discover things and learn on their own. Pragmatic assessments will also try to rely on group work and group discussions. In consideration of the philosophy of idealism, the assessments will allow learners to have learning experiences that engage their minds and reasoning. When considering humanist philosophy, the teacher promotes interpersonal skills and encourages development through fruitful interactions. A teacher who is aligned with the constructivist philosophy would significantly assess the attainment of good values and moral dignity that value society fundamentals. The study informed the theoretical work of Bloom's taxonomy which is a classification of educational objectives. Taxonomy classified educational objectives in terms of three domains, namely: cognitive, psychomotor as well as affective domain (which is composed of skills, knowledge and attitudes). Three domains relate to knowledge, comprehension, application, synthesis, analysis as well as evaluation categories (Sobral, 2021). The knowledge domain emphasises acquiring knowledge and factual information, comprehension relates to improved understanding of matters in life while application means relating theory to real practice or real situations that people face daily (Sobral, 2021). The evaluation domain is based on the ability to assess the nature and value

of phenomena. The taxonomy also views these categories from simple to complex as well as from abstract to concrete. While Bloom's work remains relevant to present-day assessment, the present study takes the position that its industry and labour market links may need to be strengthened. The philosophies of education that have been discussed offer a framework for discussing educational methods and assessments. It has been observed that each of the philosophies has its own features and benefits, strength and weaknesses; however, this depends on the context where they are being used. It is important for educators to assess their situations objectively and be able to find what suits their contexts (Hadi et al., 2023)

Given the literature as discussed earlier in the text, the purpose of this study was (1) to explore the capability of assessments at a selected university in Cape Town to measure the exact knowledge and competencies that matter in the labour market and (2) to explore the extent to which the assessments are a reliable indicator of graduate competencies.

## Research method

The methodological issues of the collection and analysis for data for this study are explained in this section.

### Paradigm and approach

The study was informed from the pragmatic paradigm that allows for flexibility in the collection and analysis of data in research. The philosophy of pragmatism resulted in the adoption of both quantitative and qualitative content analysis techniques in the study. The aim was to explore the two questions: (1) Do university assessments of HRM graduates measure the exact knowledge and competencies that matter in the labour market? and (2) to what extent are the assessments reliable as an indicator of graduate competencies? A case study approach was adopted to explore the stated questions.

### Population and sampling

A university that offers an HRM course was conveniently selected for this enquiry, and the alumni list for the HRM department was identified. The alumni list of graduates from the past 10 years was considered to identify graduates who got employed in HRM-related fields. From the list, 196 graduates were found to be in some form of stable employment and at the end 116 were deemed to fit the criteria required for the study. The selected HRM graduates were: (1) those in HRM-related employment, (2) those who can have their supervisors or managers participate in the study and (3) those who could allow their supervisors to discuss their work performances as part of this study. After linking up with the alumni, communication was made with the supervisors to inform them of their perceptions of whether the assessments made by the university in qualifying the graduates were credible and consistent with industry needs. The demographic profiles of the supervisors are stipulated in Table 1.

**TABLE 1:** Description of the sample of participants in the study ( $N = 116$ ).

Demographical group	<i>n</i>	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Males	56	48.2
Females	60	51.8
<b>Racial group</b>		
Black people	90	77.5
Mixed-race people	10	8.7
Indian people	2	1.7
White people	14	12.1
<b>Years of managing the former HRM student</b>		
Less than 5	91	78.4
More than 5	25	21.6

HRM, human resource management.

A narrative approach to data collection was adopted whereby a template was issued for graduates to answer the questions: (1) Describe whether you think the HRM graduate who your subordinate now was well-assessed and qualifies to demonstrate knowledge and competencies that matter in the labour market and (2) Given the performance of the former HRM graduate who is your subordinate now, do you think the assessments made to her or him to attain his or her qualification are reliable as indicators of graduate competencies? The supervisors were required to write 800 words in response to each question. The data-collection process took about 2 months before data analysis could start. Content analysis based on keywords in context was performed to inform a labour market-driven assessment strategy for the employability of HRM graduates in South Africa. Themes were then extracted before they were analysed quantitatively to establish the study findings.

### Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the University of South Africa College of Economic and Management Sciences ERC Human Resource Department with reference no. 2165. The study was guided by ethical considerations that include anonymity whereby names and any forms of identifications were not to be revealed in the study. Informed consent to participate in the study was obtained by first explaining the nature of the study to the supervisors who participate before they consent and show their willingness to provide data. The respondents were also allowed to withdraw from the study at any time. The privacy and confidentiality of information collected were adhered by ensuring that the data were safely secured using a password known by the researcher only to avoid data breaches. All the collected data were used for purposes of the study only.

## Results and discussion

A two-stage process was followed in the analysis of the results of the study. Firstly, the identification of emerging themes and secondly, the analysis of the themes in terms of frequency analysis and the identification of themes in response to the study objectives. Themes that capture a common pattern of response were extracted from the 116

responses provided, and a frequency analysis was performed to attain the aim and objective of the study. The analysis was performed for each of the two objectives that were set for the study.

## Identification of themes

Excerpts from the narratives provided by the respondents were considered, and common phrases that held similar and related meanings were identified into a theme. In the end, eight themes were derived from the excerpts. One theme emerged from excerpts that suggested that the assessment seemed inappropriate as the graduate employees demonstrated a lack of certain industry-relevant fundamentals. An example of a theme in this regard is:

‘Whereas the graduates demonstrate some theoretical appreciation of industry-relevant knowledge, they lacked serious capability to perform according to their theoretical knowledge. University assessments seem to work in preparing students for the world of work ...’ (Participant 14, black female, more than 5 years supervising the form HRM graduate)

There were also indications that respondents were not satisfied with the assessments in terms of how well they addressed industry-relevant matters. This theme considered assessments to seem to lack industry focus. There were some indications that respondents felt that industry needs, and industry situations were ignored in the assessments and that graduates lacked basic performance expectations when they finally got employed. This theme that can be stated that assessments seem to lack industry focus emerged from excerpts such as:

‘There was a clear indication that the real work environment and situation was novel to graduates, they lacked work ethics, familiarity with essential work deliverables and did not have confidence. Our organisation had to train them and provide new knowledge on how to perform and succeed in contributing to organisational success ...’ (Participant 11, black female, less than 5 years supervising the form HRM graduate)

The theme: university assessments seem to be too general to effectively lead to an effective transition into the world of work. It was evident that the graduates possessed knowledge of HRM but not knowledge of performing HRM functions. University assessments should focus more on specific elements required in industry and assess students based on them before certificates are awarded. A relevant excerpt in this regard stated:

‘There was a lack of specific industry skills from my subordinate. While general knowledge of the HRM function was observable, there were no actual and precise attributes related to the specific roles that HRM personnel do in organisation ...’ (Participant 15, mixed-race male, more than 5 years supervising the form HRM graduate)

Some of the excerpts also reflected the theme that universities should collaborate with the industry in assessment. There was an indication from the respondents that the assessments can be made stronger if they are collaboratively formulated

to ensure that industry experts are involved to ensure that the assessments speak to the needs of the industry. This theme was associated with excerpts such as:

‘We had to coach, train and mentor the new graduate to ensure required performance expectations are met. Right from the college, the graduate held a qualification that only for the university and not for industry.’ (Participant 1, white male, less than 5 years supervising the form HRM graduate)

Respondents believed that each student should be linked to the industry before graduation and feedback from the students from the industry should be considered central to the final assessment:

‘I would have preferred it if this student that we employ has been linked to us early and our own reports strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement be considered in the final assessment of the graduate.’ (Participant 11, black female, less than 5 years supervising the form HRM graduate).

