CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION

1.1   INTRODUCTION

One of the traditional and current objectives in education has been to develop effective assessment strategies that can be implemented to determine how much learners have learnt at school. This is the essential nature of the problem of this study.

This introductory chapter highlights the factors that contributed to the investigation, and defines the aims and key objectives of the study. It explains the main concepts and terms used and applied in this report. In addition, a thorough description of the research design and plan of action is given.

1.2   GENERAL BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This research study investigates teachers' assessment of learners' work and its' influence on the culture of learning is schools. Teachers used to assess the following: what has been learned, what can be remembered, what is understood, and whether the learner can apply the knowledge in a different context. However, the assessment is this study would be considered as a tool for teachers to motivate learners to learn successfully, and they promote the culture of learning[1] in schools.

Siebörger and Macintosh (2002:5) state that: "Assessment has become a popular word in education. Whenever new ideas about teaching or learning are mentioned nowadays, it seems that assessment is part of them." Hence this research study investigated teachers' opinions about assessment of learners' work as part of teaching and learning in a

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[1] For the purpose of this report "culture of learning" has been defined as "a positive school climate where the atmosphere is conducive to teaching and learning, where everyone who has interest in the school expresses pride in it, where pupils are given maximum opportunities to learn and there is a high expectation for learners to achieve." (Page 18 of this report)

learning environment. This is the reason why Malcolm, quoted by Mays (2000:5), argues that teaching and learning need to provide a direction for education to proceed towards. Assessment needs to be applied by teachers to regularly monitor that learners are moving towards the required learning outcomes. This implies that teaching and learning practices are assessment driven, because it is obvious that assessment within an Outcomes-based frame of reference remains the most important activity that could enable learners to achieve the desired learning outcomes (Pretorius 1998:18).

Assessment has undergone major changes and a shift has taken place from what some call a "Culture of testing" to a "Culture of assessment". The purpose of evaluation in schools has always been to continuously assess the extent to which learners are coping with increased learning demands. Also, to ensure that timely and effective pedagogic and didactic support is given to learners during teaching and learning time. Teachers are required to develop learning programs and consider criteria for assessment of pupil's progress in an ongoing process, with the aim of building a culture of learning and teaching (Nolan 1997:2-3).

Phele (1997: 5-9) emphasizes the teacher's role and commitment in reconstructing the culture of learning, by regarding assessment as an integral part of the teaching and learning process. This indicates that teachers always need to assess learner's work in order to know what the learners have learned and obtain an idea of what learners are able to learn. When assessment becomes an integral part of the teaching – learning processes teachers will have more opportunities to monitor student learning and therefore ensure that the desired outcomes are achieved. Smit (1995:59) also emphasizes that the assessment of pupil's work by teachers determines the role of teachers in creating a culture of learning, since it gives learners a much better idea of their performance in many areas, rather than simply setting tests at the end of the term.

In this study, assessment of learners is seen as part of the learning and teaching process that affords teachers an opportunity to monitor an individual learner's ability and pace to learn the content, skills and concepts of specific school subjects on a daily basis. It also helps teachers to develop an increasing critical awareness of the needs of individuals in their classes, and how such needs could be met. It empowers teachers to provide

differentiated input that is tailored to the need of the individuals concerned (Independent Examination Board: 1997).

1.3   JUSTIFICATION FOR THE INVESTIGATION

What, then, is new about assessment? According to Berens (2001:112), "assessment describes a wide range of different ways which are now used to measure the achievements of learners". This means that one is not just thinking of tests, examinations and written exercises, but also of many other ways of gaining information and giving feedback about the progress of learners. This involves a form of continuous assessment carried out on a day-to-day basis using a wide variety of methods (Siebörger and Macintosh 2002:11).

According to the Independent Examination Board (1997: 8), the reason for continuous assessment is to promote creative and critical thinking, problem solving skills and the ability of the learner to work individually and independently. Stiggins and Conklin (1992:57) believe that all learners should have full opportunities to show what they know and can do. Such opportunities can only be realized if their teachers take learners' assessment into account. This remains an important activity of any classroom practice.

Paxton (1995: 189-195) note that assessment is a practice by which teachers try to identify one main area where improvement is necessary. Assessment also attempts to explain how performance could be improved, by identifying possible problem areas that could have a negative impact on future development. Jackson (1990a:105) remains convinced that planning for assessment to be used in a classroom practice is pedagogically justified, since it provides opportunities for learners of different levels to move forwards at their own pace.

Van Wyk (1995:14) asserts that in a country where development is currently a high priority, effective and efficient learning presents special imperatives for the culture of learning. In the changing society of the Republic of South Africa, teaching will require sensitivity to the variation in individual personalities, diversity and culture.

However, Schemeck (1998:5) argues that learners need to realize that they will have to assume a greater responsibility and accountability for their own learning. Knowledge of learning and study strategies as well as the application of these can contribute significantly to the accomplishment of an optimal culture of learning. Van Wyk (1995:18) concludes that the shift in emphasis from improved teaching to improved learning has resulted in a depiction of the learner as an active participant in the teaching-learning act.

Therefore this investigation will research in greater depth the teacher's assessment of learners' work and its influence on the culture of learning.

1.4   FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE INVESTIGATION

In the past, assessment presented a very different face as the means by which schools wittingly or unwittingly sorted out learners in terms of failure and success. Satterly (1989:5) points out that we are all familiar with the use of assessment data that classifies pupils as "dull", "disruptive", "lazy", etc, as against the more welcome classifications of "bright", "imaginative", or "budding genius". Such classifications contributed very little to the establishment of a culture of learning in schools, mainly because it did not motivate learners to sustain their attention and effort towards the achievement of learning outcomes.

The ultimate purpose of assessment is to gather information that can be used to give feedback to learners about their learning progress, help teachers evaluate the success or failure of their teaching methods, and show what it is that learners find hard to learn. These three aspects are crucial as they help the learning process (Berens 2001: 113). However, King and Van den Berg (1992:18) feel that the South African school-leaving examinations, accompanied by its teaching and learning processes, are extremely problematic with regard to continuous assessment. This is due to the secrecy and mystique embedded in the final examination, which makes teachers continually assess learners in a way that is narrowly focused on the type of external examination that will be written and the content they expect within.

King and Van den Berg (1992: 19) further state that the motivational influence of the examination could become a hurdle in the learning process. This is due to the reason that the diagnostic use of internal assessment only provides learners with coping strategies in the external examination. This shows that traditional assessment and evaluation are only concerned with ensuring that learners are successful in the final examinations through which learners are measured in comparison with one another. This has little value with regard to promoting the culture of learning in schools.

However, the school-leaving examination conducted at the end of the twelfth school year still remains highly authoritarian, yet extremely prominent. It vanguards three important factors: (a) learner competition, (b) learner memorization and (c) the recall of facts and information during the examination. Pretorius (1998:29) feels that it only has an influence on teachers' didactical methods and assessment. For example, teachers emphasize the recall of facts, they promote the uncritical acquisition of subject content by regurgitating subject content with learners, and disregard higher order activities such as the application and synthesis of knowledge and its evaluation. Consequently such learning-teaching processes and assessment provide very little information about the true potential and skills of learners.

The type of assessment that aims at achieving the goals of education in the traditional context is characterized by Freire through the "banking concept" (Freire 1972:45-46). He describes this as follows: "Narration (with the teacher as narrator) leads the students to memorize mechanically the narrated content. Worse still, it turns them into containers, into receptacles, to be filled by the teacher. The more completely he fills the receptacles, the better a teacher he is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are. Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are depositories and the teachers the depositors. Instead of communication the teacher issues communiqués and "makes deposits" which students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the "banking" concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits."

According to Birenbaum and Dochy (1996:5) the assessment approach that suits this teaching concept concentrates mainly on the testing of basic skills, supposedly acquired through tedious drill and practice, experiences, rehearsals and repetitions of what was taught in class or in the textbook. Under such circumstances, tests (mainly of the choice response format, such as multiple-choice, true/false or matching–items) became the common tools for assessment. An assessment system that develops in such an environment is usually of the paper and pencil type, which is administered in class under time constraints and forbids the use of helping material and tools. Such an assessment has little value, because teachers teach and learners patiently receive and memorize facts, which are then tested. This assessment system contributed very little to the establishment of a culture of learning in our schools.

Another prominent factor that contributed to this study is the recent emerging of the Outcomes-based Education system. According to Fraser (1998:194), this system has moved towards new assessment strategies that seek to demonstrate that a learner's performance or achievement in schools is not limited to cognitive or intellectual activities such as reasoning, mathematical and statistical calculations, decision-making strategies and powers, or the mere recall of factual information. It also embraces functions such as the physical manipulation of objects and material, as well as disposition, attitudes or beliefs. It further includes the effective utilization of the mental, emotional and physical capacities to such a level or standard that the outcome or performance meets the requirements defined in terms of the predetermined standards of expectation (Kruger and Adams 1998:195).

The difference between traditional evaluation approaches and Outcomes-based assessment approaches is the main contributory factor to this study. The former emphasizes test scores and examination results, while the latter emphasize strategies such as portfolios, direct observation, interviews, and peer-assessment and learners self-assessment. These differences are summarized in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1   Comparison of traditional evaluation methods and Outcomes-based assessment strategies

Traditional evaluation methods	Outcomes-based assessment approach
• Passive learners	• Active learners
• Exam-driven	• Learners are assessed on an on-going basis
• Rote learning	• Critical thinking, reasoning, reflection and action
• Syllabus is content-based and broken down in subjects	• Integration of knowledge; learning is relevant and connected to real-life situation
• Textbook/worksheet-bound and teacher- centered	• Learner-centered; teacher is facilitator and constantly uses group and teamwork to consolidate the new approach
• Syllabus is seen as rigid and non-negotiable	• Learning programmes are seen as guides that allow teachers to be innovative and creative
• Teachers are responsible for learning; motivation depends on teacher's personality	• Learners take responsibility for their learning and are motivated by constant feedback and affirmation of their sense of self-worth
• Emphasis is on what the teacher hopes to achieve	• Emphasis is on outcomes – what the learner becomes and understand
• Content placed in rigid time-frames	• Flexible time-frames allow learners to work at their own pace
• Curriculum development process not open to public comment	• Comment and input from the wider community is encouraged

(Source: SA National Department of Education 1997:6-7; Burker 1995:58-59)

These differences provide the theoretical information that is investigated in this study when data is collected regarding teachers' assessment of learners' work and its influence on the culture of learning. Furthermore, these differences feature very significantly in the formulation of the research problem in the following paragraphs.

1.5   THE FORMULATION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The Positivist paradigm of thinking has always emphasized the fact that fixed values or predetermined value-judgements underpin our assumptions and understanding of phenomena under discussion. We have often linked in education the "fact" that only intelligent learners are capable of performing well in tests and examinations where high level cognitive skills and abilities are tested and assessed. It is the reader's personal opinion that teachers often interpret ability and performance against a single test or criterion. Often the outcomes of a single test are the only evidence used to group learners as competent or less competent.

