



CHAPTER 3

THE NATURE AND TYPES OF TRADITIONAL ASSESSMENT AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE CULTURE OF LEARNING.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter highlighted the role that assessment could play in influencing the culture of learning in schools. It became clear that the nature and type of assessment had a major impact in this regard. This chapter and the next (chapter 4) examine this aspect in greater detail.

In terms of assessment a distinction can be made between the “traditional” assessments conducted in the past, and the “new” types of assessment that have developed in relation to the Outcomes-based Education approach. This chapter firstly contrasts the two approaches, and then presents a detailed discussion of the nature and types of “traditional” assessment methods and their influence on the culture of learning in schools. An attempt is made to explore various categories of traditional assessment methods, and their implications in improving and developing the culture of schools. An in-depth analysis of Outcomes-based assessment follows in Chapter 4.

3.2 AN OVERVIEW OF TRADITIONAL VERSUS OUTCOMES-BASED ASSESSMENT APPROACHES

Diagrams 3.1 and 3.2 illustrate and contrast the traditional education practices of evaluation and OBE assessment practices respectively. It should be noted however that



Diagram 3.1 is not a true reflection of what has been accomplished in some South African schools in the past. For instance, Christie (2001:43) argues that many excellent teachers have employed methods purported to be typical of an Outcomes-based approach for years. These are teachers who have placed a higher priority on learners' participation and have encouraged learners to think and solve problems. Although the old curriculum was content-driven, such teachers managed to guide learners to a deep understanding and appreciation of their subjects in order to generate interest in learning.

The diagrams emphasize the differences in the two approaches. Traditional product-driven evaluation (Diagram 3.1) had a minimum influence on motivating learners to have a continuous and positive attitude toward learning. This approach did not consider developing traits of learning such as mastery learning, skills development, and appreciation of values and knowledge to be used for future learning. This approach was primarily a teacher-centered method of evaluation (Van der Horst and McDonald 1997:17).

In contrast, the OBE assessment approach (Diagram 3.2) applies a variety of assessment practices that are aimed at helping every learner to actualize his or her potential. This approach is thus both teacher-centered and learner-centered (Taylor and Vinjevold 1999:103).

Diagram 3.1. Traditional Evaluation Practices (Source: Report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005, 31 May 2000)

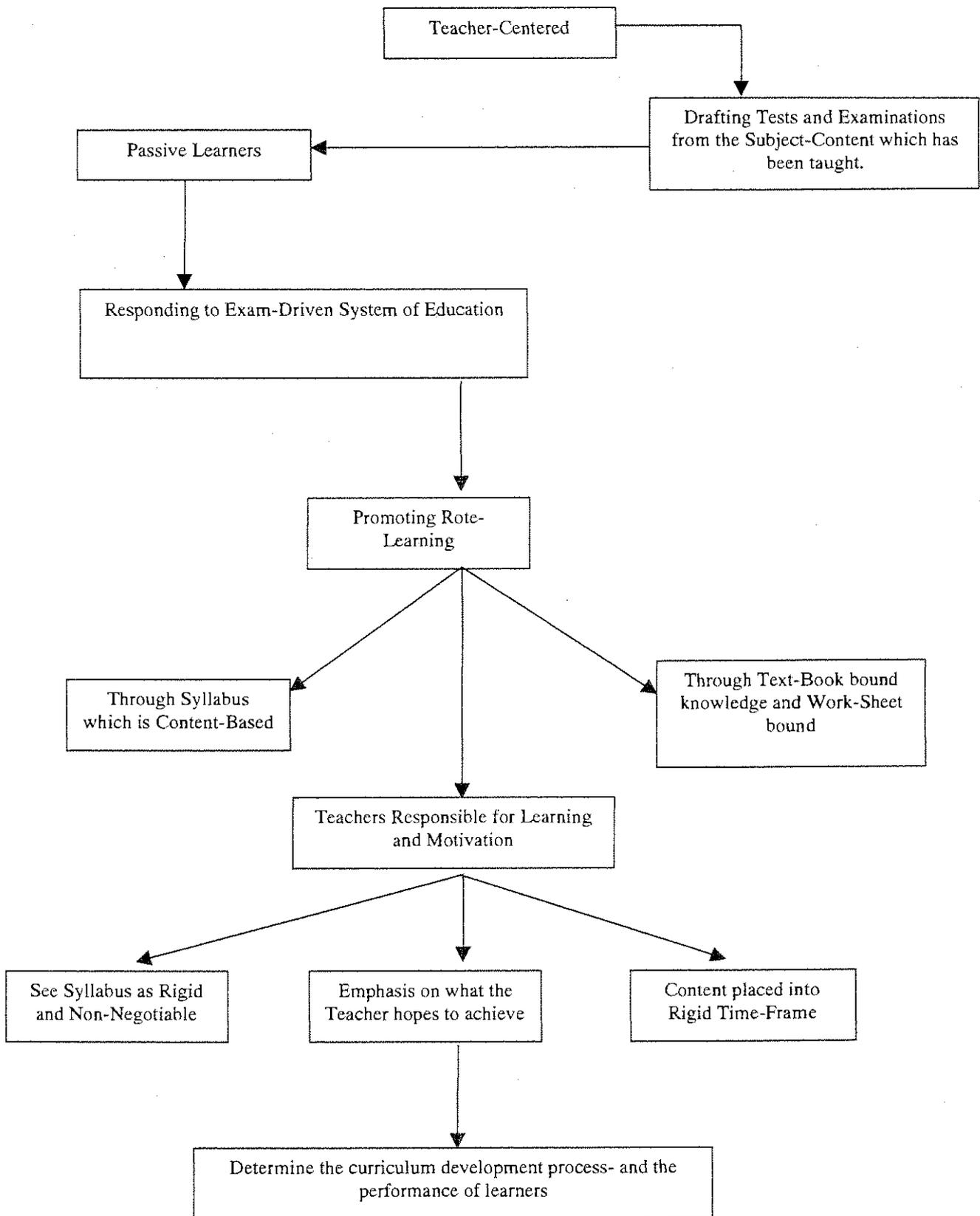
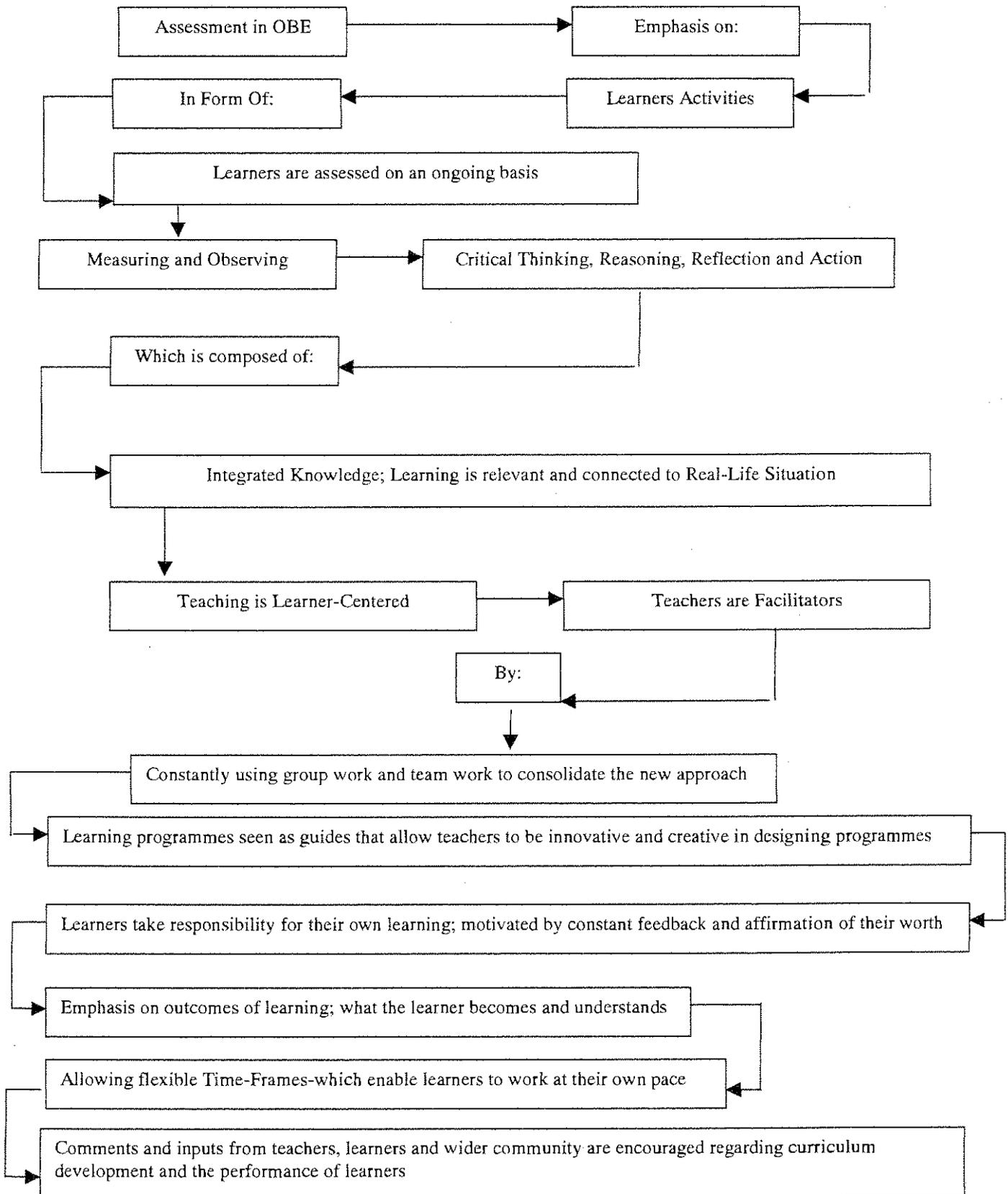


Diagram 3.2. Outcomes Based Assessment Practices (Source: Report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005, 31 May 2000)



Teachers have been involved in assessing and evaluating the work and progress of learners throughout history. A wide range of techniques and approaches has been used. These include homework exercises, class tests, formal examinations, assignments, talking to parents, and discussion in the staff room. Piek (1986: 66) argues that teachers were responsible for drafting tests and examinations questions in order to determine what pupils know. It was also necessary to distribute questions evenly over the subject matter (see diagram 3.1). Furthermore, approximately half of the questions were aimed at the average child, while there were some questions that could be answered by the less gifted and some that were aimed mainly at the more gifted. Such techniques and approaches of assessment were used with an aim to ensure that learners obtain scores or achieve a certain degree of success in relation to the content of the subjects they had been taught.

Taylor and Vinjevoold (1999:108) are of the opinion that this type of assessment focused on specific learning content and texts. The mode of assessment was based on deficits, i.e. what learners do not possess in terms of specific knowledge and skills and well-defined criteria of right and wrong. Consequently the culture of learning was not well established, because of the specific prescribed path of achieving learning outcomes.

