THE CHALLENGES OF ACCREDITATION EXPERIENCED BY PRIVATE HAIRDRESSERS IN THE SOUTH REGION OF GAUTENG PROVINCE

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Abstract
The purpose of this article is to investigate the challenges of accreditation experienced by private providers in the South Region of Gauteng Province. A cursory glance of the hairdressing landscape reveals that standards differ among private providers who deeply affected by apartheid. The focus of this article is on black private providers. Data was drawn, through qualitative approaches, from ten representatives of the Hairdressing Service Providers were sampled through purposive sampling strategies, and were interviewed at the venues and time convenient to them. The findings reveal that the accreditation process is marred by teething problems demonstrated by lack of knowledge of procedures, content and laxity in application of the policy.

Keywords: accreditation, hairdressing business, standards, specialization, evaluation

1.   Introduction

The purpose of this article is to investigate the challenges of accreditation experienced by private providers in the South Region of Gauteng Province. Accreditation requirements were introduced as a result of political changes that took place in South Africa after 1994. The political changes led to transformation in all sectors. In the education sector the major change was experienced in the accreditation process. The South African Qualifications Authority Act (SAQA), 1995 (Act No 58 of 1995) the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) are charged with the responsibility to manage the accreditation process. However, the management of accreditation is not without problems. In ensuring the delivery of the standards and qualifications, SAQA processes seem to pose challenges toprofessional providers and learners and other key stake holders in the field. Critical challenges are experienced inthe different qualifications and standards on curriculum development and delivery as well as on assessment and teaching.

The primary focus of the accreditation process is to ensure that all providers, their programmes, learner achievement, record of the learner's achievements are standardized and recorded on the National Learner Record Data (NLRD) and to certificate learners. In this way, SAQA ensures that learners are awarded a registered NQF qualification; that the qualification standards are able to demonstrate the learning outcomes of the qualification or standard in accordance with prescribed criteria and requirements. To achieve this mandate SAQA evaluates the learning programmes of different providers in a process of accreditation, thereby assuring learners and other users of the system that any learner who has been deemed competent after participating in

that learning programmes, has displayed the learning outcomes required for that qualification or standard.

2.   Problematizing the accreditation process

Hairdressing qualifications are offered public and private institutions. The problem is that standards differ among private providers who deeply affected by apartheid. The focus of this article is on black private providers. Beauty care and Hairdressing was part of the African culture, as stated by Ribane (2006, p.104) "Black people have been using natural products directly from the Earth, animals and plants: Keketsa, Letsoku, Memezi, Sekgopha and Kgatsela to care for their skins and hair." Furthermore, Dungworthet al (1997, p.4) in The Usborne book of famous women from Nefertiti to Thatcher, they also share more information about; Cleopatra the Egyptian princess on bathing with milk to preserve her beauty. The Mpondomise and Maxesibe tribes, using Memezi on their faces.Ribane (2006, p.105) also mentioned that "young black girls used to plait, braid and dreadlock (Matsetlela) each other's hair as a form of pastime".

According to Warthog Web Design (2006) state that "There were also hairstyles whose purpose was to protect the wearer from certain kinds of harm, for example, one of the oldest hairstyles in Africa, is called in Zulu isiqhoua se mpangele, loosely translated as the crest of the guinea fowl. This is a hairstyle in which the hair on top of the head has been woven and teased into a crown. Amongst the several kinds of protective hairstyles that I recall having being sported by African warriors in the last century, is one which was worn by Lozi warriors and consisted of fine dreadlocks-like plaits grown on the top of the head and which were then bound together into a pointed cone which rose about eight inches or more above the top of the warrior's head. At the point of this cone of hair was tied a little bon-bon, which was decorated with beads and smeared with red ochre This gave the warriors an appearance of having long pointed heads. Such hairstyles are called by the Barotse people of Zambia the chikuza hairstyle.

There were no professional hairdressing salons in the Black communities in the 1900 however the Caucasian communities had salons. That was the case until the late Brian Gule opened a first black own salon at Carlton Centre in Johannesburg called Black Wave. He had just came back from the United States of America to learn Hairdressing, which was in the early 1980's. The second salon was opened in Mmabatho by Alex Molokoane and it was called Bontle. The success of these two salon businesses resulted in the many Black salons that existed till today. They also created lot of Black entrepreneurs in the Black Hairdressing business according to (Ribane 2006, p.77) Chris Mohapi, Kgomotso Modise, ManaseShole, Walter Dube, Herman Mashaba, Lucky Nkosi, Moss Tau, Moloantoa, Mashiloane and Jabu Stone. However there were big white owned companies namely: Super Curl, Magic Curl, Hollywood Curl, Revlon, Alberto Culver (TCB,) L'Oréal S.A and a host of smaller ones. There was also a big company that was and is still owned by Indians; AMKA. All these companies and the Black entrepreneurs were and are still supplying the booming Hairdressing salon businesses with hairdressing chemicals and hair-care products (Euromonitor:2015) In the mist of all this new crazy booming Black hairdressing business, something important was missing; formalised education for Black Hairdressers. An education that was going to empower and give Black Hairdressers a

fundamental knowledge in business, core knowledge of Hairdressing and specialisation in different Hairdressing fields, that education was missing.