A further theme that emerged from the responses suggested that employability must be based on providing solutions to industry challenges. In this way, the respondents felt that a student who attains a qualification from the higher education system should do that out of giving a solution to industrial problems or out of appropriate innovation or creativity that meets certain needs in the industry. A relevant excerpt in this regard was:

‘Higher education provides value to industry through its capacity to prepare students to solve the problems faced in industry or through providing certain services that meet industry needs. What this means is that students should be informed of industry needs and be assessed based on the solutions that they give. Those who offer attractive and required solutions can then graduate and find easy absorption by the entities to which they offered solutions.’ (Participant 3, black male, more than 5 years supervising the form HRM graduate)

The last theme that emerged from the study was identified from perceptions that: Industry standards should be developed for higher education assessments. In this, the respondents suggested the need for industry to develop general standards for assessment of graduates which are then used by universities to establish successful graduates. The following excerpt typifies such views:

‘I think there is simply needed to develop some standards which have to be adhered to and be the point of reference for universities in developing assessments. Various industries should meet and collaborate in the development of these standards that will then inform assessments.’ (Participant 10, black female, more than 5 years supervising the form HRM graduate)

The eight themes that were identified from the interview excerpts were then considered in terms of their frequency, which was determined as the number of times when the respondents mentioned a theme. The frequency at which a theme was mentioned is presented in Table 2. Table 2 states that the theme ‘assessments seem inappropriate’ was mentioned fewer than 5 times by 21 respondents (18.1% of respondents) while 60 (51.7% of respondents) mentioned it 5 to

**TABLE 2:** Theme mentioning frequency.

Theme	n	%
<b>Assessments seem inappropriate</b>		
Mentioned fewer than 5 times	21	18.1
Mentioned 5 to 10 times	60	51.7
Mentioned more than 10 times	35	30.2
<b>Assessments seem to lack industry focus</b>		
Mentioned fewer than 5 times	14	12.1
Mentioned 5 to 10 times	40	34.5
Mentioned more than 10 times	62	53.4
<b>Assessments seem to be too general</b>		
Mentioned fewer than 5 times	6	5.2
Mentioned 5 to 10 times	33	28.4
Mentioned more than 10 times	77	66.4
<b>University should collaborate with industry in assessment</b>		
Mentioned fewer than 5 times	5	4.3
Mentioned 5 to 10 times	53	45.7
Mentioned more than 10 times	58	50.0
<b>Give industry the responsibility to assess</b>		
Mentioned fewer than 5 times	39	33.6
Mentioned 5 to 10 times	71	61.2
Mentioned more than 10 times	6	5.2
<b>Each student is linked to industry that assess</b>		
Mentioned fewer than 5 times	19	16.4
Mentioned 5 to 10 times	62	53.4
Mentioned more than 10 times	35	30.2
<b>Employability is based on providing solutions to industry challenges</b>		
Mentioned fewer than 5 times	18	15.5
Mentioned 5 to 10 times	67	57.8
Mentioned more than 10 times	31	26.7
<b>Industry-based standards to be developed for assessments</b>		
Mentioned fewer than 5 times	14	12.1
Mentioned 5 to 10 times	68	58.6
Mentioned more than 10 times	34	29.3

10 times and lastly, 35 respondents (30.2%) mentioned it more than 10 times. The majority (51.7%) mentioned that assessments seem inappropriate 5 to 10 times in their narratives.

The theme 'Assessments seem to lack industry focus' was mentioned fewer than 5 times by 14 respondents (12.1% of respondents) while 40 (34.5%) of the respondents mentioned it 5–10 times and lastly, the majority, 62 comprising 53.4% of the respondents mentioned it more than 10 times. This clearly shows that most respondents mentioned this theme several times. The 'Assessments seem to be too general' was mentioned fewer than 5 times by 6 (5.2%) and it was mentioned more than 10 times by 77 (66.4% of respondents). The number of those who mentioned it was more than five times (4.3%) was the least. Most of the respondents (50%) mentioned the theme – University should collaborate with industry in assessment, 5–10 times, the least (4.3%) mentioned this theme fewer than five times. A moderate number (45.7%) mentioned the theme fewer than five times. The theme which rated giving the industry the responsibility to assess graduates - 'Each student is linked to industry that assess', was mentioned 5–10 times by the majority (53.4%) while the least (16.4%) mentioned it less than 5 times and it was mentioned moderately (30.2%) more than 10 times. A majority (53.4%) mentioned that 'each student should be