The traditional system of assessment thus only concentrated on evaluating learners mainly to control the end-of-year examinations. Rensberg (The Citizen, 4th November 1998) states that this old system was judgmental and did not cater adequately for the development of learners. This resulted in high repetition rates, low participation and a high dropout rate. This type of assessment mainly judged reading skills and comprehensive skill, as these played a role in allowing learners to interpret the questions effectively in order and yield the correct answers and examples. The memoranda did not allow for deviation from the set answers, so that there was very little room for flexibility or creativity. Thus learner's assessment evaluated writing skills, examination techniques and memory rather than the actual performance of a task that had been taught and learned. This resulted in a low morale regarding the culture of learning. Seemingly learners were assessed in order to be promoted to the next grade. If learners did not meet the requirements of tests or examinations, they were forced to repeat the whole year (Liebenberg, 1998:1).

Nevertheless, Willis and Kissane (1997:5) point out that over the recent decade a considerable number of education systems around the world have undertaken a new assessment approach. Student outcomes are described quite explicitly in terms of the actual learning the student should exhibit as a result of the planned learning experience in the school. Also, accountability mechanisms have been put in place that directly reflect student performance on those outcomes (see diagram 3.2). Such programs are often referred to as Outcomes-based education. Spady (1994a:1) defines Outcomes-based education as follows: “Outcomes-based education means clearly focusing and organizing everything in an educational system around what is essential for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experiences. This means starting with a clear picture of what is important for learners to be able to do, then organizing curriculum, instruction and assessment to make sure that this learning ultimately happens”. The nature and types of assessment of the new Outcomes-based Education approach focuses on the achievement of clearly defined outcomes, rather than teachers and education practitioners input in terms of syllabus content. Inasmuch, it is not the same as, for example, their score or degree of success with respect to the content of the subject they have taken (Helsby and Saunders (1993) in Willis and Kissane (1997: 2)).

According to Spady (1994a:1), the key element of assessment in Outcomes-based Education is the development of a clear set of learning outcomes around all system components. This establishes the conditions and opportunities within the system that enable and encourage all learners to achieve the essential outcomes. Such an approach of assessment will have a powerful influence on the culture of learning.

The balance of this chapter focuses on traditional assessment practices. A detailed review of Outcomes-based assessment will be covered in the following chapter, chapter 4.

3.3 THE NATURE AND TYPES OF TRADITIONAL ASSESSMENTS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE CULTURE OF LEARNING

Forster (1991, 34-35) comments as follows: “Historically and traditionally, all children were not expected to master the entire curriculum. Universal education means universal opportunity, not universal achievement. Schools were expected to sift and sort out the unmotivated and poor performing students in favour of those with some promise of academic excellence. In fact, the academic failure of a certain percentage of students was expected. An outcome different from that was often interpreted as indicating a lack of academic vigour”.

Traditional assessment had as its principal objective the sifting and sorting of learners for different status, as discussed in section 1.4. Assessment was basically used to assess knowledge as provided by the textbook. According to Van der Horst and McDonald (1997: 32), “traditional assessment required learners to master skills and competencies of verbal information; this enabled learners to communicate factual information even at the lowest levels of understanding of that information”. Another emphasis was on the simplest intellectual skills and competencies of discriminating or distinguishing between two or more things. Learners were therefore not assessed to become independent and self-directed. Such assessment did not allow them to develop cognitive strategies of learning;: how to learn, how to remember, how to interpret, how to solve problems and how to assess their own learning (Van der Horst and McDonald 1997: 35). The successful learners were those who demonstrated that they had acquired skills and competencies of recalling information and distinguishing between objects. Those who failed to demonstrate these skills and competencies were regarded as failures.

Williams, Lederman and Tancredo (in Bloom 1987:17) state that in traditional education, schools designed a curriculum and presented the information and facts in classes, which students must assimilate. When students completed the prescribed instruction in each subject, they took a test or examination to assess if they had mastered the knowledge of the particular subjects. Traditional assessment therefore appears only to have assessed the knowledge or content of a subject in isolation. Spady (1994a:55) is

of the opinion that knowledge or content by itself is not an outcome, but an enabling instructional objective. Hence he suggests that content, competence and confidence should be integrated so that learners can perform successfully when placed in a performance situation, both within and outside the classroom. Nonetheless, traditional education assessed content or knowledge, believing that this was the basis for a lifetime of learning, and that it provided the foundations to develop the skills necessary for a career (William, et al in Bloom 1987:18).

It was believed that assessment should motivate learners to learn through test scores, examination results, assignments, etc. Herman, Aschbacher and Winter (1992:95) assert that, traditionally, assessment provided information for decision-making about what students had learned, what grades they deserved, whether students should pass on to the next grade, what groups they should be assigned to, what help they needed, what areas of instruction needed revamping, where school curricula needed bolstering, and so forth. They also believe that good assessment enables teachers to accurately characterize a learner's functioning and performance, and helps the teachers to make sound decisions that will improve the standard of education.

The formal instruments of this assessment approach were therefore paper-and-pencil tests, examinations and assignments; these were scored by teachers who assigned grades to learners based on the learner's performance. Airasian (1989:5) believes that these helped teachers to understand their pupils, monitor their learning and establish a viable classroom culture of learning.

According to Tiley (1997:12) the following factors underpinned traditional assessment:

- The emphasis was on what the teacher teaches (content)
- To check and evaluate transmitted knowledge to learners by teachers
- To measure whether teachers take the responsibility for learning and teaching
- Assessment is done at the end of a section of work
- Tests and examinations are used to compare, place and grade learners
- Learning is divided into fixed subjects and fixed periods of time

- The emphasis is on competition and comparison of learners

The following sub-sections discuss different categories of traditional assessment and how these relate to the above-mentioned factors.

3.3.1 Evaluation And Measurement Of Learner's Work In Traditional Practice

In traditional education, assessment and measurement were used for the common goal of scoring or grading a learner's work. On the contrary, evaluation was used to interpret what had been measured and assessed. According to Malan (1997:60), when teachers design either assessment tasks, measurement tasks or evaluation tasks, they will think only of scores and grades. Van der Horst and McDonald (1997:169) also confirm that in most cases these concepts have been used interchangeably.

Although these concepts were used synonymously, they represented different processes. For example Cangelosi (1991:4) defines evaluation as: "a judgment about quality, value, effectiveness or impact of something." Malan (1997:27) defines measurement as "the determination of a norm (or standard) which candidates are expected to achieve in a test or examination. Candidate's marks are then measured against this norm to determine good, average, or poor. Van der Horst and McDonald (1997:170) argue that assessment is a strategy for measuring knowledge, behavior or performance, value, or attitude. It is a data-gathering strategy. Notwithstanding the contextual variations of these concepts, traditionalist were very much obsessed in believing that numerical scores should be used to evaluate learner's performance; these would be regarded a assessment results. It was believed that this would motivate learners to achieve more.

On the other hand, evaluation is the process of subjective appreciation with the specific aim of determining a person's worth in the light of evidence gathered by measuring and observation (Avenant 1990:217). The factor that comes into play in such assessment is that teachers want to ensure that what has been taught to their learners has been well transmitted, and that pupils had received all curriculum activities; this was for the benefit of the teacher's self-worth. When teachers discover through evaluations and

measurement that their learners have not yet acquired the specific knowledge, the teacher realizes that his/her teaching has failed. He/she will then look for reasons for his/her failure and plan a programme of re-learning. Therefore it can rightly be asserted that evaluation is the point of departure and not the ultimate goal of teaching.

This idea is supported by Cohen and Manion (1983:243) when they state that evaluation underpins (and precedes) the teacher's development of curriculum activities, his selection of specific objectives in his day-to-day lesson planning, and his choice of materials and methods by which to judge the progress of his pupils.

Measurement and evaluation will determine whether the teacher has succeeded in his/her goal - that all learners have understood the subject matter. It will show whether there are a few in the class who still do not understand the work, and if so, which section of the work must be re-explained. This indicates that such an assessment is meant only for teachers to reach the objectives that they have set when planning for teaching. It does not support and allow learners to develop a range of abilities and learning styles, so that they would be motivated to learn and quest for more knowledge.

Avenant (1990:219) asserts that evaluation and measurement helps teachers to determine if their methods and techniques of presentation and their general class organization have been successful. In this respect assessment through evaluation and measurement can be regarded as a teacher's compass that he/she constantly consults to determine whether he/she is going in the right direction of reaching and realizing his teaching objectives and goals. What matters most is to enable the learners to score better in the subjects that have been taught. Seemingly the use of evaluation and measurement by teachers never inculcated and promoted the spirit of continuing to achieve, which could result in extrapolation, generalization and to convergent or divergent reasoning (as stated in section 2.4). This would have undermined the culture of learning in schools.

3.3.2 The Classroom As An Assessment Environment In Traditional Practice

Traditionally the learning environment is a place where teachers are expected to teach and learners are expected to learn. Although, teachers are invested with greater responsibility of ensuring that the process of learning does take place in the learning

environment. Due to this, Taylor and Vinjevold (1999:186) indicate that assessment in the learning environment should enable teachers to monitor both the progress of student learning and also of their teaching. Hence the primary purpose of assessment should be diagnostic and formative; it should identify specific strengths and weaknesses with respect to the products and processes of teaching and learning. The focus would be to improve teaching practices and learning outcomes for the benefit of the culture of learning.

However, according to Taylor and Vinjevold (1999:134), assessment in the learning environment in the traditional paradigm is generally described in terms of teacher-centredness, pupil passivity and rote learning. Teachers ask questions to check whether pupils are listening to the lesson rather than to elicit more challenging responses from pupils. Such assessment tasks are generally oriented towards the acquisition of information rather than training high cognitive skills; these could influence learners to appreciate learning and so improve the culture of learning..

According to Everston and Randolph (in McCown, Driscoll and Roop 1996:72) this is an environment where teachers clearly demonstrate whether they value the production of their teaching or mastery of learning by learners. They suggest that in traditional classrooms, teachers tend to devalue learning - learners are regarded as “labourers” where they learn in exchange for marks, privileges or some other incentive. Teachers become “bosses” or “paymasters” who focus on work and not on what might be the outcomes of learning. This has resulted in a situation whereby teachers give direction to learning and teaching. The learning environment becomes an assessment of the teachers’ instruction – where learners need to follow directions closely. In this way teachers will complete the work efficiently (Arasian 1989:125). This is in contrast to allowing a free flow of teaching, learning and assessment processes, where learners are encouraged to question directions and to explore possibilities in order to instill an interest in learning for the benefit of the culture of learning.

It appears that teachers must constantly assess the progress and success of their instruction so that they can modify it if necessary. Doyle (1986:392) notes that, in most didactical situations, teachers assess the quality of pupil’s answer to questions in order to determine the extent to which the planned activities are succeeding. On this basis, the

teacher makes a decision about how instruction is going. If the teacher decides that the lesson is progressing satisfactorily, he/she continues teaching as planned. If the teacher senses a problem such as a lack of learner's understanding or uncertainty, then he/she will revise the planned instructional activity to alleviate the problem and initiate another teaching activity or strategy. This cycle is repeated many times in the course of a single lesson, so that the teacher should succeed in teaching the planned content. Such a classroom assessment shows that teachers strive to ensure that pupils attain their defined teaching objectives. Spady (1994a:33) points out that the teacher's role is to be sure that the content for each curriculum segment is covered or presented to each class within the calendar-defined constraints of the system. This pressure to cover an expanding body of content within the same time structure that existed a century ago leaves teachers in a no-win situation. Superficial coverage ensures superficial learning, while in-depth treatment leads to missing content. Learners lose out either way, and the culture of learning is negatively affected.