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3. Research strategy

The study utilized qualitative research approacheswhere 'concrete experience' are being observed and reflected upon to form abstract concepts.Therationale for choosing this approach is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena (Kvale, 1983: 174). The choice was guided by the need to see the research topic from the perspective of the interviewee, and to understand how and why they come to have this particular perspective. Ten representatives of the Hairdressing Service Providers were sampled through purposive sampling strategies, and were interviewed at the venues and time convenient to them. To meet this goal, we ensured during the interviews that there was a low degree of structure imposed by us; a preponderance of open questions; and a focus on 'specific situations and action sequences in the world of the interviewee' (Kvale, 1983: 176) rather than abstractions and general opinions.The nature of study requires constant reference to the context of phenomenon. As a result we used exploratory 'what' questions and 'why' questions. We used the following steps (Creswell: 2009) to analyse data:

1. Organization and preparation of data for the analysis

2. Read through all the data to gain a general sense of the information and reflect on the overall meaning.

3. We conductedthe analysis based on the specific narratives of the participants. This often involves coding or organizing related segments of data into categories.

4. We generated a description of the setting or people and identify themes from the coding. And search for theme connections.

5. Data was represented within a research report.

6. Interpret the larger meaning of the data.

4. Findings

The findings are presented in themes, and the form of quotations that are relevant to thesis of the article, and we used them judiciously. We were cautious of excessive use of quotations which can disrupt the flow of our writing and prevent the reader from following the logic of our reasoning. As a result, we used short direct quotations, up to two to three lines in our article, and punctuated the quotation with quotation marks in the body of the text. However, in some instances we used longer quotations, which are presented as separate paragraphs and indented from the main text (Pears and Shields 2010:6-7).

4.1 Accreditation experience

It appears that education and training providers have encountered numerous problems when applying for accreditation for programme approval, site approval, assessor and moderation registration and learner certification and moderation. The following are some of the responded comments:

"I am beside myself; I don't know what to do more in order for me to understand what SETA want"

"Nobody cares at SETA and we are very frustrated, they don't even return our calls, to prove that: they don't care"

"Every time, my institution receives a site visit, I get a different evaluator that requires something different from the previous evaluator."

"I am tired of this entire accreditation story; SETA must get their act together"

"SETA loses our site visit reports and we have to suffer because of their incompetence"

"You submit assessor and moderator application online, they lose it , you phone and ask them and they tell you that; you must re-apply." and submit the application manually, they also lose that as well. I don't know what to do more'

4.2 Online applications

Respondents explained the difficulties they have encountered when applying for accreditation. The respondents have difficulties in completing the online accreditation. SETQAA problems

compounded the process in regard to the constituent assessor and moderator registration. These are some of the responses that they gave when elaborating on the first question.

"The first two sections of the online accreditation was very easy to complete, however it was very difficult to complete the online alignment section"

"In order for someone to be able to complete the online alignment section, one need to be a curriculum designer and a subject matter expert and there are very few people in the Hairdressing industry who possess that skill and they charge a fortune"

"SETQAA requires that we have to attach the proof of assessor and moderator constituent registration, yet they don't complete this registrations on time and that affect our accreditation outcomes. The evaluator declares us not yet approved but is SETQAA that is sitting on our constituent assessor and moderation registration, it is not fair."

"These Service SETA people are incompetent, all they do is talk, talk, talk making promises that they don't keep, it is frustrating."

4.3. Turn around on applications

It appears that applicants take a long time after submission of their applications to hear about the results of their applications. Some of their comments are as follows:

"It is like we are waiting for ever and nobody from Service SETA calls us and tell us what is happening, we are waiting"

"When you call Service SETA and ask them; what is happening about our external moderation, they don' give you a straight answer and they promise to call you back which they never"

"It is frustrating, nobody at Seta seem to know something."

4.4 External Evaluation/site visit

It seems the respondents are confused by changes in officials dealing with accreditation of hairdressers. Every time when a new official is appointed, the hairdressers are expecting a change in the process. Some end up not complying to the process. These sentiments are echoed in the following statements:

"Just when you think that you are about to get your accreditation, then, this new evaluator comes and demand different things that were never mentioned by the previous evaluator"

"These evaluator don't know what they want"

"All these people come and demand different things, I am tired"

"One is not sure exactly what SETA wants, they shift the goalposts every time they come for a site visit."