However, the problem stretches beyond the interpretation of performance in terms of the outcomes of a single test or examination. It culminates in our understanding of performance and our classroom practices, with specific reference to assessment and evaluation. The teacher's underpinning philosophy in relation to teaching and learning is often regarded as the driving force behind their daily practice. If we believe that the ability to do well in tests and examinations is fixed to a learner's intellectual skills and abilities, then teaching and learning would have little influence on improving underperformance in different learning areas.

On the other hand, educational studies advocate Outcomes-based assessment approaches. Here teachers are encouraged to employ alternative strategies of assessment (see section 1.4) that challenge the learners' skills in relation to their inquiry and problem-solving abilities. Learners are expected to be active, inventing and contributing original ideas. They also need to interact continually in a purposeful and active way with the subject matter. Teachers and learners also need to identify and solve problems by applying creative and critical thinking (Coetzer 2001:82). The principle of activity ensures that learners become active participant in the learning process and have to take more responsibility for their own learning (see Table 1.1). This suggests that the culture of learning in schools is likely to be influenced by learners' active participation in the learning process.

1.5.1 Synthesis Of The Problem And Establishment Of The Research Rationale

The educational literature indicates that assessment is a powerful tool in education and training. Yet both teachers and learners have in the past underrated its influence. Assessment was also often regarded as synonymous with tests and examinations. These tests and examinations were largely content-based and comprised of closed questions, requiring learners to memorize information. These tests and examinations also took place at the end of a section of work or at the end of the year of study (Clarke 1996:23). According to Kotze (1999:32), the main function of assessment was inter-alia for decision-making, providing information on success and failure of learners, and also for selection and certification purposes. Seen in this light, assessment was never used to portray judgment and development of competencies or to inform on the quality and progress of learners. Instead, according to Clarke (1996:24), it was giving learners the following messages:

- You are clever if you can remember things off by heart.

- There is always one right answer.

- You are bright if you know facts.

- Tests and examinations are for judging how good I am.

- Failing means having to repeat a grade.

As a result these traditional approaches towards assessment did very little to promote a sound culture of learning in many schools. The problem is how to convince teachers to regard assessment as a powerful tool that could assist them in influencing the culture of learning. Corner (1991:9) suggests that assessments should not be seen as an isolated activity but rather as an essential element of teaching and learning that contributes towards the effectiveness of any school. Assessment is an ongoing process and an integral part of the educational experience of each learner. This leads to a situation whereby teachers should realize that assessment involves the careful selection of learning experiences and decisions about the most appropriate means of monitoring those experiences so that progress is maintained.

Ainscow and Corner (1998:74) indicate that assessment should be a continuous process of gathering and reviewing information in order to help learners succeed in their learning. This is in contrast to traditional tests and examinations that only gauge the assimilation of subject content.

One of the tasks of teachers is to establish a routine for considering how assessment can become a regular feature of their planning. This will allow them to contribute significantly to the learner's progress and also to improve the quality of the learning culture in the classroom.

This is the reason why Outcomes-based assessment promotes learner-centredness in the teaching and learning process. The emphasis is not on what the teacher wants to achieve, but rather on what the learner should know, understand, do and become. In such circumstances teachers relinquish the role of formal and prescriptive instructors and instead become initiators, observers and facilitators of pupils' activities. This suggests that, through assessment, teachers in schools can humanize education and foster positive attitudes towards learning in schools (Coetzer 2001:83).

It is from the above observations and awareness that the research rationale can be established. Teachers' perceptions of human performance, and the impact assessment and evaluation are supposed to play in the establishment and benchmarking of the achievement of the outcomes have a major influence on our assessment and evaluation practices. Our learning, facilitation and assessment practices are deeply rooted within the underpinning paradigms steering such practices. We have to accept that the traditional Positivist and Behavioural philosophies could still be playing major roles in demarcating our perceptions on classroom assessment. The present postmodern appreciation of the educational reality has also left a significant mark on our educational systems. We have to take note of Söhnge's and Arjun's (1996:90) comment that: "the scientific (modern) paradigm hinders the shift to postmodernism, which advocates an epistemology that is characterized by personal subjectifications and unpredictability, and is experiential, hermeneutic and interactive."

It is therefore important to determine how the perceptions of teachers with regard to assessment and evaluation practices relate to classroom practice. In addition, it is important to establish whether these perceptions could eventually impact on the performance of learners in learning situations. This can only be done by assessing the perceptions of teachers with regard to traditional and Outcomes-based assessment strategies, premises and practices. Such analyses could clarify why teachers regard classroom assessment as an important practice in the learning cycle, and why a specific underpinning philosophy might shape the future of learners in terms of our understanding of accountability and human performance.

1.5.2 Research Questions

The researcher believes that finding answers to the following questions will contribute towards a better understanding of the problems identified in this chapter:

1. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the educative role of classroom assessment and how should assessment be adopted to contribute towards a culture of learning in schools?

2. What are teachers' perceptions about assessment as part of the learning and teaching process in achieving the expected outcomes of learning?

3. Why teachers regard assessment-results as a means of giving feedback to learners, parents and principals?

4. What are teachers' perceptions regarding traditional evaluation methods and their influence on the culture of learning in schools?

5. What are teachers' perceptions regarding Outcomes-based assessment strategies and their influence on the culture of learning in schools?

These questions will be addressed through both the analysis of the literature and the results of the empirical investigation.

1.6 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this investigation is to examine teachers' assessment of learners' work and its influence on the culture of learning in South African schools. Advocates of Outcomes-based education stress that assessment will have a positive strengthening effect on the curriculum applied in schools, in contrast to a traditional terminal assessment that only happens once at the end of the unit or section of work (Siebörger and Macintosh 2002: 25). In consideration of this, this study specifically considers teachers' perceptions about traditional product-driven evaluation methods and the new Outcomes-based assessment strategies in terms of their influence on the culture of learning in schools.

The focus would be on teachers' perceptions regarding the application of Outcomes-based assessment strategies, together with environment. Thus, the study would have the potential to provide new insight into teachers' perceptions of assessment in South African schools, impacting on the culture of learning.

Taking the above into account, the aim of the study can be stated fully as follows: **to investigate teachers' perceptions regarding the assessment of learners' work with specific reference to the traditional impact of evaluation on classroom practices versus the application of more contemporary Outcomes-based assessment strategies and the impact these alternate approaches have on the culture of learning in South African schools.**

The researcher hoped to achieve this aim through the realization of the following objectives:

1. To examine teachers' perceptions regarding assessment of learners' work in promoting the culture of learning in schools.

2. To examine teachers' perceptions of assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning processes.

3. To examine the opinion of teachers' with regard to the use of assessment to demonstrate educational achievements to teachers, learners, principals and parents.

4. To examine teachers' perceptions in terms how traditional evaluation practices influenced the culture of learning in schools, and finally

5. To consider teachers' perceptions in relation to the potential of Outcomes-Based assessment practices to influence the culture of learning in schools.

For the purpose of this work, these objectives are addressed through empirical investigations that are restricted to a consideration of teachers' opinions and perceptions; it does not involve school-based observation.

1.6.1 Analysis of the Objectives

Research has shown that learners are often regarded as passive, powerless and often oppressed and mystified by the assessment process (Birenbaum and Dochy 1996: 7). This study therefore attempts to advocate that teachers need to regard learners as active participants who share responsibilities in the process of assessment practices in schools. This suggests that teachers should have good qualities of assessment, which could improve the results of learning in schools. Such assessment could also promote a continued dialogue between teachers and learners regarding curriculum matters. If

teachers can view assessment in this light, it could promote engagement and involvement of learners in teaching and learning activities (Cullingford 1997: 114).

Teachers need not see assessment as a time-wasting appendage to classroom practice, but as an integral part of the planning for effective instruction. This will help learners to develop an interest in learning and so promote the culture of learning in schools. Astuto and Clark (1995: 245) are of the opinion that assessment of learners' work is not only aimed at checking the learners' performance, but also to promote a collaborative effort between teachers and learners to understand levels of current achievements and open possibilities for continued learners' growth. This implies that assessment is essential in order to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning in schools.

This study attempts to establish that assessment can demonstrate educational achievements that may enhance co-operation, trust, confidence and support of teaching and learning practices by parents, principals and learners. This is because assessment results can be used by teachers to indicate what needs or problems are preventing learners from making the necessary progress that is expected of learners by parents and other stakeholders in education (Wiggins 1993: 140).

Another important aspect considered by this investigation is that of traditional evaluation practices, and how these influenced the culture of learning in schools. Van der Horst and McDonald (1999: 28) refer to this evaluation model as concentrating on evaluating learned facts by encouraging learners to memorize and recall subject content. Such evaluation methods appear to include or apply evaluation activities that are regarded as being separate from the instruction process, because they aim only to assess knowledge that was provided by the textbook.

Fraser (1998: 196) describes this evaluation approach as a "single occasion assessment", which uses the content-based model of assessment to control and emphasize the following issues:
- overemphasizing the importance of high marks;
- basing the assessment of performance and promotion of teachers on the achievement of their learners in tests and examinations;

- using tests and examinations as national criteria against which the general proficiency of learners can be assessed;

- convincing local communities and school boards/councils that the performance of learners at a given school is a reflection of the quality of schooling; and finally,

- believing that high scores are true reflections of the cognitive ability and possible future performance of learners.

Fraser (1998: 197) convincingly states that the results of this type of assessment were unfortunately not always reliable indicators of learners' abilities and performance, since it was a once-off occasion of assessment. Teachers' assessment of learners' work should not be regarded as the final step or phase of the learning and teaching process. Instead it should be incorporated systematically at all levels of teaching and learning processes.

This investigation also examines Outcomes-based education assessment strategies and their significance in contributing towards the culture of learning in schools. This is topical due to the mixed reaction by public school teachers and administrators to the Outcomes-based education initiatives (Willis and Kissane 1997:9). According to Spady (1994a:10), Outcomes-based education is a learner-centered results-orientated system founded on the belief that all individuals can learn. In this system multiple instructional and assessment strategies are available to meet the needs of each learner.

The latter argument indicates that assessment is an essential element of Outcomes-based education, mainly because assessment is aligned with the need to enable learners to achieve desirable learning outcomes. This shows that without valid and reliable assessment procedures, teachers will simply not know whether learners have achieved the learning outcomes, neither will the learner know whether they have learnt well (Van der Horst and McDonald 1999:167). It is therefore very important in Outcomes-based education that assessment procedures give a clear indication of what learners are learning and teachers are teaching.

On the basis of these aims and objectives, the researcher will investigate whether South African teachers do have an adequate understanding of the role of assessment in

education, and whether their intervention will have an impact on the development of a culture of learning in their classrooms.

1.7   CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

1.7.1   Introduction

A number of terms and key concepts are used repeatedly throughout this study, specifically:. "teachers", "learners", "influence", "culture of learning", and "assessment". This section explains their meaning and use in detail in order to remove any obscurity that might exist in the definition and meaning of these concepts, to obliviate ambiguity and to give the reader a clear understanding of the research purpose

1.7.2   Teachers

Bondesio and Beckman (1989:52) argue that teachers are individuals who possess approved professional teacher's qualifications. This qualification enables or allows them to execute their professional duties as teachers. This implies that teachers should have specialized knowledge of carrying out teaching duties.