**TABLE 3:** Descriptive statistics (N = 116).

Theme	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Assessments seem inappropriate	1	3	2.12	0.687
Assessments seem to lack industry focus	1	3	2.41	0.699
Assessments seem to be too general	1	3	2.61	0.586
University should collaborate with industry in assessment	1	3	2.46	0.581
Give industry the responsibility to assess	1	3	1.72	0.556
Each student is linked to industry that assess	1	3	2.14	0.671
Employability be based on providing solutions to industry challenges	1	3	2.11	0.643
Industry-based standards to be developed for assessments	1	3	2.17	0.622

linked to the industry that assesses it' while the least (16.4%) mentioned this fewer than five times and a moderate number (30.2%) mentioned it more than 10 times. The theme, 'Employability be based on providing the solution to industry challenges' was mentioned 5 to 10 times by the majority (57.8%) while the least (15.5%) mentioned it fewer than 5 times and 26.7% mentioned this theme more than 10 times. The last theme, 'Industry-based standards to be developed for assessments', was mentioned by the majority (58.6%) 5 to 10 times and the least (12.1%) mentioned it fewer than five times while 29.3% mentioned it more than 10 times.

Results about objective 1 – Do university assessments of HRM graduates measure the exact knowledge and competencies that matter in the labour market?

Following the frequency mentioning analysis provided in Table 2, mean mentioning was calculated. The mean was based on an ordinal scale where: Mentioned fewer than 5 times = 1, mentioned 5 to 10 times = 2 and mentioned more than 10 times 3: Consequently, a mean of 1.5 demonstrated average mentioning while a mean above 1.5 showed high mentioning and a mean less than 1.5 was indicative of low mentioning. Table 3 shows the meaning mentioned.

The theme 'Assessments seem to lack industry focus' was mentioned fewer than 5 times by 14 respondents (12.1% of respondents) while 40 (34.5%) of respondents mentioned it 5 to 10 times and lastly, the majority, 62 which was 53.4% of the respondents mentioned it more than 10 times. This clearly shows that most respondents mentioned this theme several times. The 'Assessments seem to be too general' was mentioned fewer than 5 times by 6 (5.2%) and it was mentioned more than 10 times by 77 (66.4% of respondents). The number of those who mentioned it was more than five times (4.3%) was the least. Most of the respondents (50%) mentioned the theme – University should collaborate with industry in assessment, 5–10 times, the least (4.3%) mentioned this theme fewer than five times. A moderate number (45.7%) mentioned the theme fewer than 5 times. The theme which rated to giving industry the responsibility to assess graduates was mentioned 5–10 times by the majority (61.2%) while the

least (16.4%) mentioned it less than 5 times and it was mentioned moderately (30.2%) more than 10 times. A majority (53.4%) mentioned that 'each student should be linked to industry that assess it' while the least (16.4%) mentioned this fewer than five times and a moderate number (30.2%) mentioned it more than 10 times. The theme, 'Employability be based on providing solution to industry challenges' was mentioned 5–10 times by the majority (57.8%) while the least (15.5%) mentioned it fewer than five times and 26.7% mentioned this theme more than 10 times. The last theme, 'Industry based standards to be developed for assessments', was mentioned by the majority (58.6%) 5–10 times and the least (12.1%) mentioned it fewer than 5 times while 29.3% mentioned it more than 10 times.