"With Service SETA, you are not sure where you stand as far as the accreditation is concern.

5.   Discussion

The Service SETA online accreditation was the initial stumbling block toward achieving accreditation. The Service SETA online accreditation instruction gives clear instructions of how to access the online and how to complete the online accreditation. Anything further than that, you have to struggle on your own to complete it or get a consultant who is a subject matter specialist and a curriculum designer to help you with completing the alignment and assessment parts of the Service SETA online accreditation.

The backlog of Assessor and moderation constituent registration was another stumbling blog towards attaining accreditation. When the private Hairdressing education and training provider fails to submit or produce the proof of constituent assessor and moderator registration, they are deemed not yet approved for accreditation due to this fact. SETQAA is directly responsible for Private Hairdressing education and training providers not achieving their accreditation due to SETQAA in ability to process the assessor and moderator constituent registration. SETQAA claim that: it normally takes six months to eleven months to achieve accreditation (Service SETA website) but the reality is that: it took SETQAA three years for one of the respondents to be declared a constituent assessor and moderator, by that time, the qualification that they have sought registration against, has already expired. These are negatives aspect that came out from this elaboration from respondents.

When legislations changed and new accreditation requirements were introduced by Service SETA during the change over from the Hairdressing Cosmetology Industry Training Board (HCITB) there was minimal communication between the new Service SETA and the Industry as whole resulting in the new accreditation requirement not met by the training providers because there was a lot of confusion and uncertainty. The Employers Organisation for Hairdressing Cosmetology and Beauty (EOHCB) together with the Afro Hairdressing and Beauty Employers Association met and discuss with the newly established Service SETA and map a way forward. This resulted with the establishment of the Training provider forum meeting. This forum was utilised as a vehicle for providers to voice out their problems with accreditation and all the challenges the providers have. The following is the outcomes of the results of the provider forum.

All the respondents who participated in this study all of them has been through the site visit more than three times and almost all of them have not yet achieved full accreditation, they are either provisional accredited or not yet approved. Only two of the providers have achieved accreditation for the expired qualifications not the current new ones. There is clearly a problem here, if providers are doing everything in their power and even go to the extent of getting a consultant and pay exorbitant amounts of money and they do not get their accreditation. The additional problem that came from those respondents who have provisional accreditation was that; they wait for external moderation from SETQAA for three to four years even when they have followed SETQAA procedures and have submitted the learners achievements to QALA as per their accreditation requirement.Those who have achieved their accreditation some are still waiting for the provider accreditation registration certificate from SETQAA

All ten respondents from the private Hairdressing providers agreed on one thing, that they are not sure whether they will ever get full accreditation. Based on all the challenges, chops and changes

on SETQAA side, different evaluators some of them are actually not Hairdressers, Cosmetologist or Beauticians, they are neither one of that but are given a huge task of evaluating Hairdressing programme evaluation.

The document requirements SETQAA require are a pain on the neck of Private Hairdressing education and training providers. Those that SETQAA has provided templates for are alright but the ones like: provider policies, personnel recruitment and training, quality assurance. These are the documents that deny Hairdressing providers in the South Region of Gauteng their accreditation. The current evaluators create such a storm and strew temper tantrums about these documents and deny provider accreditation.

Evaluators nit-pick and complain about certain document contents and start asking providers all sorts of questions. However if the documents are from a specific consultant that is presume to works with the evaluator, no questions are asked. This is the same consultant that is allowed to sit in during site visits by the same evaluator but other consultants are not allowed anywhere near the evaluation room where the onsite visit is taking place. Some of the respondents from the private Hairdressing education and training providers in the South region of Gauteng complained to SETQAA about this and nothing was done by SETQAA.

About eight respondents from the private Hairdressing education and training providers were instructed by SETQAA to complete an online application for the assessor and moderator constituent registration and they did that. When they check with SETQAA on the progress of their assessor and moderator constituent registration, they were told: SETQAA is unable to see or access their application, so. SETQAA instructed them again to do a manual submission. There is definitely a serious problem with the Service SETA online accreditation system.

6.   Conclusions

With regards to individual respondent's experience of the accreditation process in can be concluded thatthere are lot of unresolved problems which seem to obfuscate the accreditation. Lots still need to be clarified with regards to criteria, content and protocol. The Employers Organisation for Hairdressing Cosmetology and Beauty (EOHCB) together with the Afro Hairdressing and Beauty Employers Association should meet and discuss with the newly established Service SETA to map a way forward and clarify some of the bottlenecks and confusion.

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