Combs and Blume (1977: 8) state that becoming a teacher is not a matter of learning how to teach, but a question of personal discovery of learning how to use one's self well, and to be committed to the teaching processes. This view about teachers can be associated with one of the seven roles of being a competent "educator" which further describe an "educator" as an "assessor". It defines an "assessor" in an educational context as follows: "this is an educator who will understand that assessment is an essential feature of the teaching and learning process and know how to integrate it into this process. The educator will have an understanding of the purpose, methods and effects of assessment, and be able to provide helpful feedback to learners. The educator will design and manage both formative and summative assessment in ways that are appropriate to the level and purpose of the learning and meet the requirements of accredited bodies. The educator will keep detailed and diagnostic records of assessment.

The educator will understand how to interpret and use assessment results to feed into processes for the improvement of learning programmes" (Government Gazette 4 February 2000: 14).

The word "educator" was not used in this study although it is a more modern synonym of the word "teacher" in the educational context. The researcher decided to retain the use of "teacher" as it has a longer historical use, and is more specifically associated with schooling than the broader term "educator". However, the role and functions of an educator as an "assessor", as described in the latter paragraph, should also be applied to the teacher's role and function regarding the assessment of learners' work in this study.

1.7.3 Learners

Cockburn (1997:10) states that in a society where learning is valued, the learner is esteemed and the word "learner" is used to describe all those engaged in the learning process. According to the School Education Act of RSA of 1995, learner means any person receiving education at school.

The learner is someone who has a goal and an intention of achieving. According to Vrey (1992:225), the learner wants to realize this goal. However he or she is involved because he/she chooses to be involved and this involvement is defined in terms of the psychic vitality of the learner's commitment. The learner must understand the goal of learning and rate it as important enough to want to realize it.

In this study the learner will be regarded as a partner in the progress of his or her own development whereby interest has to be maintained throughout the education cycle.

1.7.4 Influence

Hawkins (1989:4-21) describes the term "influence" as the power to produce an effect or the ability to affect a person's character, beliefs or action.

In this study the teacher's assessment of the learner's work will be taken as an action that will influence or have an effect on learning so that learners will understand why they are learning. According to Bhengu (1997: 27), the constant feedback that they will receive during the learning process should keep them motivated and committed towards better learning.

This study will be used to indicate that assessment could motivate both learners and teachers to attach significance to what they are learning and teaching. Jackson (1991:13) emphasizes that it is difficult to motivate children to learn if they cannot attach meaning to the learning task. As a result assessment in this study will be investigated as an influential element or part of a teacher's role.

1.7.5 Culture Of Learning

"Culture of learning" is an emerging theory in South Africa that has become prominent in education since the Soweto student uprisings of 1976. According to Strydom and Norugwana (1993: 384), the climate in schools across South Africa has not been conducive to learning since this period of time. Hartshorne, in Smith and Pacheco (1996:160) writes that "As the period of protest and revolt continued and intensified, through 1976-80, 1984-1986 and finally from 1988 onwards, the learning environment in the high schools, first in the metropolitan urban areas, then in other urban areas and recently in some rural areas, slowly and surely began to crumble and disintegrate. Even when calls to return to school were accepted there was no guarantee that any learning was taking place. Pupils came to schools at different times, left when they felt like it, did not bring their books to school, refused to do homework or tests and generally, increasingly began to reject any kind of authority."

Nielsen (Masitsa 1995:27) defines a culture of learning as "a positive school climate where the atmosphere is conducive to teaching and learning, where everyone who has interest in the school expresses pride in it, where pupils are given maximum opportunities to learn and there is a high expectation for learners to achieve." It is therefore abundantly clear that the culture of learning not only stresses educational goals

and values, but it also clearly communicates the expectations, norms and beliefs that all learners can and will learn in order to achieve outcomes of learning.

Ex-Robben Islanders can justifiably claim to have preceded educational authorities in establishing a so-called "learning culture" on the island. Ramudzulli (1995:30) states that "learning was a 24 hour activity for prisoners on the island. While learning undoubtedly had value in improving the quality of prison life, ultimately the focus of learning extended to improve the life of the masses back on the mainland. This belief in a community or corporate value of learning is one that organizations would do well to address."

As a result of making learning a life-long process in Robben Island, success rates across primary, secondary, undergraduate and post-graduate studies were outstanding. Unacceptable behaviour within the cell as well as in the broader prison community was diminished by the culture of learning that existed in Robben Island.

In 1990, the Congress of South African Students began to campaign and encourage students and teacher to adopt the "culture of learning". It indicated that the behavior of students or teachers who deliberately disrupt schools was not acceptable. It called for school premises to be kept clean and neat, and it also took a swipe at teachers who tended to strike before exams. Punctuality was called for and students were not permitted to leave school unless granted permission to do so in advance. Prior to this time the situation was marked by an observable lack of interest and commitment to learning and teaching. There was a manifestation of anti-academic and destructive attitudes and behaviors amongst many African youths and teachers. The Congress of South African Students called upon the culture of learning in order to rebuild and create a learning society.

Nxumalo (1993:55-60) has defined culture of learning as "a social integration of bringing parents, teachers and students together to establish strict regulations for convenient and successful learning and teaching. These regulations will make parents feel responsible for their children and offer practical support to them at home. For

instance; they should make sure that their children prepare for school, check their schoolwork and attend school on time. The principal should have control over the students as well as teachers, and be accountable to parents and communities." This definition indicates a binding agreement amongst learners, teachers and parents, in order to promote effective teaching and learning. It also emphasizes discipline and morale to be prevalent in all stakeholders who are involved with learning and teaching.

Smith and Pacheco (1996:162) discuss learning culture as "leerkultuur", which can be described as the leerlingesteldheid en gees van hardwerkendeheid in 'n skool wat moontlik gemaak word deur die wisselwerking tussen vier sisteme of kragte naamlik: die persoonskenmerke van leerlinge, gesinsfaktore, die skool-klimaat sowel as die invloed van die samelewingsisteme op die skool, die leerkragte en die leerlinge." (English translation: Learner attitude and spirit/disposition of diligence in a school, which is enabled by the interaction between four systems of forces namely: the personality characteristics of learners, family factors, school climate, as well as the influence of society on the schools, the educators and the learners.)

The concept "learning culture" has become a household word in South Africa during the past four years. The way in which this concept is often used indicates that no consensus or uniformity exists about the actual meaning of the concept. However, Smith and Pacheco (1996:163) conclude that a culture of learning is determined by the following four systems or factors:

- The learner and his personal characteristics which include his attitude towards learning;

- Factors in the family and immediate living environment;

- School-related factors such as the management style of the principal, school and classroom atmosphere, and the professional competence of the teacher;

- Macro-societal factors such as political and economical factors.

All the above factors, through their interaction, contribute to creating a certain attitude in teachers and learners towards teaching and learning in a school. In view of the above, a culture of learning can be defined as "the general disposition and attitude of pupils towards learning. This includes the atmosphere of diligence or industry that develops in pupils in a school as a result of a combination of personal characteristics of pupils, commitment and involvement of parents, the leadership of the principal, the professional conduct of teachers and the attitude towards the school of people in the community" (Smith and Pacheco 1996:164).

Davidoff, Kaplan and Lazarus (1995:175) refer to the culture of learning as the general ethos at the school. This includes issues such as the extent to which teachers and students are motivated, the way in which students and parents are involved (or not involved, as the case may be) in the life of the school, the way in which people relate to each other, the approach to discipline, and the general attitude towards teaching and learning.

Again Van der Vyver (2001:123) describes the culture of learning in terms of both teachers' and learners' behavior at educational institutions. He suggests that the culture of learning is generally defined in terms of learners' experiences at such institutions, but it needs to be recognized that most often learner behavior is determined by, or is a response to, teachers' behavior. This indicates that the culture of learning has two distinct characteristics: what learners do in order to get by; and what teachers do in order to assist learners to get by in the teaching and learning situation (Van der Vyver *ibid.*).

This suggests that a certain culture of learning evolves in schools from what teachers do and the way teachers relate to learners,. Hence this study will also investigate how teachers are using assessment to promote the culture of learning in schools.

To summarize, in this study "culture of learning" will mean an atmosphere at school where everyone shares a sense of efficiency; where learners believe they can truly learn; where teachers believe they can truly teach; and parents as well as the community believe the school can and should be an exciting and productive place to learn.

1.7.6 Assessment

According to Satterly (1989:1) and Birenbaum and Dochy (1996:8), the word "assessment" originates from the Latin verb "assidere" meaning "sitting alongside someone", or "to sit beside". Sitting beside children suggests a close relationship and a sharing of experience (Satterly1989:1). It is ironic therefore to discover that educational assessment is generally associated in many people's minds with ranking and evaluation of a learner's learning progress.

However, in this study the term assessment will be used specifically in the context of appraising a learner's work, in order to motivate learners to value and honor learning processes at school. In this type of assessment, teachers need to do something more than the traditional norm-referenced or criteria-referenced paper-and-pencil measurements requiring learners to respond (Fischer and King, 1995:2).

There are differences between the terms "assessment", "test", "measurement" and "evaluation". Airasian (1994:5) makes a clear distinction between assessment and other terms that are generally associated with assessment. He states that assessment includes the full range of information teachers gather in the classroom - information that helps them understand their learners, monitor their instruction and establish a viable classroom culture.

This study looks at the variety of ways that teachers gather and synthesize information when assessing their learners. There are a number of different types of Outcomes-based assessment such as performance-based assessment, competence-based-assessment and Authentic-based assessment. These are discussed below.

Performance-based assessment

"Performance-based assessment assists learners to create an answer or a product that demonstrates their knowledge and skills. It also permits learners to show what they can do in a real situation" (Popham 1995:228). This indicates that this type of assessment can boost learner outcomes in terms of academic achievement and emotional well being.

Competency-based assessment

Towers and Towers (1996: 58) define competency-based-assessment "as an effort aimed at defining and evaluating learners' performance, to establish what learners know, understand and can do in order that teachers can identify their pupils' strengths and weaknesses, and plan the next steps in their instruction endeavors." This definition indicates that assessment provides feedback both to the learner and teacher as to how the journey of learning is progressing. It also provides the starting point for future planning.

Authentic Assessment

The move towards Outcomes-based education has also changed the trends of assessment. In the traditional context assessment involved examination and tests (see section 1.4); these did not give learners appropriate opportunities to reveal their knowledge, skills, attitudes or values. Therefore Outcomes-based education has brought a move towards new assessment strategies, which looks for ways other than traditional methods of evaluating learning outcomes. One of the assessment techniques which has contributed to the reform movement is known as "Authentic Assessment". Van der Horst and McDonald (1997:168) describe authentic assessment as a measurement of complex performance and higher order thinking skills in real-life contexts. They further argue that it provides a more direct measure of higher order learning outcomes than that of more traditional measures. Authentic assessment is thus based on what learners actually do, in a variety of contexts, at points throughout the learning times.

It would seem that such assessment is geared towards giving a clear indication of what learners are learning. It also appears to be flexible and equitable, and designed specifically to match the learning outcomes learners will strive to achieve. This implies that it will contribute to the interest of learning and so enhance the culture of learning. McCown, Driscoll and Roop (1996: 87) are of the opinion that it improves learning and provides a multidimensional picture of what students know and can do. It respects students' diversity in ways of understanding. It also suggests actions teachers can take to improve the educational development of their students and the quality of educational programs. To accomplish these goals of assessment, teachers will have to equip themselves with a broader array of assessment techniques and strategies than ever before.