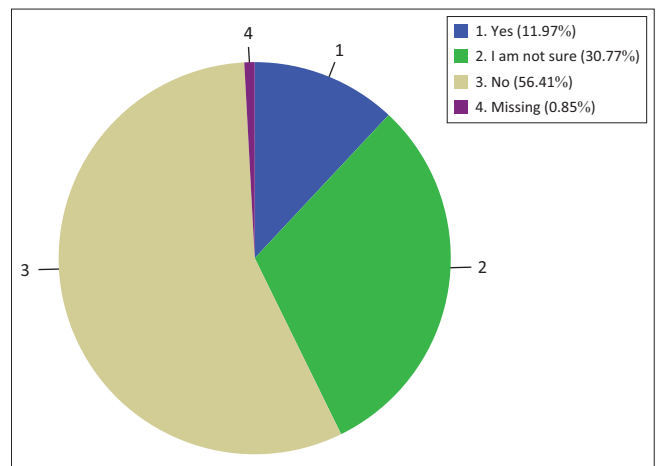
Results in relation to objective 1 – Do university assessments of HRM graduates measure the exact knowledge and competencies that matter in the labour market?

Following the frequency mentioning analysis provided in Table 2, mean mentioning was calculated. The mean was based on an ordinal scale where: Mentioned fewer than 5 times = 1, mentioned 5 to 10 times = 2 and mentioned more than 10 times = 3: Consequently, a mean of 1.5 demonstrated average mentioning while a mean above 1.5 showed high mentioning and a mean less than 1.5 was indicative of low mentioning. Table 3 is the meaning mentioning.

From Table 3, assessments seem to be too general (mean = 2.46) and were ranked to have the highest mentioned by the respondents followed, in order: University should collaborate with industry in assessment (mean = 2.46), assessments seem to lack industry focus (mean = 2.41), industry-based standards to be developed for assessments (mean = 2.17), each student be linked to an industry that assesses (2.14), assessments seem inappropriate (mean = 2.12), employability be based on providing solution to industry challenges (2.11) and lastly give industry the responsibility to assess (1.72).

Results concerning research question 2 – Given the performance of the former HRM graduate who is your subordinate now, do you think the assessments made to her or him to attain his or her qualification are reliable as an indicator of graduate competencies? The results concerning research question 2 were presented in Figure 1. Figure 1 shows that the majority (56.41%) of the respondents did not think the assessments made for the graduates to attain their qualifications were a reliable indicator of graduate competencies.

These facts that emanated from this study showed a lack of satisfaction with the present assessments in higher education as indicators of industry fitness and preparedness. When the themes mentioned by the respondents are considered, it can be concluded that to improve the industry preparedness of graduates, there is a need to consider assessments in terms of industry collaboration, industry focus industry, industry-based



**FIGURE 1:** Views on whether graduate assessment and qualification were a reliable indicator of industry competence.

standards, each student industry links, improving inappropriateness of assessments, assessments that address industry challenges and giving industry the responsibility to assess. An industry-based assessment strategy in higher education as provided in Figure 2 is therefore suggested.

Figure 2 presents an industry-centric or a labour market-driven assessment strategy for the employability of HRM graduates in South Africa that has emerged from this study.