As discussed previously (section 2.2), the existence of collaboration between learners and teachers empowers learners to participate in the learning situation and teachers to build on the strengths and talents of their learners. In the situations of assessment described above such collaboration becomes defeated - as a result the culture of learning will also be defeated.

Whenever teachers use the classroom as an assessment environment for their teaching content, they inescapably develop a self-fulfilling mechanism by which the teacher comes to hold certain expectations about the students which the teachers had initially assumed (Rist in Kallaway 1986:292). According to Airasian (1989:131), it is natural in such circumstances for teachers to identify a smaller sub-group of pupils who are then used as a barometer of the interest and understanding of the class as a whole. It is obviously difficult to monitor a huge number of pupils simultaneously during instruction. As a result, the sub-group (though not necessarily the lowest pupils) serves to help the teacher gauge the comprehension of his/her expectations. If the sub-group keeps up and appears to comprehend what is going on in the lesson, the teacher is reassured about the pace and complexity of instruction. This approach will not help all learners to learn successfully, which will again have a negative impact on the culture of learning.



Spady (1994a:34) also criticized this approach of assessment. He alludes that well-meaning educators and policymakers decided a century ago that teachers should only have a limited supply of good grades to dispense because standards of excellence are inherently relative and comparative. This view is supported by Jansen (in Nkomo 1990:333) who feels that a central reason for this phenomenon is the fact that curricular and instructional decisions are entirely outside the control of the teacher, resting in the hands of departmental bureaucrats and government officials. This, by definition, forces teachers to dispense good grades to those learners who do relatively well, while those learners who are in need of intensive assessment are relegated to lower achievers. Seen in this light, the emphasis of assessment lies squarely on the competition and comparison of pupils (Tiley 1997:12). Subsequently these would have an undesirable effect on the culture of learning. In order for assessment to promote the culture of learning, it should give maximum opportunities to all learners so that all learners can and will learn in order to achieve the desired outcomes of learning.

Airasian (1989:125) indicates that the traditional classroom assessment approach placed a greater emphasis on teachers to succeed with their planned teaching instructions. Such an approach usually results in teaching without learning, because teachers in this situation assume that their learners are learning what they are trying to teach them. On the contrary, when tests (in the form of assessment) are conducted teachers generally obtain disappointing results; they often notice considerable gaps between what has been taught and what has been learned. By the time teachers notice these gaps in knowledge or understanding, it is frequently too late to remedy the problems. As a result both the culture of learning and teaching become adversely affected. It seems that assessment in traditional practice was an isolated activity from the teaching and learning processes. Wiggins (1998:73) feels that the ineffectiveness and inefficiencies in teaching and learning were issues that were usually considered long after the learning and teaching processes were completed.

3.3.3 Summative And Formative Assessment In Traditional Practice

It is generally held that one of the main purposes of assessment is to provide information to help people make decisions, as referred to in section 3.3. DesForges (1990:3) points out that pupils, teachers, parents, employers and local and national policy-makers all want educational judgment, which are the results of assessment. Pupils need to know what progress they are making and what their strengths, weaknesses or special abilities are. This information helps them to decide on where to concentrate their effort in, for example, revising for examinations or considering possible careers.

Teachers also need to know about which parts of the curriculum are generally going down well or proving difficult. Parents also have a keen interest in their children's progress - schools would thus be expected to show parents evidence of their success in this respect. This would help parents to motivate their children for the benefit of the culture of learning in schools.

Local and national education officers are responsible to ensure that their respective policies are enacted and that standards are being maintained or enhanced. They will therefore need information on learner's achievements to ensure that the system is working properly. This will again support the culture of learning in schools.

As a result of the above, teachers have a responsibility to regularly use formative and summative assessment to convince parents, pupils and policy-makers that the education system works properly. This will help them to support and motivate learners to learn, and to convince these co-partners of education that learning is taking place.

Satterly (1989:6) highlights the positive effects of formative assessment during lessons. Formative assessment involves the gathering of information through classroom observation, and is used mainly to guide the teacher's interactions with pupils during both instructional and non-instructional classroom encounters. Airasian (1994: 135) states that teachers use these observations to make moment-to-moment decisions about how to solve specific pupil's problems, how to control the class, what to do next in a

lesson, and how to gauge the pupils' reactions to instructions. In other words, everyday classroom work gives continuous clues to the teacher on ways to support a learner's learning. Such an assessment raises the quality of teaching and learning by guiding both the learners and teachers to the next step forward. This has a tremendous influence on the culture of learning.

Airasian (1994: 136) states that the results of such assessments were rarely recorded or saved in formal records, because these informal observations had to be supplemented by more formal kinds of evidence to improve their validity and reliability. This type of assessment, known as summative assessment, came at the end of a learning process, when it was difficult to alter or rectify what had already occurred. Satterly (1989: 7) describes this type of assessment as terminal, rather than continual during the stages of learning. This 'terminal' stage is when assessment becomes competitive, or at least comparative between pupils. Such assessment also supplies a sort of seal of approval and disapproval on children's efforts. It helps teachers to make decisions that the school bureaucracy requires of them. Its records are public records of a pupil's school accomplishments and are often the sole evidence that parents have of how their children are doing in school. This sounds unpedagogical, and as such has little to contribute to the culture of learning. DesForges (1990:3) feels that many teachers focus their summative assessment exclusively on the information gained during instruction. Seeing that this generally calls for nothing but memorized facts, such an assessment has a negative impact on the culture of learning.

Summative assessment results, which include official tests and formal examinations, are usually made public, appearing in report cards, school record folders and newspapers. These results are based on the progress of individual pupils, because they are about grading, promoting and placing honor on individuals. Summative assessment is formally and systematically conducted whereby pupils take the same test or examination, in the same amount of time, with the same scoring procedure used across pupils. The tests and examination results are recorded for future use. This is confirmed by Spady (1994a:33) who argues that everything students do, regardless of its substance or nature, is ultimately translated into numbers and percentages that are kept in a student's permanent record. These numeric symbols are then endlessly accumulated and averaged together, as if they represent equivalent things, which they clearly do not.

They also do not provide teachers and pupil's with specific directions to guide instruction or learning in order to promote learning as a life-long process. This type of assessment therefore has a low input with regard to the culture of learning.

The following subsections discuss homework, assignments, official tests, classwork, exercises, formal examinations and norm-referenced assessment as sub-categories of both summative and formative assessment.

3.3.3.1 Homework And Assignments As Assessment Practices

The option of using homework and assignments in schools serves various purposes, such as curriculum coverage and enforcement of instructional objectives. Piek (1986:54) indicates that limited time is available during the lesson-time for teaching the entire subject content. It is therefore necessary to give the pupils homework and assignments. Another aim of homework and assignments is to reinforce and enrich the work done in class, and also to assess teaching objectives. It also contributes to what the learners will be expected to do in an examination at the end of the term. According to Rowntree (1977:122), the teacher's comment on a student's homework and assignment would certainly imply some kind of teaching intention. However, this type of assessment appears not to be a form of assessment which motivates learners to have zeal to learn or to cultivate the spirit of the culture of learning.

Homework and assignments are supposed to be used as an effective tool of assessment, just like good teaching and learning. They should foster and encourage learners to take responsibility for their own learning, and develop confidence in working independently. This will help them to cope with the increasing challenges that learners face inside and outside the classroom. It will also enable them to reflect on their own abilities and progress and to be actively involved in improving themselves (Malan 1997:52). Homework and assignments should be used to point the way for a reconsideration of the work that is being done. This will encourage learners to revisit the task of learning on their own, and so develop good strategies of learning how to learn and assess themselves. Such activities will maximize chances of learning and inculcate the spirit of the culture of learning.

However, there are appropriate purposes of homework and assignments that could be used as assessment tools to promote the culture of learning. Lorber and Pierce (1983:102) suggest the following:

i) Helping students to acquire new information

Teachers often request the reading of a section of a textbook which will serve as a basis for further discussion, or ask students to review a particular tape-slide sequence. In this way the teacher will help learners to acquire new information, which will promote self-discovery.

ii) Providing practice in particular skills

Some skills, such as typing, solving mathematical problems and so forth can be polished by repeated practice. The teacher can use homework and assignments to engage learners in such practice out of class. This assists learners to be competent and gain skills on their own, as a result a culture of learning will be promoted.

iii) Providing for student creativity and particular student needs

In-class activities generally force students to be one of a group and leave little opportunity for them to demonstrate skills unique to them as individuals, or to engage in instructional activities they feel are of particular interest to them personally. By working with individuals in planning homework and assignments, teachers can do much to make school relevant and interesting to learners.

Self-instructional and self-paced procedures and techniques of doing homework and assignments can enhance the culture of learning. Here, the learner has to set a goal, and organize all the resources and information to achieve this goal. This involves pre-assessment. When the task is completed the learner will have to assess whether the task had been perfectly done - this implies self-assessment. When he/she feels that there are loop-holes, the learner will either seek guidance or assistance from his/her peers or his/her teacher, here he/she will be collaborating. All these activities enable a learner to be a pace-setter, which

contributes very strongly to the development of a culture of learning (Lorber and Pierce, 1983:105).

3.3.3.2 Classwork Exercises And Official Tests In The Assessment Process

Research has confirmed that tests and classwork exercises are means through which teachers can evaluate their teaching (Satterly 1989:113). Tests and classwork exercises also gauge the knowledge of the teaching that has taken place, and the level of ability of the learners for whom the test is intended. Hymes, Chafin and Gonder (1991:9) contend that test and classwork exercises are used to gather the clearest, most precise, consistent and meaningful data possible to answer questions about student performance to ensure that teaching plans, instructional programs and curricular changes have addressed real needs. Ideally, tests and classroom work exercises measure and judge the achievements of learners with regard to the work which has been done by teachers. This use of tests and classwork exercises indicates that teachers only assess learners in order to take from learners what they have been taught, and establish whether learners have attained all the instructional objectives. Also, to measure the amount of work which has been done. In this sense assessment was not necessarily a part of the teaching and learning processes because it did not challenge and stimulate learners to try harder, aim higher, and achieve better results (Malan 1997:25). Tests and classwork exercises are supposed to be functional, supportive and encourage learners to achieve more. If they can be empathetically used in this sense, they will definitely make assessment an integral part of teaching and learning processes. Hence a culture of learning will be promoted.

Cohen and Manion (1983:248) indicate that teachers, through tests and classwork exercises, aim to gather information about their pupils' understanding of new material or their retention of previously taught concepts. Generally, tests are composed of a number of items – for example, missing words, incomplete sentences, true/false statements, multiple-choice answers, matching pairs of statements and responses and essay type questions. These items are arranged in such a way that they progress from lower level intellectual abilities to the most complex. Thus tests might begin with simple recall as measured by the completion of statement or true/false type items, then progress through short answers or multiple choice items to the essay type items. According to Avenant (1990:225), advocates of essay-type tests are of the opinion that, apart from evaluating

knowledge of facts, they may also be used to evaluate pupil's abilities to make deductions, analysis, synthesis and applications. However, the standard use of essays is to evaluate the understanding of complex subject-matter. King and Van den Berg (1992:22) assert that traditional assessment uses official tests and classwork exercises to test only cognitive learning and to cover the wide range of content that has been taught. In no way does this assessment attempt to elicit the excitement and interest of learning that form the basis of the culture of learning.