This research pursues assessment as one of the teachers' capabilities to empower learners to master skills, knowledge, attitudes and values; to demonstrate complex tasks rather than individual skills practiced in isolation. This study will highlight the importance of assessment in aligning teaching and learning processes. It will also link assessment as a pedagogical aspect to promote and enhance a culture of learning in all schools

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND PLAN OF ACTION

This section discusses the research approach used by the researcher to meet the aims and objectives defined.

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were applied in this study. Scott and Usher (1996:59) maintain that the two research methodologies do not belong to separate research paradigms; both can be used sensibly within a common investigation. Similarly, Verma and Mallick (1999:115) note that the process of using both qualitative and quantitative data ensures that the conclusions drawn are meaningful, precise and representative. Consequently, both research methodologies were employed in this study so that the results from one form of data source could help to inform and refine data from other sources.

A combination of qualitative research and quantitative research was used to address the aims and objectives of the study. Once the aims of the study were defined, the research sequence was as follows:
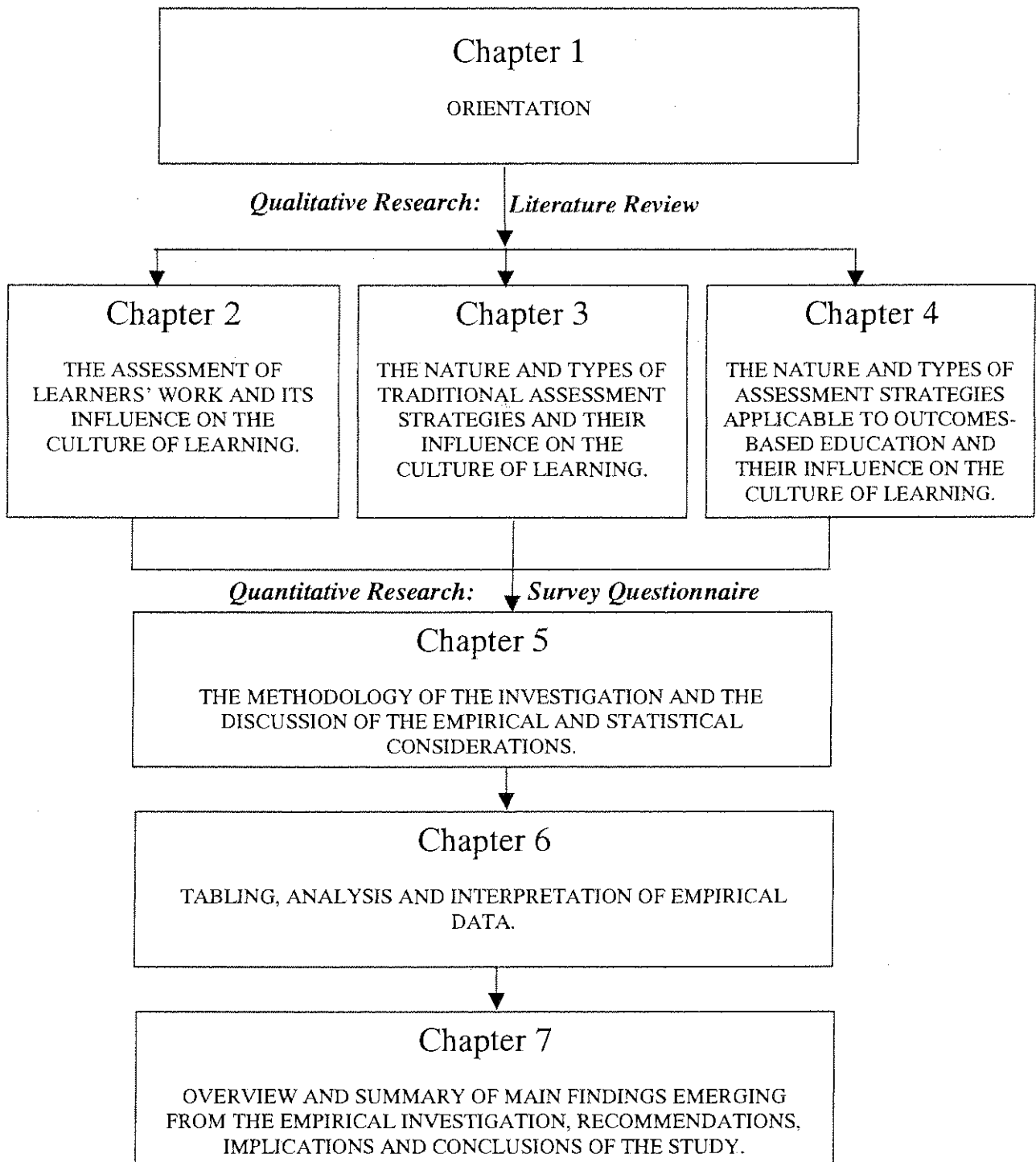
- Step 1: Qualitative research: detailed analysis of the literature

- Step 2: Quantitative research:

    a) Development of the survey questionnaire based on the findings of the

    literature study;

    b) Design and execution of the survey questionnaire;

    c) Data analysis and interpretation.

- Step 3: Thesis construction

Figure 1.2 provides an outline of the structure of the thesis, indicating the formulation of

the chapters in relation to the qualitative and quantitative parts of the study. The

following sections discuss these in greater detail.

Figure 1.1.   *Thesis design and structure*

Chapter 1

ORIENTATION

Qualitative Research: *Literature Review*

Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4
THE ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS' WORK AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE CULTURE OF LEARNING.	THE NATURE AND TYPES OF TRADITIONAL ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE CULTURE OF LEARNING.	THE NATURE AND TYPES OF ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES APPLICABLE TO OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE CULTURE OF LEARNING.

Quantitative Research: *Survey Questionnaire*

Chapter 5

THE METHODOLOGY OF THE INVESTIGATION AND THE DISCUSSION OF THE EMPIRICAL AND STATISTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

Chapter 6

TABLING, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF EMPIRICAL DATA.

Chapter 7

OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS EMERGING FROM THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY.

1.8.1 Qualitative Research Applied in the Study

Qualitative research methodology is applied in this study in Chapters two, three and four (see Figure 1.2) in order to build an in-depth theoretical background for this study. Before discussing the detailed literature review conducted in this study, it is useful to provide an overview of the applications and benefits of qualitative research.

1.8.1.1 Applications and Benefits of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is used to obtain a more holistic picture of what goes on in a particular situation or setting (Fraenkel and Wallen 1993:10). Qualitative methods are probably the best means for discovering educational problems; they enable researchers to better understand the total environment in which education takes place (Gall, Borg and Gall 1996:40). Hence in this study qualitative research was used to collect data in relation to the stated problems outlined in section 1.5. The qualitative data sources for this study included the formal literature, unpublished documents, press statements and radio and television media.

Killen (2002:1) notes that "much of the literature on assessment concentrates on methodology - providing advice about when to assess learners (formative versus summative assessment), what types of questions to ask (multiple choice, essays, etc.), how to mark answers (global impressions versus specific criteria) and how to allocate grades. All these are necessary considerations, but they are based on the assumption that the tester is clear about what exactly is being measured, and that what is being measured is appropriate. Unfortunately, these assumptions may not always be justified. This causes particular problems when the foundation of a curriculum changes - such as when attempts are made to introduce Outcomes-based education. In these circumstances it is inappropriate to continue to base assessment practices on tradition and on narrow experience, in the hope that this will suffice. Instead, it becomes necessary to question these assumptions and look at assessment from a different perspective". Therefore the researcher in this study would consider texts with substantial body of knowledge on principles of sound assessment practices, of Outcomes-based assessment strageties and traditional evaluation methods. Hence the researcher should be able to give

interpretation of different meanings and intentions about assessment from the qualitative data sources of this study.

De Vos (2001:240) cites that, the most commonly used label for qualitative research is the term "interpretative". This refers to the fact that the aim of qualitative research is not to explain human behavior in terms of universally valid laws or generalization, but rather to understand and interpret the meanings and intentions that underlie every human action. Mouton and Marais (1993:104) suggest that if qualitative research is interpretative it means it relates to the theory of hermeneutics. Palmer (1988:33) indicates that, from the beginning, the word hermeneutics has denoted the science of interpretation.

It is deducted from this that qualitative research and its hermeneutics methodology is probably the most appropriate research approach that could be used by the researcher in this study. Through interacting with the various literature, documents and press statements, the researcher will interpret and also get to understand the meanings people in educational circles attach to the key issues examined in this study. Specifically, the meanings they attach to the assessment of learners' work and its influence on the culture of learning; traditional evaluation methods and their influence on the culture of learning; and Outcomes-based assessment strategies and their influence on the culture of learning (see Figure 1.2). Hence a hermeneutics approach, which is generally know as the science of interpretation (Palmer 1988:34), is thought to be appropriate to assist the researcher to correctly interpret the meaning and understanding that educational literature and documents attach to teachers' assessment of learners' work and its influence on the culture of learning.

1.8.1.2 The Literature Survey

The researcher reviewed the literature that was relevant to the problem under investigation. The literature review is discussed in detail in Chapters two, three and four. The main purpose of the literature survey was to synthesis the information pertinent to the aims and key objectives of the study (see section 1.6.1). For instance, Chapter two attempts to justify that the assessment of learners' work by teachers does

have an influence on the culture of learning. The researcher assumed that the literature would reveal that not only teachers should be satisfied about the results of assessment of learners' work, but also that parents, learners, principals and school administrators should participate in and share the results of assessment. Chapter three discusses the nature and types of traditional assessment strategies and their influence on the culture of learning. The nature and types of assessment strategies applicable to Outcomes-based education and their influence on the culture of learning are discussed in Chapter four (see Figure 1.1).

Anderson, Herr and Nihlen (1994:78) indicate that literature study also assists researchers to select research strategies, procedures and instruments that will enable them to conduct the empirical analysis of their results. This constituted the secondary purpose of the literature review in this thesis.

1.8.2 Quantitative Empirical Investigation

The results of the quantitative research are presented in Chapters 5 and 6 (See Figure 1.1).

De Vos (2001:243) believes that qualitative research is inherently exploratory. As a result of this emphasis, the qualitative researcher embarks on a voyage of discovery rather than one of verification. The quantitative researcher can then use these discoveries as a basis for further research. Charles (1988:17) notes that quantitative research organizes data in non-experimental quantitative terms and expresses theses numerically. Items of questionnaires are constructed and analyzed in an objective and context-free manner in order to solicit responses or data from the sample population.

This study applied a quantitative approach through the use of survey questionnaires. These questionnaires were distributed to measure and evaluate the following issues:

- Teachers' perceptions or opinions regarding teachers' assessment of learners' work and its influence on the culture of learning,
- Teachers' perceptions regarding traditional evaluation methods and their influence on the culture of learning, and

- Teachers' perceptions regarding Outcomes-based assessment strategies and their influence on the culture of learning.

The results of the questionnaire survey were tested by means of a confirmatory factor analysis, as described by Robin, Fox and Belinda (2001:511). The approach, methodology and results of the analyses are presented in detail in Chapters five and six of this thesis.