## Limitations

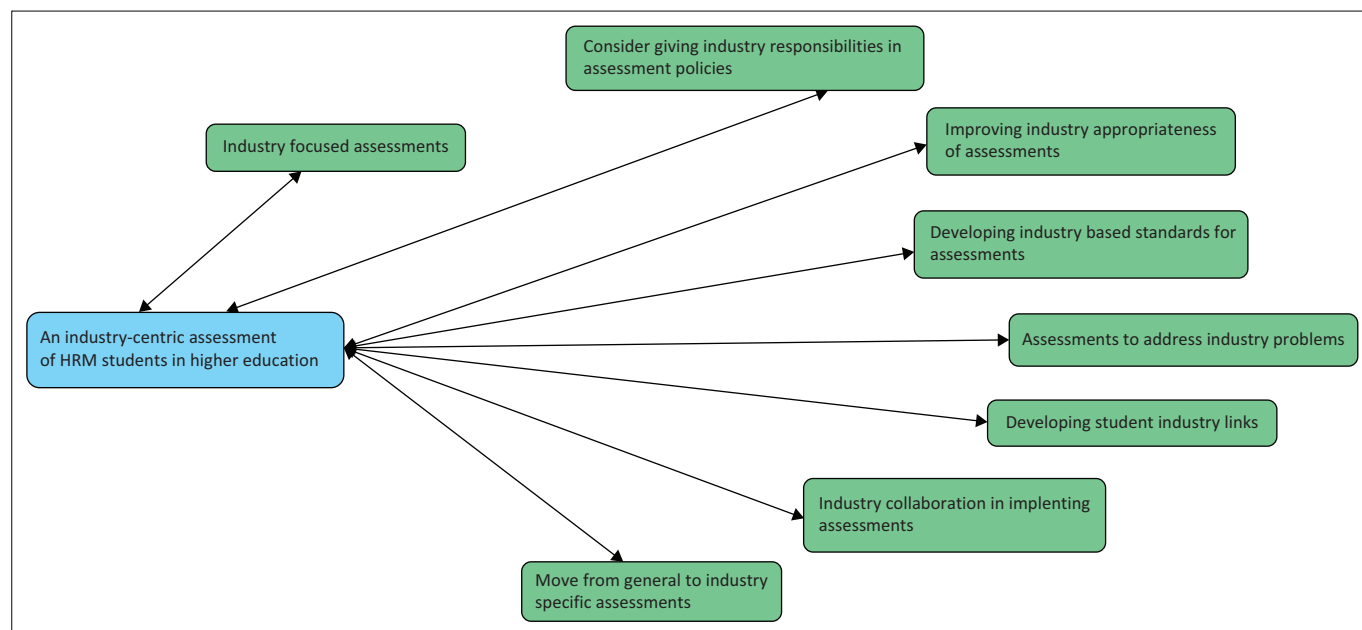
The study was geographically limited to one selected case study of a university in South Africa because of the need to have specific focus and detailed analysis that is possible with limited travel resources. The study was also theoretically limited to HRM graduates and their assessments. The scopes may be expanded to provide a holistic understanding.

## Future research and recommendations

It is recommended that future research on higher education assessment strategies should seek to explore the involvement of industry in the assessment of higher education graduates in more depth. Research on higher education strategies should consider the eight themes identified in this study and how they can effectively be adopted to strengthen the employability of HRM graduates. In general, it is recommended that higher education should seek several ways to engage and collaborate with industry to ensure the appropriateness of assessments for graduate employability. Future research can consider the views of the alumni on HRM assessments rather than that of their managers and supervisors only as was in this study.

## Conclusion

This study has explored a labour-based assessment strategy for enhancing the labour market absorption of HRM graduates. The study sought the perspectives of the



HRM, human resource management.

**FIGURE 2:** An industry-centric assessment strategy for HRM students in higher education.

industry on how well the graduates reflected the required competencies to perform various HRM functions and roles. It was found in this study that the industry found the present assessment methods inappropriate in meeting industry needs and indicated the need for developing industry-based assessment standards. The study also showed a need to ensure the involvement of industry in the various assessment policies to ensure that graduates are competent in solving problems thereby adding value to companies and organisations.

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## Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

## Authors' contributions

T.B. and W.P.C. contributed equally to this study. T.B. and W.P.C. were in charge of the conceptualisation, methodology, data gathering and analysis of the research. We also equally contributed to preparing and improving the manuscript and also approved the absolute version for the journal. T.B. and W.P.C. have contributed significantly to the work and accuracy of the content for publication.

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## Data availability

The data presented in this study are available upon reasonable request from the corresponding author, T.B. The data are not publicly available because of privacy and ethical restrictions.

## Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and are the product of professional research. It does not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated institution, funder, agency or that of the publisher. The authors are responsible for this article's results, findings and content.

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