Again Avenant (1990:223) points out that effective classwork exercises and testing give teachers an indication of the success of their teaching. In addition, they give pupils an indication of how they perform in comparison to the rest of their classmates, and give parents an idea of how their children are fairing at school. Finally, they also enable principals and heads of departments to determine the amount of work which has been covered by their teachers. Spady (1994a:32) views such an assessment as the only chance for students to prove that they have learned. This suggests that students should strive to obtain a passing grade in order to receive credits, with the only emphasis here being that of achieving the learned content. Any other learning activities that could reflect the students' standing in the system are ignored, consequently the culture of learning would also be ignored.

Rowntree (1977:22) asserts that "we must also recognize that tests and classwork exercises are "motivational" assessment. However they are usually used to benefit the teacher rather than the students. In effect, by structuring the student's allocation of time and effort and legitimizing certain kinds of activity and outlawing others, such assessment indicates what is to count as knowledge worth having and what is not". Tests and classwork exercises can be used to define the reality of academic life for pupils and give teachers control of pupils' perceptions and behaviors. To be blunt, assessment of this nature can also be used as an instrument of coercion, making pupils do something they might not otherwise be inclined to do. This could result in the decline of the culture of learning.

3.3.3.3 Formal Examinations As Part Of The Assessment Process

The culminating point of official testing and classwork exercises is when learners sit for a formal examination. This is a uniform mechanism for identifying talents and measuring achievements. Eckstein and Noah (1992:110) point out that the consequences of this formal examination is that teachers adjust their teaching to enable learners to score the highest marks. The result is that when learners are sitting for formal examinations, they will be expected to yield orthodox answers. This could deprive learners of the opportunity to make sense of the experience that they have gained during teaching and learning. It could also cause learners to fail to elaborate on their own experience and expose their prior knowledge of learning, which are the learners' most important existing ideas (Nkomo 1990:332).

Consequently, examinations tend to influence teachers' assessment of learners' work, focusing on what the examination will require. Hence teachers downplay the need for learners to develop their full range of competencies such as knowledge, concepts and skills, all of which students can use when entering the work force or continuing to the next level of higher education.

According to Van der Horst and McDonald (1997:5), the perspective of formal examinations in South Africa did not equip learners with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to help them become active and valuable participants in creating a better country, and a better future for all. Boschee and Baron (1993:41) also believe that formal examinations cause teachers to abandon the idea that learners have the potential to achieve success. This is because the onus of preparing for examination is on the teacher who must provide suitable conditions for effective learning and revision of work to occur. Generally teachers have to ensure that learners are granted opportunities to be successful in examinations, by providing an appropriate learning environment, materials and back-up guidance. This obviously means that the assessment of learner's work was not based on empowering learners to master skills, knowledge and good dispositions, or to build good confidence and competencies, which would have influenced the culture of learning. Such assessment thus focused on evaluating and identifying the competencies that were required of learners when sitting for their formal examinations.

Therefore the objective of testing and class work exercises was to train pupils how to approach the content of examinations. South African school-teachers continually assess learners' work with a narrow focus on the type of external examination that will be written and the content they expect to be covered in it. Indications are that examinations do not diagnose learning problems or learning progress, neither do they place students at different levels of ability or help teachers plan what to teach. Instead, according to Eckstein and Noah (1992:110), examinations are used to select students for secondary and higher education. This suggests that examination is mostly used as a selection instrument. Van Schalkwyk (1988:140) further emphasizes that every community needs a common and, as far as possible, objective means of testing its younger generation's level of ability and training. An objective testing method such as this is also useful for selecting learners for certain subjects and courses and placing them in suitable schools, classes and courses for promoting them. This only enhances the assessment of the knowledge tested on in the examination and what has been taught in the classrooms. This is why teachers teach the examination content, and assess learners' work with respect to examination expectations. This can have little contribution to the establishment of the culture of learning.

Thus, over time, teaching and learning were reduced to testing and remedial programmes for examination purposes. There was a lack of consideration for essential competencies, which could for example include any of the following: Survival or life skills, basic skills, psychomotor skills, professional and vocational skills, intellectual skills, interpersonal skills and personal skills (Van der Horst and McDonald, 1997:10). These authors further contend that, through examination, the education system was content and input driven - learners were not taught the actual skills that they would need in a working world. The idea of competency-based education, where assessment is used to determine whether learners have mastered the outcomes of learning, was abandoned. Seemingly more concentration was given to content, learners were expected to recall information, and to remember what was in their textbooks. Assessment was basically on drilling. Teachers had to regurgitate the learning content to learners, which discouraged creative thinking and higher-order-thinking skills in learners. Consequently teachers failed to instill an interest of learning in learners, and also had no effect with regard to the culture of learning.



It appears that examinations function to test what learners have grasped and reward the attainment of a certain level of proficiency as assessed by examination. They also provide a passport to future options. King and Van den Berg (1992:5) argue that examinations serve to select and monitor, and are also a powerful tool of inspection and control of the education process and the schooling bureaucracy. As a measuring instrument, examinations also perform two main functions: to assess the knowledge and skills the candidates have attained; and to give access to certain privileges and status in a form of certification to those who deemed to have succeeded. Van Schalkwyk (1988:140) asserts that certification is the formalized summary and validation of the examination performance. The shift of emphasis in this regard will therefore not be on learning to master learning content, but on passing the examinations in order to be certificated. Such educational endeavors are detrimental to the lifelong learning process, which underpins the culture of learning. This calls upon teachers to have a very firm grasp of their subject and high levels of assessment knowledge. Teachers' assessment should not only guarantee that learners are able to earn a certificate, but learners should also be assessed for knowledge that will make them competent in future life, in order to promote the culture of learning.

When examinations determine a child's advancement at school and their life's opportunities, parents understandably put pressure on teachers to ensure that their children succeed. They hold the school system and particularly teachers accountable for their child's results in examinations. To throw more light on this issue, Louw (in Beeld, 13 November 1991:1) wrote that "Ontstoke ouers, aangevuur deur die "skok en bitterheid" van hul matriek kinders, dreig nou om die Transvaalse Onderwys Departement hof toe te vat oor die vraestel. Ouers het nou genoeg gehad hiervan. Die TOD kan nie sulke belaglike vraestelle opstel en dink ons gaan dit net so aanvaar nie. As die slaagpersentasie of die onderskeiding syfer laer is as verlede jaar, gaan ons optree". (Angry parents, who was filled with shock because of their matric children, threaten to take the Transvaal Department of Education to court, because of the question papers. Parents said they had enough. The Department of Education can not set this type of question papers, and think that we are going to accept it. If the pass rate or distinction rate is less than last year, we are going to take action).

Eckstein and Noah (1992:109) point out that if parents judge their children's performance and academic abilities through examination results, teachers will in turn



teach and assess learners only to score better symbols in formal examination. As a result, skills that are often accountable in the work place, in social life and at higher institutions of learning are likely to be underrated. Such skills include critical skills, selective skills, creative, interpretive, reflective, analytical and transactional writing skills. As a result, interest in learning and the culture of learning is likely to be affected negatively (Ministerial Committee 1998:12).

King and Van den Berg (1992:9) point out that examination and certification are the visible signposts along the road of education from primary school through to tertiary levels. The consequences of examination to teachers is that teachers adjust their teaching to what the examination will cover, to ensure that their learners score the highest scores. They become less concerned about competencies of skills and knowledge. Even when teachers construct class work exercises or test questions they do not expend time and thought to them, since they use the item bank tests from previous examination question papers, in order to align their questions with the questions of the external examiners. Roos (in Roux 1983:32) and Van Schalkwyk (1988:141) share the idea that item bank tests provide an opportunity for teachers, who must use these test questions in their informal and formal assessment to improve the standard of examination results. This clearly shows that teachers are only assessing to give training to learners of how to approach and write examinations. They are making no attempt to instill in learners a burning desire to master what has been taught and so maintain the culture of learning.

3.3.3.4 Norm-Referenced Assessment In The Learning Process

The norm-referenced assessment has been used in education systems to compare a child's performance in relation to the group to which the child belongs, or in relation to other tests which claim to measure the same attributes (Satterly 1989:39). Furthermore Popham (1989:85) also asserts that, in education, norm-referenced assessment is most frequently encountered when reporting students' results on academic aptitude tests, such as the scholastic test. Generally, this assessment focuses on how a given students' performance stacks up in relation to the performance of other students. This implies that the results of this assessment are not measured strongly on the domain content

represented by the test, but merely on the students relative standing in relation to one another (Gipps, Stobart and Lawton 1989:79).

The culture of learning in schools could be better serviced by an assessment which provides evidence about particular students' skills and knowledge, rather than evidence about how these students compare with one another. Spady (1994a:39) suggests that the best operations of assessment are the ones that consistently and systematically enable all learners to succeed, rather than those which impose quotas on which or how many students can be successful, or limit what students are allowed to learn and how high they can aspire.

According to Malan (1997:26) norm-referenced assessment does not refer to the way in which tests, examinations or other assignment tasks are constructed, but to the purpose for which the results of the assessment are used. The results could, for example, be used to determine whether a learner's performance is average, below average, or above average; how academic performance differs according to gender, class or racial lines; whether two or more tests or examination papers are of the same standard. Teachers thus use norm-referenced assessment regularly in their classes to work out class averages and compare individual learner's achievements with those of other learners. This clearly indicates that norm-referenced assessment in schools or classes is not used to support teaching and learning, but is only practiced to rate learners according to a set standard or norm. This is linked to departmental requirements which specify for example that 40% in most subjects is the norm required for a pass and 80% the norm for gaining a distinction (Malan 1997:27). The determining factor for such an assessment is a norm or standard which learners are expected to achieve in the test or examination. It does not supply specific information about what an individual learner knows, understands or can do to further encourage learning. It totally precludes all attempts at educative teaching, which could bear good fruits in relation to the culture of learning.

However, according to Hymes, Chafin and Gonder (1991:11) the great majority of schools are successfully using norm-referenced tests to take a periodic look at their students' achievement levels in certain basic skills. They watch for data on trends to signal the need for changes in their instructional programs, and they also use it for the selection of pupils and classification. It can be used to identify learners for advanced

class enrolment and to place pupils for remedial programmes. The way the tests are constructed spread the students out on the scale, so that differences are easier to see and selection is facilitated. Such tests help to predict success by measuring the knowledge, ability and skills of learners by comparing their scores, rather than specifying what a student knows or does not know (William in Hymes et al 1991:11).