The question items incorporated into the survey questionnaire were derived from the detailed study of the literature described in Chapters two, three and four. This lends support to the validity and reliability of this survey. In relation to this, Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (1985:358) confirm that, to ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaires, researchers should use the theoretical assumptions contained in the literature of the study under investigation. If this is done the questionnaires will have a higher content validity and reliability.

1.8.3   Research Hypotheses

Anderson, Herr and Nihlen (1994; 161) concur that an important element of quantitative research is that hypotheses should be formulated before the investigation is embarked upon, because the whole study should revolve around the research hypotheses. This is accentuated by Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (1985 ; 75), who state that the hypothesis is a powerful tool in scientific inquiry, because it helps the researcher to be in the correct perspective regarding the phenomenon under investigation. Similarly, research hypotheses predict a direction for the results of a study (Cates 1985:17).

A hypothesis is a prediction or a statement of the specific results or outcomes that are expected to occur (Fraenkel and Wallen 1996:18, Vockell and Asher 1995:193). A hypothesis can also be defined as a tentative prediction of the results of the research findings (Gay and Airasian 2000:71). Hypotheses state the researchers' expectations with regard to the relationship between the variables of the research problem (Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh 1990:94; Gay 1992:66; Gay and Airasian 2000:71 and Van Dalen 1979:196-197).

The researcher formulated the following hypotheses to anticipate what the outcomes of this study might be. Firstly, the literature study intended to gather data for the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. An assessment system built upon the traditional evaluation methods has a detrimental effect on the development of the culture of learning in schools.

Hypothesis 2. Assessment strategies built upon an Outcomes-based assessment policy are more effective in contributing toward the development of a culture of learning in schools.

Secondly, the empirical investigation tested the following Null hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3. No distinction can be drawn between teachers' perceptions regarding the impact or influence of traditional evaluation methods and teachers' perceptions regarding the impact or influence of Outcomes-based assessment strategies on the culture of learning in schools.

The realization of the aims and objectives of this study in paragraph 1.6, through the literature study and empirical analysis of this study, would enable the researcher to verify, accept or reject the above stated hypotheses.

1.9   SUMMARY

In this chapter the following important aspects have been explained: general background of the study; factors that contributed to the investigation; the formulation of the research problem; the aims and objectives of the study; clarification of terms; research design and plan of action; and finally statement of the research hypotheses.

CHAPTER 2

THE ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS' WORK AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE CULTURE OF LEARNING

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the literature that discusses assessment of learners' work, and how the results of assessment affect learners, teachers, school administrators, principals and parents in relation to the development and improvement of the culture of learning in schools (see section 1.8.1).

Assessment, like instruction, needs to be meaningful and must address both processes and products. It also needs to pay attention to attitudes, confidence, interests, and experience as well as knowledge, understanding and strategies. Thomas (1993:257) suggests that, if assessment pays attention to all these factors, both teachers and learners would be motivated. This would help to stimulate a culture of learning.

McGee and Head (1994:280) believe that if the assessment of learner's work is characterized by co-operation and collaboration of teachers, learners, school administrators and parents, it will emphasize a process for partnership among all parties who need and expect productive learning. Similarly, Boschee and Baron (1993:2) argue that if teachers and learners share the responsibility of assessment for learning purposes, they will be equally motivated towards successful learning processes. It is important to understand that assessment in this study may either be a result of teacher's activities or may be triggered by learners, because assessment is regarded as an integral part of both teaching and learning processes (as indicated in paragraph 1.5.1.)

In this chapter the researcher specifically focuses on five aspects of the teacher-learner-assessment interface that may promote a culture of learning in schools:

- The role of assessment as a motivating factor for teachers and learners,
- The role of teachers' perceptions about assessment,
- The role of learners' perceptions about assessment,
- The role of the school administrators perceptions about assessment, and
- The role of parental involvement in the assessment process.

Each of these aspects is discussed in detail in the following sections.

2.2 THE ROLE OF ASSESSMENT IN THE MOTIVATION OF LEARNERS AND TEACHERS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CULTURE OF LEARNING.

Assessment has a great potential for motivating both teachers and learners. Through assessment teachers can motivate most learners and foster many of a learner's competencies. A great deal of research has indicated that assessment can assist teachers to understand how to motivate pupils. Teachers can also develop assessment skills that can improve a learner's understanding of the nature of the learning process (Weston 1991:45). According to Venter (1998:5), usually pupils set targets for each subject in collaboration with their teachers. These set targets will continuously direct the learner's assessment of his/her own achievement, using multiple strategies of assessment. A learner will thus be motivated to learn by rating himself/herself against his/her own potential. This could result in a positive impact with regard to the culture of learning.

Research shows that many teachers are beginning to realize that no single assessment, however improved, can take the place of the multidimensional, continuous, contextualized assessment necessary for the ongoing teaching and learning circles of particular classrooms. According to Thomas (1993:260), Rowland believes that whenever teachers really look closely at what learners are doing, the choices they are

making and the forms of expressions they are using, the teachers are able to develop an understanding of why learners worked in the way they did. This suggests that teachers need to approach their work with a questioning frame of mind. They must explore new possibilities and find ways of teaching that will motivate learners and promote critical thinking and problem solving skills (Thomas 1993:259).

There has long been widespread consensus among educational researchers, practitioners, and policymakers that curricula and instruction should ideally incorporate critical thinking and problem solving skills. This allows education to promote higher order cognitive skills and strategies for instruction (Bol and Strange, 1996:146). According to Aldridge, Scott and Kuby (1994:45), this suggests that teachers should begin to see their role as preparing all learners for life in a world of rapid scientific and technological change, rather than that of preparing a small minority of learners for a highly specialized career. In keeping up with this shift, the current reconceptualization of state curricular frameworks should reflect the goal of helping learners to integrate what they learn in the classroom into their lives. Bol and Strange (1996:147) believe that this can be achieved by firstly making the curriculum content more inquiry-based. Secondly, outcomes-based assessment measures should be adopted which tap the learner's ability to engage in guided discovery activities, rather than memory for content *per se*. An assessment which promotes critical-thinking, problem-solving and other kinds of higher order thinking strategies will motivate both teachers and learners to apply more sophisticated thinking skills. This would have a positive effect on the culture of learning (McCaslin and Good 1992:134).

Many education systems have emphasized that skills, knowledge and educational information can only be acquired by learners from teachers (Brandt 1994:8). As a result, these systems did not plan for appropriate learning experiences to motivate learners to achieve the necessary learning outcomes. These include, inter-alia, critical thinking, problem solving, application, appreciation, analyzing, synthesizing and evaluation of information (Olivier 1998:36). Such learning outcomes were not given the attention they deserved due to the fact that many education systems focused only on developing the basic levels of skills and knowledge of numeracy and literacy. This has the result that the future of many learners has been compromised because the outcomes held for them were low and unclear.

A major challenge facing any move to an Outcomes-based system is to redesign the assessment of learners. This will motivate the learners to acquire learning experiences, and enable them to think critically, be evaluators of information, problem solvers and finally, to apply the knowledge they have gained appropriately and successfully (Spady 1994b:21). This would undoubtedly have a positive effect on the culture of learning.

This is the reason why Spady and Marshall (1991:67-72) say that authentic assessment and performance-based assessment rather than standardized, multiple-choices are necessary to measure the learner's attainment of such learning outcomes. They further argue that many outcomes demand a type of assessment that is more performance-orientated, because most current tests fail to measure the applications of knowledge described in new Outcomes-based education. Performance-based assessment moves away from an emphasis on recall towards an emphasis on resourcefulness. This motivates teaching and learning to focus on analysis, synthesis, evaluation and other higher-order thinking skills.

According to Manges, Wigle and Wingett (1996:11), assessment is like a motion picture of a learner with multiple opportunities for practice and performance. Through assessment, teachers afford learners opportunities to demonstrate the learning outcomes that they have achieved. This implies that assessment is not routine in nature, but rather that learners should demonstrate the attainment of outcomes of learning by being motivated to inspect, reflect and evaluate their own work in order to promote a culture of learning.

Popham (1995:2) is of the opinion that assessment should also try to determine the status of learners regarding "Educational variables of interest." Variables are factors that influence or could be influenced by other factors. In education, for example, we find that learners vary in how much they know about a subject, how skilled they are in performing various operations (for example long division), and how positive their attitudes are towards school. Popham (1995:5) asserts that teachers should use assessment in a deliberate effort to determine such variables as the learner's knowledge, skills or attitudes. The assessment of these variables lifts the interest of the learner, because they involve more than a teacher's impression. Such assessment looks at the

way learners acquire knowledge, and how teachers enable learners to learn, because it follows a systematic approach to get a fix on a learner's status.

In truth, however, few classroom teachers give explicit attention to influencing their learner's attitudes and values. Even fewer classroom teachers actually try to assess the affective status of their learners. Research supports the fact that many teachers, particularly those who teach older learners, believe that their only educational mission is to increase a learner's knowledge and skills. (Van der Horst and McDonald 1999;53) Such teachers believe that affective variables do simply not fall within their proper sphere of influence. In the past few years, Boyd, Lugg and Zahorchak (1996:347) have shown that there has been an emergence of a vocal group of individuals who have taken strong positions against schools offering anything other than traditional academic (cognitive) education. These critics, usually representing religious or conservative constituencies, argue that it is the duty of the family and church to promote values in children, and that any attempt by the schools to systematically modify children's attitudes or values should cease.

Popham (1995:180), notwithstanding the aforementioned criticism, re-emphasizes that affective assessment of learners that promotes positive attitudes towards learning would be universally approved and also nurture learner's self-esteem. He regards affective variables as equally important as cognitive variables, arguing: "We have seen people who were not all that "gifted" intellectually still succeed because they were highly motivated and hard working. Conversely, how many times have we seen truly able people simply veer away from challenges because they did not consider themselves worthy." This shows that, to promote the culture of learning, assessment should be used to equip learners with independence and initiative in directing their own learning. They should be able to ask questions, evaluate evidence, defend their arguments and apply their knowledge to new situations (Taylor and Vinjevold 1999:109). In short this could promote positive attitudes, feelings and self-worthiness amongst learners.

Both Popham (1995) and Messick (1979:292) share that, in addition to serving as an end-of-instruction goal, affective assessment devices, if administered regularly, will help teachers determine if modifications in the instructional programme are warranted. A major part of a teacher's role involves planning learning experiences and activities.

Different activities encapsulate different learning experiences, hence teachers choose to offer a particular activity because of its potential in terms of learning outcomes, attitudes and the value of its content to learners (Mitchell and Koshy, 1993:49). However learners will learn certain things by engaging with the activity. As active participants in their own learning, learners will bring something of themselves to the activity. They may branch off in an equally valid and productive direction.

This is why Salvia and Ysseldyke (1995:217) warn of the danger of developing tunnel vision; being so busy looking for the possible outcomes during assessment that one misses the actual outcomes of learning. They maintain that assessment should be done to motivate teachers not only to concentrate on the specific learning outcomes, but also to review the range of activities engaged in. The aim should be to motivate learners to learn intellectually rather than just attaining specific outcomes of learning.