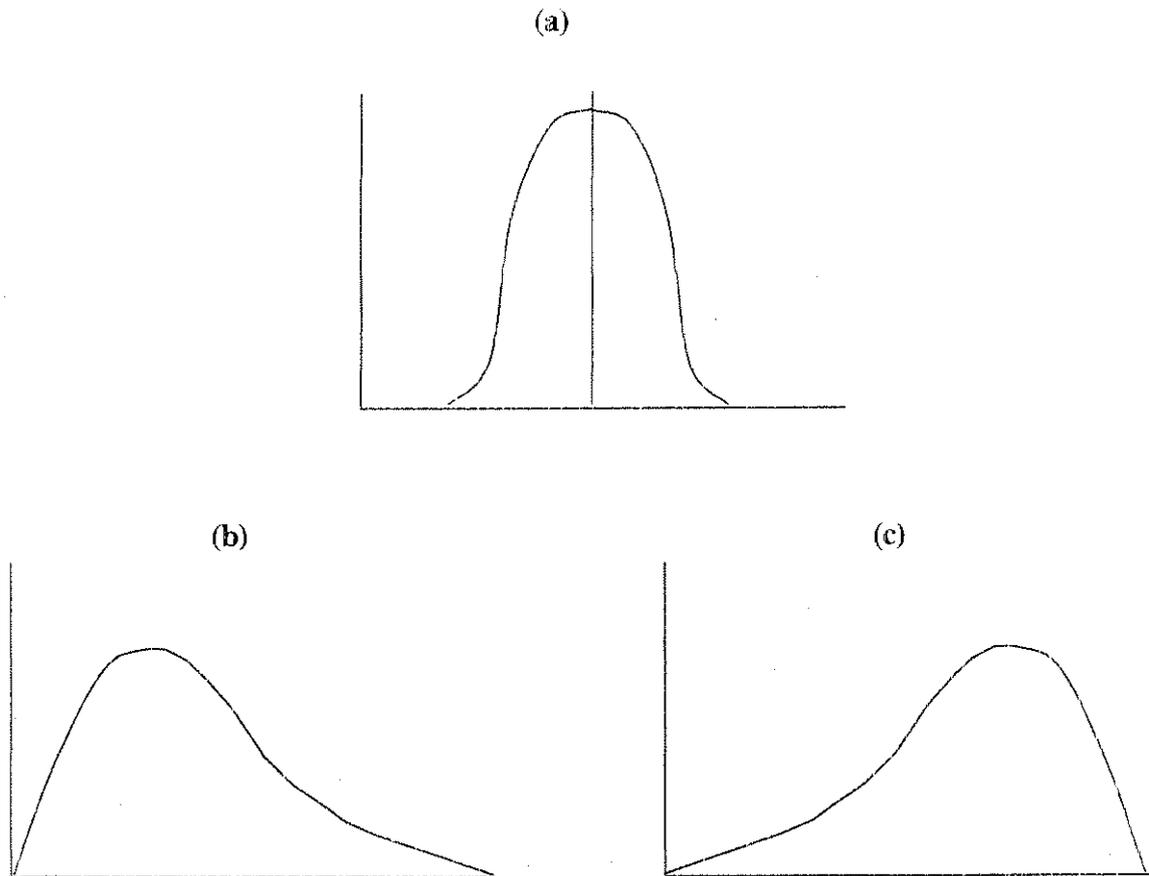
This indicates that the basic purpose of norm-referenced assessment is to discriminate among individuals and perpetuate grouping of learners by averaging them according to norm, scores and achievements. Such assessment does not improve learning and also does not provide a multidimensional picture of what learners know and can do. It also does not respect students' diversity in ways of understanding, or suggest actions teachers can take to improve the educational development of their students and the quality of their educational programs. It further does not allow teachers and learners to be together, engaged in a learning and teaching process, by solving problems, pupils interacting with ideas with one another and with teachers, pupils displaying their working minds and spirits in how they respond to problematic situations. If all these didactical activities are not catered for by norm-referenced assessment, then there is very little chance of engaging learners in a highly motivated learning situation. As a result the culture of learning will be badly affected.

This is why Satterly (1989:40) concludes that many teachers believe that drawing comparisons between individuals and providing scores which describe the child's standing in a group do not serve any pedagogical purpose. According to Malan (1997:30), in the norm-referenced paradigm the marks of other candidates could affect any individual candidate's final mark. Irrespective of whether candidates have done too well or too poorly, the marks can easily be amended to a perfect bell shape. Thus learners in the norm-referenced paradigm were expected to achieve according to the predetermined scale. Malan (1997:28) argues that if there was an imbalance, there was a standard procedure to adjust learners' marks (up or down) until the ideal bell shape was attained.

The first step in norm-referencing is the determination of a norm (or standard) which candidates are expected to achieve in a test or examination. Candidates' marks are then measured against this norm to determine whether their performance can be regarded as

good, average or poor (Stiggins 1994:123). If the majority of candidates have performed better than the norm, the test or examination may be regarded as having been too easy. If, on the other hand, too many candidates performed below the norm, the test or examination could be considered to have been too difficult (Malan 1997:26). This method of assessment did not cater for any individual learner's effort and input with regard to learning - the only significant aspect was a predetermined norm or standard, hence the culture of learning was defeated.

Malan (1997:27) states that if all the 'candidates' marks were plotted on a graph, the perfect distribution would look like graph 3.3(a). A test or examination which was too difficult would result in a graph corresponding to 3.3(b). A test or examination which was too easy would resemble graph 3.3(c).



Graph 3.3 *Examples of bell-shaped curves showing a) normal distribution, b) left-skewed distribution and c) right-skewed distribution*

These graphs are referred to as bell shapes, with graph 3.3(a) representing the ideal bell curve. Both graphs 3.3(b) and 3.3(c) would then represent an abnormal distribution of

marks. These imbalances would then be corrected until they meet the requirements of the bell shape. Spady (1994a:23), Spady and Marshall (1991:69) and Malan (1997:28) postulate that lately these procedures have been severely criticized. Some of the more common criticisms are that norm-referenced assessment:

- Perpetuates class, racial and gender distinctions;
- Does not supply specific information about what an individual learner knows, understands or can do;
- Engineers results to suit various devious purposes; and
- Is more concerned about statistics derived from assessment results than about the candidates or learners involved in the assessment

This is why many teachers know that there are learners who should not pass but have passed, and there are learners who could not fail but have failed. Such an assessment does not bring any reality with regard to teaching and learning, hence the culture of learning can deteriorate. Malan (1997:28) therefore concludes that it is criticisms like this which have given rise to alternate ways of assessment.

3.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter aspects of the nature and types of traditional assessment have been discussed. The following types of tradition assessment strategies were discussed: summative assessment, formative assessment and their sub-categories. Evaluation and measurement were also considered because of their use in traditional assessment synonymously with the assessment concept. The classroom was also discussed, because traditionally it would seem that teachers used the classroom as an environment for assessing their own instructional objectives.

It was shown that in the traditional approach, most assessment was not specifically used as an integral part of teaching and learning processes. This is despite the fact that there were numerous chances to use assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning, and so support learners for the promotion of the culture of learning. The emphasis of the traditionalist approach with regard to assessment was basically on measuring the learned content, and to gauge the vitality of the teacher's control with regard to teaching and learning activities. Assessment was also used to promote learners from one grade to another.

This chapter revealed that various education systems around the world are developing a system of not only using assessment results for purposes of promoting learners from one grade to another, or to indicate that academic performance differs on gender, class or racial lines, or to demonstrate that two or more test or examination papers are of the same standard. Instead, the new system of education intends to use assessment to describe student outcomes of learning quite explicitly in terms of the actual learning students should exhibit. For example, it emphasizes that learners, through assessment, should be able to demonstrate abilities and competencies such as specific knowledge, skills or understanding in order to develop self-confidence and self-reliance for the promotion of the culture of learning.

The following chapter discusses the alternative ways of assessment that have been developed, based on the Outcomes-based education system

CHAPTER 4

THE NATURE AND TYPES OF OUTCOMES-BASED ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE CULTURE OF LEARNING

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the past educators relied mainly on written tests and examinations at the end of the year to determine which learners should be promoted to the next grade. The emphasis of assessment here was more on content and knowledge. Too little value was placed on practical skills, such as the ability to work collaboratively as part of a team, conflict resolution, project management, organizational skills and life management skills. Yet these skills are required daily in the workplace and in the world of life. They also arouse an interest in learning which has a direct effect on the culture of learning.

According to Rensberg (1998:2) the new Outcomes-based approach in education focuses on the achievement of clearly defined outcomes rather than teachers and education practitioners' inputs in terms of syllabus content, as discussed in chapter 3. The approach of the old system was to use assessment to judge learners' performances only against the presented content knowledge; it did not cater adequately for the development of learners. It needs to be mentioned however, that although outcomes-based education assesses the performance of outcomes, it does still consider content knowledge. To this point, Siebörger and Macintosh (1998:42) stress that outcomes of learning do not exist without content knowledge, but the main emphasis with outcome-based education is that learners have to do something with the knowledge. They further state that content knowledge in the OBE curriculum has changed, but it is still very important in the following ways:

- it makes sense of subjects and disciplines in education;
- content will sometimes need to be studied in depth in order to achieve an outcome;
- range statements and descriptions of performance levels depend on content knowledge; and
- content will make it easier to achieve suitable outcomes.

All these factors come into play when assessment is done. Knowledge remains the foundation against which all the skills and competencies are performed. This indicates that Outcomes-based assessment has made a remarkable and radical departure from the previous traditional system, which evaluated learners mainly on the content knowledge (as shown in chapter 3). The assessment of content knowledge in OBE means that one is not just thinking of tests, examinations and written exercises, but of many other ways of gaining information and giving feedback about the progress of learners (Siebörger and Macintosh, 1998:5). These could have a tremendous influence on the culture of learning, since learners will be presented with a multi-dimensional practice of assessment.

This clearly shows that OBE uses assessment in the learner's best interest, because the outcomes of learning communicate to learners that they have achieved the expected outcomes, and these can be used by both learners and teachers to measure future progress (Wolfondale 1995:13). Assessment here does not only test and examine the knowledge content of that which has been taught, but it also tends to be diagnostic and prognostic in nature.

Therefore the purpose of this chapter is to signify that the Outcomes-Based Education approach intends to focus equally on knowledge, skills, attitudes and the process of learning which lead to the achievement of both specific outcomes and critical outcomes. It will also indicate how learning should empower learners to achieve the specific outcomes of learning, where assessment is used to guide and evaluate teaching and learning processes, leading to the improvement of the culture of learning. This view is also supported by Olivier (1998:21), who points out that the OBE approach deviates

from the conventional and traditional content-based education and training, in the sense that OBE focuses on the mastering of processes linked to intended outcomes, as well as on mastering the knowledge and skills needed to achieve the outcomes. The reason being that whenever learners achieve outcomes, it proves that they did participate in their own development. They do not simply just learn, remember and recall content in order to achieve a score or grade as indicated in chapter 3.

4.2 THE NATURE OF ASSESSMENT IN OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION

The outcomes-based approach to curriculum design is strongly linked to assessment and therefore demands the implementation of valid and reliable assessment procedures. Pretorius (1998:82) feels that unless assessment is properly aligned with curriculum reform and teaching processes, the desired changes in education will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to implement. He further states that to give life to the outcomes-based approach to teaching and learning, assessment must move from the emphasis on summative assessment as a single event, to developmental assessment, which is an ongoing process. In this way, assessment will be a tool that assists the learner and teacher in ascertaining learning progress; this could contribute to the culture of learning.

According to Olivier (1998:37), the assessment approaches of OBE have moved their focus from being mainly judgmental to incorporate assessment of processes and other essential attributes. Such assessment does not concentrate on the outcomes of learning only, but it also considers supportive learning traits, as well as processes of teaching and learning. This encourages learners to achieve in order to promote the culture of learning.

This shows that the assessment approaches of OBE have the capability to assess not only knowledge, but also skills, attitudes and processes as well as the end-result thereof. This suggests that learners would be able to demonstrate improved knowledge, skills and attitudes, which implies that learners will also master an achievement of the processes followed by means of the learning and teaching processes. This is why Wiggins

(1998:3) refers to an assessment process that is often unobtrusive to students and teachers, and is virtually indistinguishable from what takes place during good teaching and learning.

This indicates that assessment of outcome-based education is an integral component of teaching and learning. It is a system that is designed to improve, and not just audit, a learner's performance. It aims primarily to educate and improve a learner's performance, and as a result will enhance the rate of learning. This will have good consequences for the culture of learning. This is in contrast to the traditional part of assessment, where silent examinees sit in rows, answering uniform questions with orthodox answers, following calendars that dictate that all learners must be examined simultaneously regardless of readiness (Airasian 1994:171).

Wiggins (1998:4) is of the opinion that assessment of OBE gives students the kinds of challenges, diversity and flexibility that makes assessment far more realistic. These include working together and critiquing one another's writing, hearing and debating points and even making presentations in group discussions. Teachers want to know not only what assumptions the students started with, and what decisions they made, but also why the students thought these assumptions were valid and how they justify their decisions. Such methods of assessment resemble the way learners will be expected to use their knowledge and skills in the real world. Such exercises will build a culture of learning, because learners will be aware that the knowledge and skills that they are acquiring will be of great use in their future lives.

This also shows that achievement of excellence by pupils depends not only on the quality of tasks that pupils undertake. It also depends on the quality of assessment that they receive. This is why Wiggins (1998:8) states that educationists have wrongly construed assessment as a problem of tinkering with testing techniques, rather than intellectual imperatives embedded in a new vision of the purpose of teaching. By contrast, the OBE assessment system actually works to teach learners to have a strong performance and gains overtime for all learners, unlike expecting only a few learners to achieve outstanding performance. This suggests that OBE, through assessment, has the intention of seeing all learners become successful. If learners see progress with their

learning, they are likely to develop an interest in learning which will promote the culture of learning.

This simply points out that OBE assessment does not rely on short answers or multiple-choice testing only. This has, according to Wiggins (1998:10), landed teachers in a world that could be described as “teach, test and hope for the best”. This suggests that teachers have developed a typical tendency to cover a great deal of material and then test on it believing that they have assessed, and then move on. Spady (1994a:50) argues that the outcomes of this assessment were only micro-skills and isolated bits of information that were of little consequence to students and their teacher once the learning experiences were completed, tested and recorded in teacher’s book. Often they represented small bits of information and parts of isolated segments of curriculum that students quickly forget once the particular curriculum segment was completed. This has little value to the culture of learning. Typical examples of information that is assessed in this context include names of the leading characters in novel or the names of the tributaries of a river.

Wiggins (1998:11) supports the view that the teacher’s task regarding assessment ought to be seen as maximizing learning on worthy tasks that require enduring knowledge and skills. This suggests that assessment should be even more central in a teacher’s task, because it has to support and motivate learners and enable them to attain learning outcomes which would be very important to their educational and life career future (Van der Horst and McDonald 1997:19). If assessment is viewed in this light it will impact positively on the culture of learning because it will be assessing things that really matter to learners. Seeing that it contributes to learning as a lifelong process, assessment in OBE needs to be well planned.

The following sub-sections explain certain concepts which are related and associated with the nature of assessment for outcome-based education and their influence on the culture of learning. Teachers will use these concepts when executing learning programmes in a learning environment, or when assessing learning activities in order to ascertain whether learners have achieved the desired learning outcomes (Pretorius 1998:36).

4.2.1 Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are clear results that teachers want learners to demonstrate at the end of a significant learning experience. Spady (1994b:2) argues that learning outcomes are what learners can actually do with what they know and have learned, they are a tangible application of what has been learned. This means that learning outcomes are actions and performances that embody and reflect learner competence in using content, information and ideas successfully. This also shows that learning outcomes are what learners can actually do with what they know and understand at the end of a significant learning experience. This suggests that demonstration of learning outcomes can elicit creativity and promote ownership of the learned content amongst learners in schools.

Advocates of OBE emphasize that learning should promote an ability to translate mental processing into forms and kinds of action that occur in real social settings. Hence outcomes of learning need to be forms of learning that teachers can see learners do, and that can be assessed directly.

However, this does not mean that teachers have to focus on the individual learner who must master the learning content. Eventually, when the content has been mastered, then learners are subjected to examination and are passed or failed. This indicates whether they have achieved the learning outcomes or not.

Malan (1997:10) maintains that outcomes of learning should form the basis of all educational activity. The reason being that in the OBE approach there is interdependence between learning outcomes and the processes of teaching and learning. These include supportive elements such as the acquiring of knowledge, skills and attitudes, as well as ways of executing performances. However it should be noted that the supportive elements are not outcomes, they are only instrumental in achieving the learning outcomes. This is why Malan (1997:16) concludes that an effective interaction of all these supportive elements, including teaching and learning processes, results in outcomes of learning.

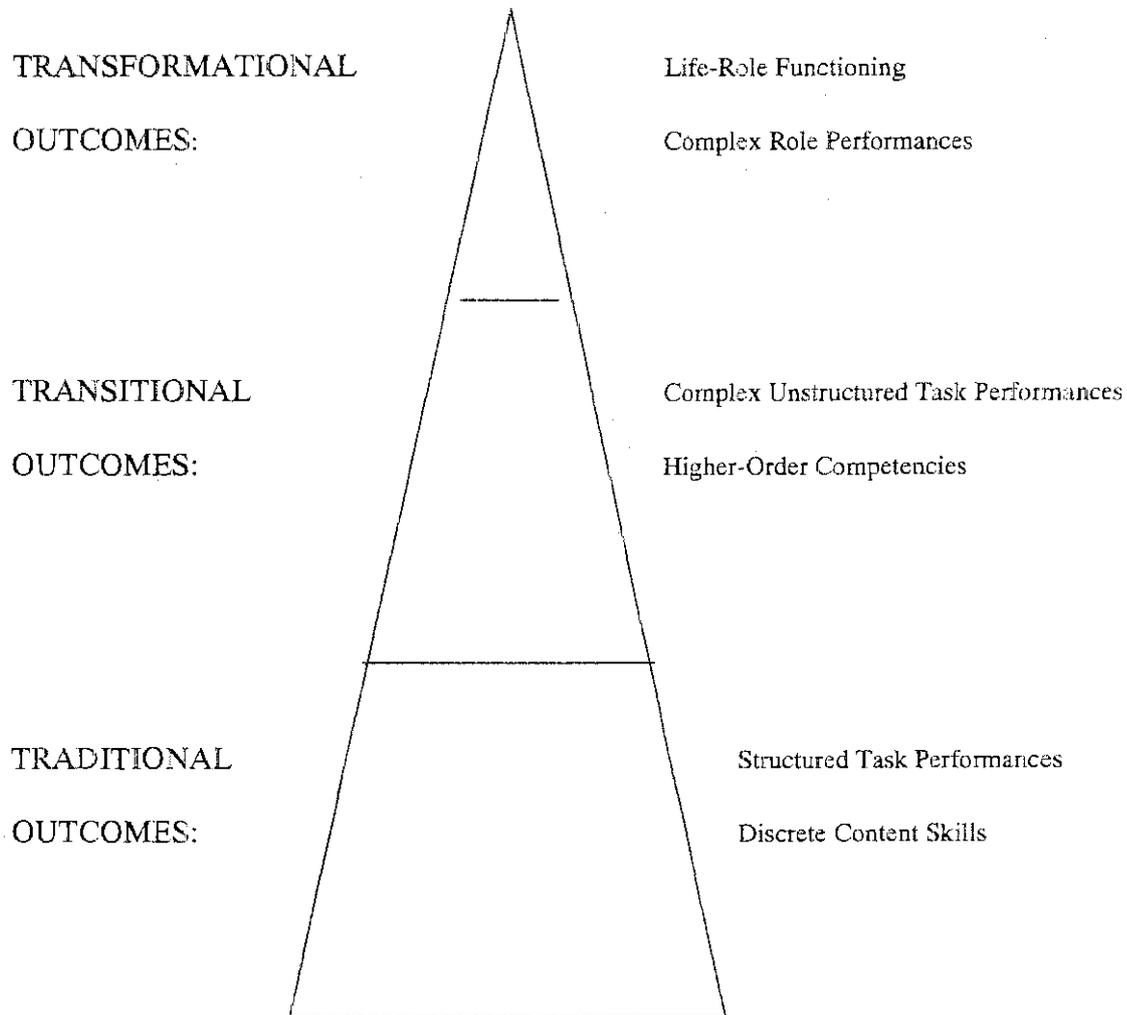
Spady (1988) in Malan (1997:12) argues that the only legitimate basis for developing learning outcomes is to first derive the exit outcomes from the skills and knowledge



which learners will need to lead successful lives in a future world. The next step would be to develop specific outcomes for each school programme. These specific outcomes must show a direct correlation with, and contribute to, the original exit outcomes. Finally the teachers, as experts of teaching and training content, have to identify lesson outcomes which will act as criteria against which to assess the learners' learning progress and development (Malan 1997:13).

Van der Horst and McDonald (1997:30) caution that even though there is a lot wrong with traditional educational practices, we must be careful not to overlook the importance of learning content. Learning content assists teachers to identify lesson outcomes of learning, in order to help learners to achieve good social dispositions and life skills. Further they assert that without a sound foundation in the content of a subject, no higher order thinking skills or problem solving skills can be applied. All learners need to acquire a sound content or knowledge base in order to develop expertise in manipulating the content in other contexts. From this sound content base different learning outcomes can be derived, as illustrated in figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: The Demonstration of Learning Outcomes



Source: Spady 1994: 19

This is why Spady (1994b:19) developed three basic categories of learning outcomes, each with its own characteristics in relation to the learning content and knowledge. The first category is constituted of discrete content skills. These are content-dependent, tightly structured by the teacher and linked to small, specific segments of curriculum content which makes their assessment inseparable from their content. However they serve as enabling outcomes for structured task performances which represent most day-to-day classroom activities, such as homework, assignments and work tasks. These activities and the learning results are known as traditional outcomes. Their assessment allows for the interaction between teachers and learners to debate the learned content, which will eventually boost the culture of learning.

The second category is transitional outcomes. Here, according to Spady (1994b:20), we encounter two learning demonstrations: higher-order competencies and complex unstructured task performances. These include analyzing concepts and their interrelations, proposing solutions to multi-faceted problems, using complex arrays of data and information to make decisions; and planning complex structures, processes or events. All these demonstrations can include many kinds of content. Although they are more generalizable across different kinds of subject areas and performance contexts than outcomes in traditional zones, they do rely on some content skills and structured tasks for both assessment and learning purposes.

The third category is transformational outcomes. Spady (1994b:21) feels that although this category seems to lie beyond the structures and frames of reference used most often in schools, they link the world of schooling to real life. They involve a high degree of generalizability across time and situation, and they demand a high degree of ownership, self-direction and self-assessment. They are formulated in terms of the roles which competent, well-adjusted adults might be expected to fulfill in the world outside school. This role often calls upon an adult to act as the problem solver, communicator, conflict negotiator, or information processor (Malan 1997:16). Transformational outcomes are not as narrow and specific as traditional outcomes. As such, they focus not only on the knowledge, skills and attitudes which school leavers should have acquired, but also on their ability to apply these in the world outside school (Malan 1997:10). Hence this outcome of learning is regarded as a philosophical contribution to the culture of learning.