Rallis (1995:226) shows that assessment should be learner-centered, because a learner-centered approach offers each learner many opportunities to learn. Through assessment the school broadens to encompass those learners it finds dwelling within. The teachers learn who their learners are; they ask what talents and life experiences each learner brings and what each learner needs. If a learner does not meet a "standard" the learner is not dismissed as a failure; rather, the teacher considers remedial teaching to intervene and compensate for the learning difficulties of the learner. This motivates the child to learn, which should be an underpinning principle of the culture of learning.

In this study assessment is regarded as a motivation tool to promote the culture of learning. Rallis (1995:228) asserts that collaboration, caring and growth are the ruling ethics of a learner's assessment. He further states that teachers and learners should collaborate; they will then realize that the whole product of assessment is equal to more than the sum of each person's contribution.

The proponents of the alternative assessment movement prefer the use of formative data, which directly examines student performance on significant "real world" tasks, over that of the more traditional summative assessment characterized by scores on multiple-choice standardized achievement (Wiggins 1989:710). They argue that the formative nature of alternative assessment provides a framework for individualizing instruction.

This allows for student self-assessment, and becomes an ongoing aspect of instruction that facilitates opportunities for collaboration between teachers and students in ways that more traditional summative assessment do not. Finally, they argue that such assessments are more flexible and versatile than more traditional assessments. Specifically, such assessments can focus on student processes, products, and performances in ways that traditional multiple-choice, paper-and-pencil assessments cannot (Worthen, 1993: 444-454).

Astuto and Clark (1995:245) indicate that assessment motivates collaboration and caring between teachers and learners. The reason is that it presses both the individual and the group to achieve higher levels of understanding and expertise. It also fosters inquiry, discovery, and trial and error, and it builds on the strengths and talents of all participants. Through such collaboration and care, teachers become aware of the growth and development of their learners in more holistic and comprehensive ways. Learners become empowered to participate in the improvement of their own learning. Both teachers and learners become more engaged and committed to the teaching-learning process (Little, 1993:193).

2.3 TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT ASSESSMENT AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE CULTURE OF LEARNING.

This study focuses on assessment as a continuous process of gathering and reviewing information in order to help learners succeed in their learning. Wittrock and Baker (1991:297) urge teachers to use assessment that is collaborative, rather than competitive assessment which separates those who "can" from those who "cannot". Collaborative assessment can help teachers to develop a perception of encouraging learners to enquire, discover and build strengths and talents with regard to learning. Such assessment enables learners to participate in their own learning, thus promoting the culture of learning (Little 1993:192). Collaborative assessment also contributes to the professional and technical development of teachers. However, the primary purpose of assessment is to identify and specify strengths and weaknesses with respect to teaching and learning in order to improve teaching practices and learning outcomes (Greaney and Kellaghan,

1996:13).

Manges, Wigle and Wingett (1996:10) are of the opinion that teachers must adopt instructional roles which are more collaborative and facilitative in nature. The focus needs to be on how teachers should facilitate the learning process. Teachers need to interact continuously with learners to confirm progress and direction based on performance indicators. They must develop criteria to assess or judge the evidence, and reconcile learning styles with the context of learning. They should propagate creativity by promoting self-development, and encourage cross-curricular thinking and the development of higher order thinking, communication and decision-making skills (Olivier 1998:40-41).

Airasian (1994:62) proposes that the instructional process consists of three general steps. The first step involves planning the instruction; this includes identifying desired pupil behavior changes, selecting materials and organizing learning experiences into a coherent whole. The second step involves extensive interaction with the pupils; Finally, the third step determines whether the planned pupil changes have occurred, that is, whether pupils have learned.

The third step can be useful in assessing the appropriateness of the learning experiences. However, with regard to assessment, the first and second steps are as important as the third step. This is because what teachers do during didactic activities influences what learners will do when being assessed. It is important to note that while the focus here is upon assessment as carried out by classroom teachers, teacher-centered assessment is not the only type of assessment that goes on in classrooms (Airasian 1994:6). Just as teachers constantly assess their learners, so too do learners constantly assess their teachers. It is thus important for teachers to look beyond their written lesson plan and to take the classroom as a learning society, which prizes the culture of learning and teachers as leaders of that society (Messick 1979:297).

The knowledge and skill-base of what teachers need to know and be able to do in recent years has been broadened and deepened over that expected in the past. In the past teachers strongly believed that assessment was only used for grading and promoting pupils to the next level. The modern understanding is that assessment should guide and

give directions for the teacher's instruction, and also give additional information about pupils' learning (Airasian 1994:138).

To demonstrate that the teacher's role with regard to assessment has been broadened and deepened, Jackson (1990b:84) points out that assessment should meet three main requirements:

- The behaviors pupils are expected to exhibit must be related to the teacher's educational objectives and instructional emphases;
- The exercises or questions included must provide a representative sample of the objectives and instructional emphases; and
- The assessment exercises, question, directions and scoring procedures must be clear, unambiguous and appropriate for the pupils.

Jackson (1990b:85) concludes that if these three characteristics are reflected in assessment procedures, the information gathered will provide a valid and reliable foundation from which the teacher can make a decision about a pupil's learning. The decisions that teachers reach through assessment should bring comfort and pleasure, which in turn instills the enjoyment of learning, because decisions that result from assessment influence learner's lives both in and out of school (Brigance and Hargis 1993:25).

Imrie (1995:175-189) points out that changing assessment practices is the most effective way of influencing the quality of student learning. It is clear that teachers have to practice assessment differently from what they used to do. They must now understand and come to grips with new theories of teaching and learning, which include inter-alia cognitive loading theory, social reconstruction theory and didactic constructivism. They must also be able to create a powerful learning environment. These aspects are discussed in detail below.

2.3.1 Cognitive loading theory.

This theory is more complex than verbal learning and intellectual learning. Kirschner (2002:3) states that cognitive loading theory assumes a limited working memory connected to unlimited long term-memory. As a result of this, instruction should be designed such that working memory is capable of processing the instruction. This suggests that teachers should be aware that cognitive architecture such as memory enables learners to connect and transfer skills, attitude and knowledge over an unlimited time span, which is a lifelong learning process.

Sweller, van Merriënboer and Paas (1998:251) divide cognitive architecture memory for learning into two types. The first is known as the short-term or working memory. This is thought to be the memory that learners use to organize, contrast, or compare the information. Working memory is seen not as one monolithic structure, but rather a system embodying at least two mode-specific components: a visuo-spatial sketchpad and a phonological loop co-ordinated by a central executive. The second type of memory is the long-term-memory. This is the repository for more permanent knowledge and skills, and includes all things in memory that are not currently being used but which are needed to understand. Most cognitive scientists believe that the storage of long-term-memory is unlimited and that it is a permanent record of everything that has been learned. They believe that the functioning of its content is initiated by working memory or short-term-memory (Sweller, van Merriënboer and Paas 1998:253).

Kirschner (2002:4) believes that human cognition thus places its primary emphasis on the ability to store seemingly unlimited amounts of information, including large, complex interactions and procedures, in long-term-memory. Human intellect is a consequence of this stored knowledge. As a result teachers must consider how this information is stored and organized in long-term-memory so that it is accessible when and where it is needed.

Teachers should therefore attempt to embody cognitive loading theory in their instructional design, and when assessing learners work. They could translate the following cognitive strategies to learners for the promotion of the culture of learning:

- how to remember;

- how to learn;

- how to interpret;

- how to solve problems.

This could empower learners to adopt the most effective approach for learning in various contexts, with the result that the culture of learning could be promoted.

2.3.2 Social Reconstructionist View

Teachers need to develop a positive perception about their professional activities in the classroom situation. They should be mindful of the social reconstructionist view. Robinson (2001a:108) explains that a social-reconstructionist orientation to teachers development could become closely linked (even conceptually integrated) with an orientation that stresses on teachers the need for personal development. This could assist teachers to have a profound influence on the culture of learning amongst learners. In Outcomes-based education (OBE) policies, teachers are expected to take full responsibility for careful planning and management of their learners work through continuous assessment. Therefore, to promote the culture of learning, teachers would be expected to become more involved in motivating and facilitating learners to be eager to learn (Paterson and Fataar, 2001:150).

Van der Horst and McDonald (1997:6) assert that the new Outcomes-based curriculum in South Africa is aimed at developing a thinking, problem-solving citizen who would be empowered to participate in the development of the country in an active and productive way. This calls upon teachers to provide education that will assist learners to be equipped with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to help them become active, valuable participants in creating a better country. Robinson (2001a:104) believes that this is typical of a social-reconstructionist view of schooling, where schooling is

regarded as a way to change and improve society. As a result schools would be expected to produce successful learners, with high self-esteem, who are motivated and willing to strive for further successes. Positive and constructive ongoing assessment on the part of the teacher is essential in this regard, for the benefit of the culture of learning.

This clearly shows that the social-reconstructionist view is geared towards producing good citizens through the education process; citizens who will take responsible positions in a society. This is also noted in Turnbull (2002:124) when he asserts that: "Social-reconstructionists aim at no less than a change in education, both nationally and locally; for people to think of themselves as active citizens, willing, and able and equipped to have an influence in public life and with critical capacities to weigh evidences before speaking and acting; to make them individually confident in finding new forms of involvement and action among themselves."

This view suggests that teachers should apply sound assessment practices in classrooms, that could result in producing active citizens who could participate in public life without fear and intimidation. Teachers and learners need to be involved at multiple levels, thinking together about significant and enduring solutions they might create, and helping those solutions to come about.

2.3.3 Didactic Constructivism

Von Glasersfeld (2002:171) asserts that the essential principles of didactic constructivism is that teaching should not begin with presentation of sacred truths, but rather by creating opportunities for making the students to think and learn. Furthermore, he states that the prerequisite of teaching is that teachers need to believe that students can think. He argues that assessment in teaching and learning situations should direct students' thinking in the didactic situation from time to time by neutral assessment questions. This is why Smith (2002:348) feels that it is not enough for teachers to be familiar with the program content, they must also have a range of didactic situations at their disposal in which the concept to be constructed can be implied.

This particular didactic method make it imperative to realize that, teaching is not only about presenting sacred knowledge to learners. Danner (1995) in Killen (2002:3) argues

that "learning is not only adding something to our knowledge". Killen (2002:3) believe that "It is a process of integrating new subject-matter into the learners' world of sense and meaning. In other words, learning is a process that leads to understanding". Therefore, teachers need to have appropriate methods to describe whatever is that they want students to understand, and apply appropriate assessment tools to measure that teaching and learning has been successful.

Von Glasersfeld (2002:170) explicitly explains this didactic constructivism in the following figure:

Figure 2.1. The example of steel balls (from Leonard and Garace 1996)
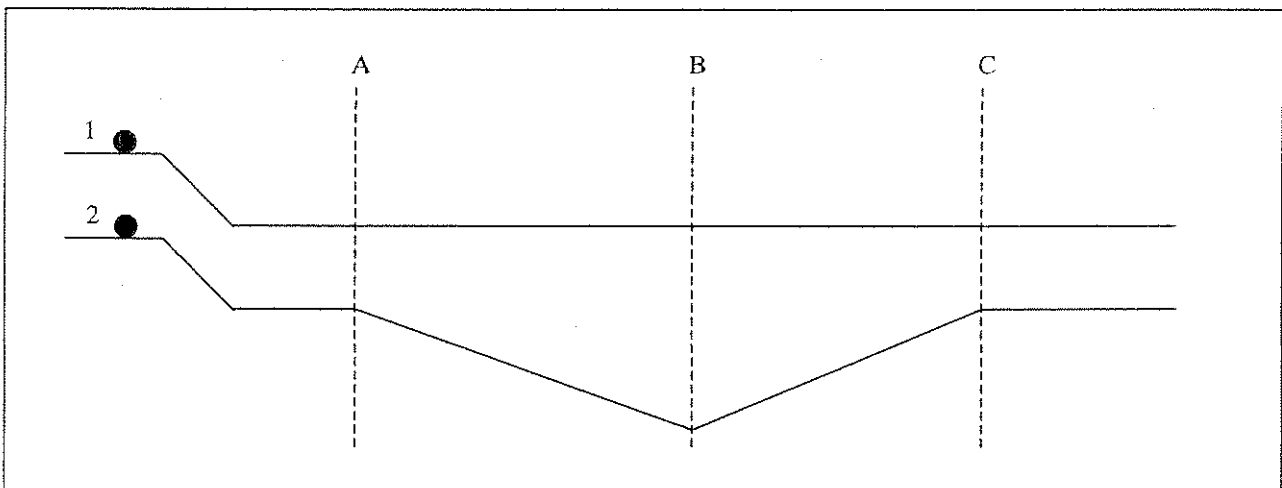

Figure 2.1 shows two tracks on which steel balls can roll almost without loss of energy through friction. The two tracks are not identical, but the starting point and the finish point are the same height in both cases. The question is, if two balls leave at the same time, which will reach the finish line first? Very seldom do learners answer that ball two will win the race. So there is a great surprise when the steel balls are rolled and, every time, ball two wins the race. Some students laugh and claim the apparatus has been rigged. They are assured that it has not, and are asked to describe as precisely as possible what happened.

At first it is not easy to get them to speak, but when they are told that it is not a test and that they should simply share their ideas with others, one or two of the students begin

the discussions and others gradually join in. Usually, they soon agree on the following description:

- Both balls arrive at point A at the same time at the same speed.

- The downhill slope from A to B enables ball two to accelerate and reach B before ball one.

- "Is ball 2 in the lead?" they are asked.

- "Yes at point B ball two is in the lead, but then it has to go uphill, which makes it lose its lead." Then they are asked:

- "And when ball two reaches point C is it going faster or more slowly than ball one?"

Such time to time questions in the teaching and learning situation lead to a longer discussion, but eventually learners become involved. This sparks motivation and interest in learning amongst learners in the classroom situation. Usually this interaction between teachers and learners promotes collective teaching and learning, with the result that the culture of learning is promoted. Killen (2002:3) asserts that this style of teaching and learning makes it obvious that teachers "should be interested in issues of quality rather than quantity of student learning.

For example, it changes teachers' focus from asking: "How many questions can a learner answer?" or "Which skill can a learner demonstrate?" to "How well does the learner answer questions?" and "How expertly can the learner demonstrate particular skills?" (See section 1.1). Imrie (1995:176) and Killen (2002:3) postulate the following regarding the implications of assessment in constructivism didactics;

- Understanding (rather than memorization)

- Creativity (rather than reproduction)

- Diversity (rather than conformity)

- Initiative (rather than compliance)

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- Challenge (rather than blind acceptance)

Killen (2002a:4) feels that this is an attempt to provide a framework of assessment theory that will ensure that assessment is an effective link between pedagogy and the quality of learning and performance.

2.3.4 The Creation Of A Powerful Learning Environment

According to Van der Horst and McDonald (1997:7), teachers are responsible for creating a powerful learning environment. This means that teachers need to create and control the conditions under which learners can succeed. Hence teachers are charged, against all odds, with the responsibility of creating learning environments that are inviting, challenging and motivating to improve the quality of learning in schools (Christie 2001:47). Such a positive school atmosphere would promote the culture of learning.

Such an environment must be characterized by an emphasis on active learning, where each learner is involved in the teaching and learning processes. This could be achieved if teachers could appreciate that each learner is unique and has his or her own way of learning at their own pace. The teacher also needs to have good records of what has been achieved and what is still to be done (Siebörger and Macintosh 1998:58). In this regard assessment should be used to help the learner, rather than provide a set of marks for the teachers. This would again promote culture of learning in schools.

The establishment of a positive and powerful learning environment goes hand in hand with the issue of school culture. School culture has been identified in the literature as a key element of institutional development. As such, it incorporates the schools vision, mission, aims, tasks and policies as well as the values and norms operating at the school (Robinson 2001a:106).

It can be deduced that, in schools with a positive culture, assessment would be one of the valued elements. Airasian (2001:6) feels that teachers should conduct an initial assessment early in the school year. The purpose of this is to learn about their pupils'

social, academic and behavioral characteristics and needs in order to foster and enhance instruction, communication and cooperation in the classroom. These assessments are called sizing-up assessments, and allow teachers to set-up and maintain an effective classroom society. Other assessment strategies should follow, which assist teachers to establish a positive learning environment. Such assessments are used to deliver instruction and include decisions about what should be taught, what materials used, how a lesson is progressing, and what changes in planned activities are needed. Of all these many functions of assessment, Airasian (2001:4) believes that the one purpose of assessment which could not be overlooked is that of assisting teachers to establish and maintain a powerful learning environment for the promotion of the culture of learning.

This shows that assessment can promote interaction between teachers and learners in the learning environment. The learning environment is like the space described by Ayers (1993:2) as follows: "The space is a visible container of human action". This quotation makes one think particularly about the space in which the teacher and learners interact in the course of performing learning activities in the classroom (Vakalisa 1998:179). Teachers in this situation are charged with the duty of managing these activities and the environment in which they occur. They are also particularly responsible for creating a climate of tolerance, respect and co-operation between themselves and learners, as well as among learners. These, according to Vakalisa (1998:180), are the typical responsibilities for signaling the creation of a positive learning environment by teachers.

Ornstein (1990:34) proposes the business-academic approach for teachers in order to keep a positive learning environment. He indicates that distraction and misbehavior of learners are the direct results of poorly planned lessons that are not presented with precision and proficiency. Therefore, he suggests that the main focus of teachers should be on keeping learners meaningfully engaged in the business of learning throughout class time. This can be done by orchestrating the classroom life as follows:

- Planning the curriculum

- Organizing procedures and resources

- Arranging the environment to maximize efficiency

- Monitoring students progress

- Anticipating problems

This shows that teachers need to have effective classroom management for effective teaching and maintenance of the powerful positive learning environment. To achieve this, Vakalisa (1998:180) is of the opinion that teachers will need more than the knowledge of the subject content and how to present it. Teachers will also need effective strategies to maintain order and keep alive the learners' motivation to learn. This could have a possible positive impact on the culture of learning in schools.

2.4 LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT ASSESSMENTS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE CULTURE OF LEARNING

The American National Commission on Excellence in Education (1993) proposes that: "teachers should bear in mind that assessing pupils should aim to provide pupils a fair opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned from the instruction provided" (Airasian, 1994:149). The purpose of assessment is not to trick learners into doing poorly, entertain them or ensure that most of them get "A" grades. It is also not only to determine how much total knowledge learners have accumulated as a result of all their learning experiences. It is simply a means of letting learners show what they have learned from the things they have been taught and experienced, so that each learner will be encouraged to seek a better means of learning.

Assessment thereof ensures that learners have been able to master the subject-content that they have learnt. Avenant (1990:246) emphasizes that the principle of mastery learning can be seen as comprising the steps a teacher should take to help his/her pupils to obtain a thorough understanding of the subject-matter, to be able to make deductions and value judgments about it, and remember it for a long time. Seen in this perspective, mastery learning will enable learners to know exactly what has been taught, and be able to memorize, apply convergent or divergent reasoning, generalize, extrapolate and make value judgments. Avenant (1990:247) again asserts that it may happen that a pupil understands the subject-matter, is very interested in it and finds it real and concrete, but

needs assistance in consolidating the work he/she has learnt. In such a case assessment, as a didactical practice, plays a vital role by indicating through its outcomes that the learner has mastered the subject-content. Consequently the learner's morale of learning will be boosted and the culture of learning will be positively influenced.

Assessment needs to be viewed by learners as a lever to promote the changes needed in their learning. Mitchell (1992:21) comments that learning does not mean memorizing facts or algorithms; it means the ability to use them appropriately by weighing conflicting values, arguing with reasoned propositions, selecting facts, using evidence, and thinking clearly. If learners are to increase their ability in these areas, both learners and teachers need constant feedback in the form of assessment. Thus assessment becomes part of both teaching and learning.

Most tests do not provide real help to learners, since they have the wrong focus of labeling and ranking. Brigance and Hargis (1993:24) point out that we need authentic assessment, which concerns itself with what learners have actually learned. It should be a dynamic, substantive form of assessment that will be used to ensure that learners succeed. The success of learners is undoubtedly one major factor that contributes to the learning culture. According to Masitsa (1995:391), large amounts of instruction and high learner ability count little if learners are not successful. Regular assessment, followed by prompt feedback, motivates learners because it enables them to know how they are performing and to make time for improvement. It must be a form of assessment with an active ingredient, to enhance the learner's zeal and zest to learn successfully.

Learners need not perceive assessment as an instrument used by teachers to track them down, or as an instrument which perpetuates inequality in learning. Instead it should be seen as an acknowledgement of the totality of what learners have done in order to improve their learning culture and help teachers identify their needs more closely (Hargreaves, 1989:116). Recognition of a learner's achievement in any sphere at school has a tremendous influence on enhancing the culture of learning.

Assessment will also gives teachers an opportunity to allow learners who make mistakes ample chance to re-learn and correct errors, helping them to feel motivated and comfortable to take intellectual risks without fear of being criticized or reprimanded.

Salvia and Ysseldyke (1995:29) also believe that when learners have received appropriate instruction, but are still experiencing academic problems, teachers usually use assessment in order to document the nature of the problem (that is, identify specific strengths and weaknesses) and to generate hypotheses about the problem's likely cause.

Sutton (1992:53) points out that if assessment information and objectives are well shared between learners and teachers, the learners themselves can increasingly involve themselves in monitoring their own progress and assume responsibility for providing their own feedback. According to Angelo and Cross (1993:24) learners will learn independence from others (teachers) for knowledge of how well they are doing, and be encouraged to recognize and realize rules and strategies, whereby they may test the validity of their own responses. This would be a step towards self-assessment that will support and establish a culture of learning among learners.

2.5 SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT ASSESSMENT AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE CULTURE OF LEARNING

The principal is responsible for the administration, organization and control of everything connected with the school. Owing to the vastness of the school and the comprehensiveness of the functions he/she has to perform, he/she is compelled to delegate certain tasks and responsibilities to Heads of Departments and teachers. He/she nevertheless bears full responsibility and accountability for everything that happens in his/her school (Masitsa 1995:29).

School as a teaching and learning organization should be conflict-free. Chisholm and Vally (1996:30-36) contend that a relationship of interdependency based on trust and respect should be encouraged between principals, Heads of Department, teachers and learners. Assessment of learners' work has an impact on the daily functioning of all these people, and it has a direct effect on the culture of learning in all schools.