The Report of the Ministerial Committee (1996:25) describes outcomes of learning as the end products of a learning process. They state that the word “outcomes” is used broadly as an inclusive term, referring to everything learnt, including social and personal skills, learning how to learn, concepts, knowledge, understanding, methodologies, values, attitudes and also including both intended and unintended outcomes. Consequently, in OBE there are programmes of learning designed to help the learners to achieve outcomes of learning. The South African Qualification Authority demarcates learning outcomes into two categories: specific outcomes and critical outcomes. These help to bring a clearly defined picture regarding the outcomes of learning (Department of Education 1997:10).

4.2.2 Specific Outcomes

According to the Draft Policy Document of the Department of Education (1997:12), specific outcomes refer to the specification of what learners are able to do at the end of a learning experience. They include skills, knowledge and values that inform the demonstration of the achievement of an outcome or a set of outcomes. Lubisi, Wedekind, Parker and Gultig, (1998:8) describe specific outcomes as context-specific. They believe that they are formulated within the context in which they are to be demonstrated, and describe the competence that learners should be able to demonstrate in a particular area of learning at certain levels. However, they are not terminal. The reason for this is that they form the basis for assessing the progress of learners. They are also building blocks which enable learners to reach a culminating stage of performance.

Hence assessment of specific outcomes in OBE does not necessarily mean that teachers test the mastery of content in a traditional system (Siebörger and Macintosh, 1998:44). The OBE assessment approaches ensure that specific outcomes are translated into the performance of competencies, so that learners can see the results of their learning. This should help motivate learners and so promote the culture of learning.

4.2.3 Critical Cross-Field Outcomes

According to the Discussion Document of the Report of the Ministerial Committee (1996:25-26) and Lubisi, Wedekind, Parker and Gultig (1998:9), critical cross-field outcomes are generic and cross-curricular. They underpin the learning process in all its facets. They are not restricted to any specific learning context, but they inform the formulation of specific outcomes across curricular or in individual areas of learning for all learners.

Spady (1994b:20) speaks about the realm of role performances, which operate with authentic life contexts as the backdrop for students to demonstrate what real people do to be successful on a continuing basis in their career, family and community. Spady further asserts that almost all real-life role performances require complex applications of many kinds of knowledge and competences as people confront the challenges surrounding them in their social systems. Therefore role performance could be linked to critical cross-field outcomes, because role performances link the world of schooling to real-life. Hence the critical cross-field outcomes can contribute to the culture of learning, because learners would be committed to carry out role performances in their future lives, rather than just perform isolated tasks on demand.

This suggests that critical outcomes are working principles. As such they should direct teaching, learning, assessment implementation and education practices, as well as the development of learning programmes and materials. In other words, all “learning-areas” and specific outcomes should originate from critical outcomes. In relation to this, Vermeulen (1997:47) states that critical outcomes assist learners to gain skills, knowledge and values that will allow them to contribute to their own success as well as to the success of their family, community and the nation as a whole.

It should therefore be noted that when learners are continually assessed by teachers for performance of specific outcomes, the achievements of learners with regard to these specific outcomes emulate the achievement of critical outcomes. This is because specific outcomes of different learning areas are informed by critical outcomes.

The critical outcomes have a great role to play with respect to the culture of learning, because they are concerned with the development of the fully fledged person. This is supported by Vermeulen (1997:46), who asserts that critical outcomes are used broadly to refer to everything learnt, including social and personal skills, learning how to learn concepts, knowledge, understanding methodologies, values, attitudes, as well as including both intended and unintended outcomes. Ultimately an assessment of specific outcomes does not only assess the understanding of the context within which specific outcomes are formulated. Rather this assessment has a far-reaching effect on the critical outcomes, which has informed the creation of specific outcome in its particular context.

According to the Draft Policy Document of the Department of Education (1997:13), General and Further Education and Training has a special contribution to make to learners regarding the development of the basic knowledge, skills, understanding, abilities and values necessary for functioning in the changing, modern society. Education and training must therefore aim to assist all learners to achieve critical outcomes irrespective of age, race, geographical location, or gender. This will effect changes in their social lives and enable learners to develop a lifelong attitude that will be appropriate for the promotion of the culture of learning. Consequent to this, SAQA proposed seven critical outcomes for South African Education as listed below:

- Learners will identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking;
- Learners will work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organization or community;
- Learners will organize and manage oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively;
- Learners will collect, analyze, organize and critically evaluate information;
- Learners will communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and language skills in the mode of oral and/or written presentation;

- Learners will use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others;
- Learners will demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognizing that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

Five additional guidelines were added to these critical outcomes by SAQA, in order to contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the society at large. These are:

- Reflecting on and exploring a variety of strategies to learn effectively;
- Participating as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities;
- Being culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts;
- Exploring education and career opportunities;
- Developing entrepreneurial abilities.

On many occasions the teachers' assessment of learners' work will not directly assess the attainment of these critical outcomes in different levels of learning. These critical outcomes will be assessed indirectly because all learning areas and their various specific outcomes are informed by critical outcomes. When considering the proposed critical outcomes, it becomes obvious that the emphasis is mostly on what has been pointed out in chapter 1 and 2, i.e. that teaching, learning and assessment should not only concentrate on memory for content. Instead these three didactical components should pay attention to promoting critical-thinking, problem-solving and other kinds of higher order thinking strategies.

The nature of critical outcomes makes teachers facilitators of learning, because they are expected to design and implement learning environments that will be appropriate to the

needs of their particular learners. Therefore Smit (1995:58) is of the opinion that “teaching will include the cultivation of the educator’s own inner growth and creative awakening. The assumption here is that when educators are open to their own inner-being, they will invite co-learning and a co-creating process with the learner. What teaching will require, is an exquisite sensitivity to the challenges of human development, not a prepackaged kit of methods and materials”.

Smit (1995:59) further states that OBE is learner-centered. Therefore educators are expected to display a reverence and a respect for the individual, and awareness of and attentiveness to each learner’s needs, differences and abilities. Again educators are required to consider each individual in the context of family, school, society, the global community and the cosmos. This suggests that assessment will cover a wide spectrum, which will make teachers, facilitators and various co-learners encourage and assist pupils to gain a strong desire to learn for a life-long learning process. They will also help pupils to improve their learning abilities and resources, which will make a positive contribution to the culture of learning.

4.2.4 Unit Standards

A unit standard is a nationally registered statement of desired education and training outcomes and their associated performance criteria. It should give attention to critical cross-field outcomes, though it is not essential to address all of them within a single unit standard. The development of unit standards in the South African context involves the participation of SAQA, accredited National Standards Bodies (NSBS) and Standards Generating Bodies (SGBS). Unit standards are registered by SAQA at a defined NQF level (Department of Education 2000:21).

According to SAQA (1999:12), the achievement of the unit standard by learners in each level indicates that the learners has achieved the learning outcomes with respect to that level and can progress within that particular pathway. SAQA (1999:13) further states that each unit standard must reflect a qualitative improvement in terms of enhanced ability and enhanced learning. It must also succinctly capture what the learner should know and be able to do once the unit standard is achieved. Hence achievement of the

unit standard can have a positive contribution towards the culture of learning, since the learners' ability will be enhanced and the quality of learning will improve. Department of Education (1997:32) indicates that there will be unit standard documents for each learning area at each level, and all standards must be registered with the South African Qualifications Authority. Greaney and Kelleghan (1996:7) argue that in countries like Chile, France, Ireland, Thailand, the United Kingdom and the United States, it was the information on student achievement in key curriculum areas, collected on a regular basis, which helped to monitor changes in achievement over time. This also provides the evidence relevant to assertions made by policy-makers, curriculum designers and educational managers that educational standards are falling or improving.

Van der Wagen and Ridley (1997:7) postulate that a unit standard has a number of performance outcomes and these outcomes have performance criteria that describe the attainment of these performance outcomes in order to achieve a unit standard. The unit is then described in terms of a number of performance outcomes. Each of these outcomes would have performance criteria associated with it. These performance criteria describe what good performance should look like (Van der Wagen and Ridley, 1997:8-9).

This implies that in order to facilitate learning for the promotion of the culture of learning, teachers should continually assess whether learners are achieving the outcomes of learning. Furthermore teachers should critically and intelligently use assessment criteria and range statements when assessing learners' work in order to assist learners to achieve the unit standard. Since according to SAQA (2001a:45) assessment criteria and range statement needs to allow the candidates to reflect achievement of the Unit Standard which captures the critical cross-field outcomes as well as specific outcomes, in order for the candidate to apply knowledge, skills, ability and value to a range of contexts and circumstances. This shows that both assessment criteria and range statements could create validity and reliability of assessment strategies, for the development of the culture of learning, since learners can experience success with regard to learning outcomes.

Both critical cross-field outcomes and specific outcomes, as captured by the unit standard, are intended to enable learners to function effectively in everyday life and to

see themselves as lifelong learners who are able to apply their newly acquired knowledge, skills, values and attitudes in a variety of ways. Seen in this light, unit standards can develop the culture of learning amongst learners.

According to the Department of Education (2000:20), the purpose of a unit standard is to provide guidance as follows;

- to the learner on what outcomes are to be assessed;
- to the assessor on what criteria are to be used for assessment; and
- to the educator on the preparation of learning material to assist the learner to reach the outcomes.

These provisions indicate a positive aspect of promoting the culture of learning. They shows that unit standards are not about trapping learners, or embedding them with a mystique of secrecy, but rather that they should be transparent for both learners and educators.

This confirms the idea that OBE approaches intend that learners should have a clear picture of what is expected of them and what is important for them to be able to do during learning and after learning experiences as discussed in section 3.2. Teachers then need to utilize assessment as an integral part of the teaching and learning processes, so that learners can come to grips with performance outcomes in order to master unit standards.

According to the Department of Education (1997:5), unit standards are nationally agreed and internationally comparable statements of outcomes that are registered on the National Qualifications Framework. Pretorius (1998:41) suggests that when developing a unit standard it must comply with the following set of criteria:

- Whether there is a need for the unit standard.
- The significant achievement required from the learner.

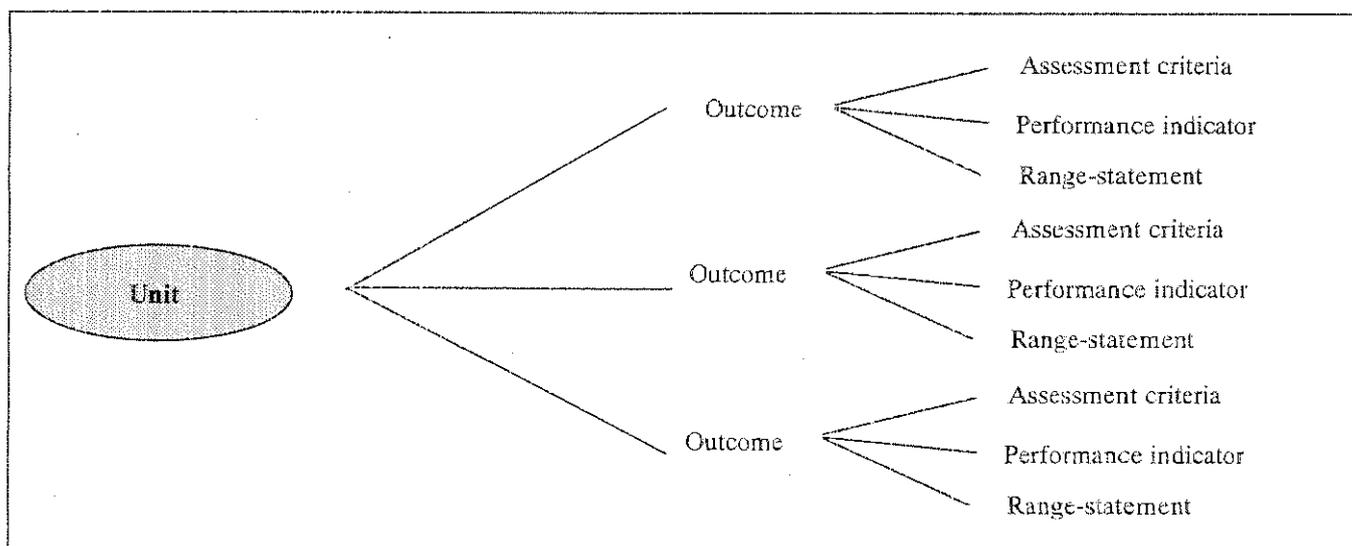
- The outcomes within the unit are consistent with each other, and with the overall competence outlines in the general competence for the unit.
- The unit does not create barriers to achievement.
- The unit conforms to the appropriate SAQA unit specification.