School administrators need to view their position as the lever to foster staff collaboration. They should emphasize teamwork and promote co-operation,

cohesiveness, communication, commitment, loyalty, trust and identification with the school. Teachers can give their support by being on good terms with one another, supporting the principal and by being enthusiastic about their work. In this way teachers could concentrate more on their work and regard it as a priority and shared responsibility. This can also contribute towards a positive culture of learning.

Research (Stiggins and Conklin 1992:31) indicates that assessment involves shared decision making amongst teachers at school. Principals who share decisions with teachers enrich their own ideas about assessment, provide opportunities for teachers to develop assessment qualities and can easily count on the teachers' support. Masitsa (1995:386) maintains that teachers of such schools feel good about themselves and are often highly motivated to do their work. When decisions are shared, school learners are more likely to accept the results of assessment, and this could increase their co-operation towards the attainment of the culture of learning.

It has been found that the maintenance of high academic standards at school has a positive effect on the establishment of a learning culture. The school's prosperity depends on a spirit of high expectations and a focus on excellence. Consequently, the school should set and maintain high but realistic assessment standards if it is to foster a work ethic among its learners and teachers. Principals should explain the value of a high standard of assessment to learners. Teachers should show learners that they have confidence in their ability to achieve academically. Walter, Dlugosh, Anderson and Simmons (1995:179) urge principals to move away from the traditional time-based school system, where learners race the calendar to complete work in a variety of subjects. Rather, they should emphasize excellent levels of performance for all learners by providing multiple opportunities for learners to demonstrate competencies through assessment results.

The introduction of OBE in South Africa by means of curriculum 2005 is a more formidable undertaking than was originally envisaged (Green 2001:129). As a consequence of this, principals are be expected to develop a culture of motivating teachers to develop professionally. This suggests that principals should take into account the individual lives and identities of the teachers who have to understand and implement

Curriculum 2005 and its assessment strategies, for the promotion of the culture of learning in schools.

In order to ensure the implementation of Curriculum 2005, principals have to understand the four basic principles underlying the management of the assessment processes (Educator Development Manual of the Department of Education of South Africa 2001:18). The first principle is that of design down. This principle dictates that the outcomes to be addressed through teaching and learning are first clearly stated before developing the teaching and learning activities the learner will be engaged in. The second principle is clarity of focus. This implies that teachers must ensure that learners are clear about the criteria against which they are to be assessed and therefore what they are expected to demonstrate. The third principle is high expectations, which implies that educators must assist learners to reach their full potential. The fourth and final principle is expanded opportunities. This means that educators must find multiple ways of exposing learners to learning opportunities that will help learners to demonstrate their full potential in terms of knowledge, skills, values and attitude (Spady 1994a:15-36).

Spady (1994a:6) also emphasizes that time in an Outcomes-based system is used as an alterable resource, depending on the needs of teachers and students. Within reasonable constraints, time is manipulated to the best advantage of all learners – some learners learn some parts of the curriculum sooner, while others accomplish those parts later.

Learners are likely to work better if taught and assessed in an environment of confidence that they can and will succeed. The school should have a well-structured and effective evaluation programme spanning the entire year so as to be able to assess the learner's performance.

To guarantee that assessment contributes to the culture of learning, principals need to apply there four principle very consistently, systematically and creatively in managing assessment processes. Working on these principles, principals could strengthen the conditions, enabling learners and teachers to be successful so the culture of learning would be promoted in schools. This is why Fullan (1995:232) points out that principals and teachers need time for reform as well as time to come to grips with the new

assessment system. Such assessment principals define the expected results of schooling based on current and future life-roles and requirements.

The creation of a positive school atmosphere has been found to have a tremendous effect on the establishment of a learning culture. This is so because in such an atmosphere teaching and learning enjoy maximum support (Masitsa, 1995:388). In this study, objective 2 states that assessment will be taken as an integral part of teaching and learning (see section 1.6). Hence principals and teachers will have to create such an atmosphere for assessment, which will ensure that learners honor and value assessment as a mechanism that evaluates adequately what they have learned.

Principals should watch out for things that can collectively erode assessment time. Walter, et al. (1995:183) assert that the effective management of time can greatly assist in minimizing distractions. Assessment is one of the major resources available to learners for improving their academic achievement. Consequently sufficient time must be allocated to assessment, so that learners and teachers spend enough time on assessing the work they have done. Teachers also need time to evaluate the performances of their learners. On the other hand, learners need more time to spend on their learning work in order to learn more. Again teachers need more time to give feedbacks to learners about their assessment. Parents too need time to discuss the academic performances of their children with teachers and principals. This indicates that the more time allocated to assessment, the more time will be allocated to the promotion of culture of learning.

2.6 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT WITH ASSESSMENT AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE CULTURE OF LEARNING

In this study assessment is regarded as a factor which can contribute to the establishment of the culture of learning in schools. The approach to learner's work assessment described so far may have given the impression that assessment is something done by teachers to learners only. However Ryna (1994:43-44) indicates that parents are now being invited to take part in assessing their child's growth and progress. If parents take

a more active role in assessment they will naturally become more involved in their child's schoolwork and in this way help to promote the culture of learning.

Mitchell and Koshy (1993:53) argue that it is sensible to focus upon teachers; it is their role and professional responsibility to develop the skills of assessment. However, involving parents completes the assessment circle, because parents, learners and teachers are all included in the education of the child. Therefore a positive relationship between teachers and parents needs to be created, to ensure that parents are informed about what happens at school, and they are made aware of the value of assessment towards attaining the culture of learning.

Johnson (1992:75) is of the opinion that records of assessment have to involve parents because this provides the opportunity for parents to become familiar with the kinds of activity and learning experiences offered to their children. Studies indicate that such recording of assessment need to be very concrete because it demystifies classroom life (Mitchell and Koshy, 1993:64). This enables parents to provide purposeful support to the teacher's work and helps to stimulate the psycho-social aspects of the child's academic development.

Researchers such as Hill and Ruptic (1994:67) agree that if teachers involve parents in assessment, parents can provide teachers with additional information as to what learners know, understand and can do. They could also provide support at home in the areas which have been identified as lacking or needing encouragement. Parents would encourage their children to do their best at school, making them aware of the value of education. They can support teachers in their efforts to promote the culture of learning through assessment. Parental support for the child is also good for his/her social and emotional development.

Ryna (1994:46) states that traditionally parents have been left out of the assessment process. This is unfortunate because parents are in a unique position to provide teachers with certain information that would otherwise be inaccessible. The key is to work along with the parents collaboratively in discussing progress and making future plans. Keel (1994:83) also advocates that parents, whatever their educational status, be brought on board the assessment process and acquire an understanding of the issues that underlie

assessment. Teachers are then able to ask the parents to monitor certain behaviors and attitudes at home that could be affecting school performance.

Educational literature (Seely 1994:3) has shown that, in recent years, one form of alternative assessment has come to the forefront in discussions addressing assessment practices. This is the concept of portfolios assessment; the same concept has expanded to the educational setting. In the classroom portfolios are constructed to represent a student's abilities in various areas. With a portfolio as evidence of the learning process, it is possible to understand the path of growth and development a learner has followed over a certain period of time. According to Seely (1994:26), the contents of a portfolio are more informative than a single abstract grade. This suggests that parents could be empowered to assess the portfolio performance of their children. The portfolio is a collection of the learner's performance and work; it therefore demonstrates to parents that the learning process has taken place.

Parents are interested in knowing how well their own children are performing. Through portfolios and jointly constructed conferences parents are able to understand their child's progress more completely. This will enhance learning and promote a learning culture.

The principle of clarity of focus, as discussed in Section 2.5 (par 7), is particularly relevant if parents are to be involved in the assessment process. As noted by Seely (1994:27), it is important to remember that parents may be unaccustomed to the new perspectives of learning and assessment practices. It is critical therefore that teachers need to invest some time explaining, modeling and sharing the outcomes with parents. As parents become comfortable with assessment practice, they will be able to offer their own perspectives and interpretations, thereby adding to the richness of the culture of learning.

Parents, however, may not be accustomed to assessment. It will be up to teachers to create an environment in which parents feel comfortable and non-threatened. Keel (1994:84) and Hill and Ruptic (1994:73) state that parents are children's first teachers, so if they are given the opportunity to assess their children's learning they will become more aware of what to observe and how their children learn. If parents are involved in their child's assessment on a continual basis, this will send a message to the child to take

assessment seriously. When children see that their parents regard assessment as important they will also regard it important. This will have a tremendous influence on the culture of learning, since parents will now be in a position to offer information about assessment, rather than just receive it (Anthony, Johnson, Mickelon and Preece, 1991: 38).

2.7   SYNTHESIS

This chapter has shed light on how assessment of learner's work can be used as mechanism to motivate teachers, parents and learners to promote the culture of learning in schools.

Section 2.2 dealt with motivational issues – how assessment could be used to motivate teachers and learners and by so doing contribute to the culture of learning. This section showed that when teachers collaborate with and care for their learners, they motivate them to build on their strengths and talents, to learn intellectually, and achieve multiple outcomes of assessment and learning. Motivation of learners is undoubtedly one of the major factors that contribute to the culture of learning.

Section 2.3 focused on how teachers' perceptions towards assessment can influence the culture of learning. This revealed that teachers should promote a learning society in the classroom by not perceiving assessment as an instrument for ranking learners into those who "can" and those who "cannot". Teachers should perceive assessment as a means to empower them to modify and determine effective future instructional techniques. If teachers could view assessment in this light, they would make a tremendous contribution towards a positive culture of learning.

Section 2.4 discussed how learners' perceptions to assessment impact on the culture of learning. This showed that learners need not regard assessment as a trick of letting them perform poorly nor as a means of entertaining them to get "A" grades. Rather, they should see assessment as a means to ensure that they can demonstrate what they have learned successfully. It will also help to identify learning areas that warrant re-learning

until they are mastered well. Assessment should therefore be viewed by learners as an educational endeavor which will brew success and so enhance the love of learning.

Section 2.5 focused on the role of the principal in relation to assessment and the culture of learning. It was found that although principals are responsible for delegating duties to other teaching personnel, they also have a professional responsibility of sharing decisions with regard to the assessment of learner's work. The reason for this is that the results of assessment demonstrate the multiple opportunities provided by the school and also define the expected results of schooling and teaching.

Section 2.6 examined the potential role of parents. It was shown that assessment need not only be a joint venture between teachers and learners; it must also include and involve parents. Teachers must therefore go beyond one-way distributing of assessment results to parents. Parents need to be more informed and involved in the assessment process so that they are able to discuss their children's progress with teachers. When children realize that their parents are more involved with their assessment they will regard it as important. This will help to maintain the culture of learning in schools.

In conclusion, it can be argued that authentic assessment will motivate learners to learn, teachers to teach, and school administrators or principals to create a trustworthy, decision-sharing atmosphere for assessment to be used as a tool for promoting a learning culture. Parents need to become actively involved with assessment processes so that they accept the results thereof as a true reflection of their children's performance in order to maintain a high culture of learning.

The following chapters investigate varieties of assessment strategies and approaches, and their sphere of influence on the culture of learning.