It therefore becomes necessary for teachers to bear in mind that concepts such as specific outcomes, critical cross-field outcomes, assessment criteria, performance indicators and range statements should be in unison with regard to the assessment of learners' work, because these concepts are necessary to support learners to master unit standards, for the benefit of the culture of learning. According to Department of Education (1997:23), credits are allocated to each unit standard. The learner will only receive a credit(s) when the learner has achieved the unit standard. Credits may be accumulated until conditions have been met for the award of a qualification.

For the learner to achieve a unit standard in any learning area, he/she needs to be assisted by the teacher through assessment to achieve that particular unit. However, each unit is associated with a number of outcomes, which according to Van Der Wagen and Ridley (1997:7) could be achieved by applying assessment criteria. These specify the evidence and quality of performance to be demonstrated in order to achieve the outcomes (See 4.2.5). Performance indicators should also be applied which provide the learner with more detailed information about what the learner must know and be able to do in order to show achievement (See 4.2.6). Lastly each unit needs to be associated with range-statements which describe the context in which the individual learner is expected to perform (See 4.2.7, and Guidelines for the Assessment of NQF Registered Unit Standards and Qualifications 2001b:27).

The association of unit standards, assessment criteria, performance indicators and range-statements can be expressed graphically as shown in figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2. Association of unit standards, assessment criteria, performance indicators and range-statements.



Source: Van Der Wagen and Ridley 1997:7)

From the above, it is clear that the new Outcomes-Based Education approach is a definite shift from a curriculum where content was a main component, to a curriculum where the achievement of critical cross-field outcomes and specific outcomes is the driving force (Boschee and Baron 1993:36 and Pretorius 1998:45). Such an approach could set a platform for a life-long learning process which has positive implications on the culture of learning in schools.

4.2.5 Assessment Criteria

Kotze (1999:31) explains that assessment criteria indicate the requirements of specific outcomes and are related to the subject of the learning area. Assessment criteria specify the evidence and quality of performance to be demonstrated in order to achieve the outcomes (Pretorius 1998:36). They indicate in broad terms the observable processes and products of learning that should serve to demonstrate the learners' achievements. In order to meet the requirements of assessment criteria, the assessment has to be appropriately designed in terms of form, use, level of difficulty, frequency, timing and

feedback. Learners need information on their performance as a check and balance on what they have or have not mastered and as a guide and stimulus to subsequent learning (Staatkoerant, 1998:23). This will make a positive contribution to learning culture

Assessment criteria play a very important role with regard to learning, teaching and assessment because they indicate to both learners and teachers that the learning outcomes have been achieved. Siebörger and Macintosh (1998:39) are of the view that such criteria form the authentic grounds on which assessment is dependent. They motivate learners to continue learning. Assessment criteria need to be broadly stated to provide sufficient details so that they are not hidden from learners. This approach assists learners to know exactly what path they have to follow in order to achieve the expected learning outcomes.

4.2.6 Performance Indicators

The assessment criteria give only broad indications of what evidence learners need to present before they are seen as having achieved the specific outcomes. OBE also asks that teachers be more specific about the evidence learners must provide to prove that they have achieved the learning outcomes (Lubisi, Wedekind, Parker and Gultig, 1998:13). There is therefore a need to provide much more detailed information about what learners should know and be able to do in order to show achievement. Vermeulen (1997:49) also states that we need to ensure that learners have formed opinions and assumed values through their learning. The outcome is the culmination of the learning process. There is thus a need to provide learners with indicators by which they can plan and measure their progress towards the achievement of the outcomes.

Performance indicators provide the details of the content and the processes that learners should master, as well as details of learning contexts in which the learners will be engaged. This provides learners with appropriate opportunities to organize their learning processes in order to understand the learning strategies that they must use in order to achieve learning outcomes. Vermeulen (1997:49) also asserts that performance indicators will provide teachers and learners with a breakdown of the essential stages to be reached in the process of achieving the outcome. They will help in the planning of the learning process, the tracking of progress and the diagnosing of problems.

Performance indicators will contribute to the culture of learning because they indicate to learners what to achieve and whether what must be achieved has been achieved, because they show the level of achievement that the learner finally achieves. Performance indicators also allow statements to be made about the quality of achievement, that is, whether the achievement is at the level required or whether the learner has surpassed this level (Bhengu 1997:18).

4.2.7 Range Statements

According to the Draft Policy of RSA Education (1997:3), range statements indicate the scope, depth and level of complexity, and parameters of the achievement. They indicate the critical areas of content, processes and context which the learner should be engaged with in order to reach an acceptable level of achievement. Vermeulen (1997:47) asserts that while the range statements indicate the areas of content, product and process, they do not restrict learning to specific lists of learning knowledge, items or activities which learners can work through mechanically. The range statements provide direction, but allow for multiple learning strategies, for flexibility in the choice of content and process, and also for a variety of assessment methods which will help learners to achieve learning outcomes successfully for the promotion of the culture of learning.

In fact, range statements demonstrate that learning outcomes are not scores or grades, but the end product of clearly defined processes that students carry out (Spady 1994b:18.) The range statements describe the level of complexity and the extent of deep insight that learners are expected to master. According to Vermeulen (1997:48), the National Qualifications Framework of South Africa differentiates the reading of range statements for different levels of learning categories. This is done in order to facilitate learning, teaching and assessment for these levels. For example a range statement for a foundation phase will be concrete and content-dependent. It will be tightly structured by the teacher and linked to small, specific segments of curriculum content. For an intermediate phase it will be a structured task performance requiring a multiple learning strategy, and flexibility in the choice of content. Whilst in the Senior phase it would be at the higher order competency level, requiring analysis of concepts and their interrelations, proposing solutions to multifaceted problems, using complex arrays of

data and information to make decisions, planning complex structures, processes, events ; and communicating effectively with public audiences (Spady, 1994b:20).

The range statements are geared towards helping learners to generalize across different kinds of subject areas, and to use different content knowledge and skills to manage different types of learning situations. They help learners to exercise personal ownership of what they have learned so that they should have self-direction and self-assessment. All these factors of learning build a high profile for the learning culture. The range statement has the additional function of ensuring that balance is maintained between the acquisition of both knowledge and skills and the development of values. It also provides broad indicators that guide the choice of teaching, learning and assessment (Olivier 1998:18).

4.3 OUTCOMES-BASED ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE CULTURE OF LEARNING

The literature reviewed in chapter 3 revealed that the teaching and learning strategies currently operating in most of our schools are teacher-driven and are too text-book-bound. They do not lend themselves to progressive forms of assessment. The lack of transparency and accountability in the system of assessment has resulted in learners not being clear about what is required in the assessment, and who is accountable for their failure to fulfill the requirements. As a result, teachers did not let learners participate in their own learning, which occurs when learners are continually assessed and encouraged to think and solve problems. Van der Horst and McDonald (1997:27) believe that such teachers cannot manage to guide learners to a deep understanding and appreciation of their subjects, or manage to develop the skills required for research in subject areas and to motivate learners to become thoughtful and skilled people. This resulted in a low morale with regard to the culture of learning in schools.

According to the Staatkoerant (1998:17), it has become imperative that alternative strategies of assessing learners' achievements be implemented. These alternative strategies have to take into consideration the continuous/formative assessment in the

summative assessment. In this way the new approach of Outcomes-Based-Education was adopted, because of its principles that are: learner-centered, results-orientated, and what learners need to learn is clearly defined. Each learner's progress is based on demonstrating achievements, and each learner's needs are accommodated through multiple teaching and learning strategies and assessment approaches (Staatkoerant 1998:17). On this basis the new approaches of assessment were devised with a strong belief that they would help to anchor and pursue a culture of learning amongst learners.

Outcome-based education views it as the teacher's responsibility to focus on the actual learning outcomes rather than on covering a provided curriculum. In short, the classroom becomes an active, highly challenging learning environment and performance centre (Willis and Kissane 1997:9). Teachers have to focus on learning outcomes because proponents of OBE regard assessment as a tool to assist learning and teaching to enable learners to achieve the desired outcomes. Thus assessment is not only to be used in testing and examination for comparing the failure and success of learners in a judgmental way – this being the practice of assessment that has brought a low morale into the culture of learning.

Consequently OBE assessment focuses mainly on what learners know and can do. Bertrams (1997:9) argues that it should happen throughout the year, focus on applying skills, and involve a range of methods. It should be about understanding, co-operation and success of all learners. The paradigm of OBE with regard to assessment is the viewpoint of “what” and “whether” students learn successfully, in contrast to the traditional viewpoint of “when” and “how” they learn something, as described in section 3.2. According to Spady (1994b:8), this orientation to schooling entails a fundamental shift in how the system operates – a shift that makes accomplishing results more important than simply providing services. The OBE paradigm desires to have all learners emerge from the system as genuinely successful learners, who have a positive influence on the culture of learning.

The following subsections describe a range of OBE assessment approaches and techniques, considering their approaches to articulating and monitoring student outcomes of learning and performance standards, with a view of influencing a culture of learning in schools.



4.3.1 Performance-Based Assessment in Outcomes-Based Education

Airasian (1994:228) explains performance assessment as the gathering of appropriate evidence about a pupil's learning. The teacher has to judge and observe each pupil's actual performance in which pupils provide an answer or a product that demonstrates their knowledge and skills. Performance assessments are designed to engage pupils in solving problems and performing real-life tasks of importance in their own right, so that learners can attain the learning outcomes.

The performances that classroom teachers observe and judge should match or surpass those that pupils have been taught. First and foremost, teachers should provide good instruction on the content, behaviors and performances that the pupils will be expected to demonstrate (Airasian, 1994:269). This in turn will empower learners to plan and execute performances according to the good instruction their teachers have offered them when they are assessed.

Whenever teachers anchor performance assessment in the kind of work pupils really do know, rather than merely eliciting easy-to-score responses, or trapping learners to do badly, then a culture of learning will prosper. Recent educational research has indicated that performance assessment that is applied against this background ensures authentic assessment (Wiggins, 1998:21.), because performance assessment focuses on the learner's processes, products or performance, rather than on memory, information or behavior. Malan (1997:30) believes that during performance assessment, learners are engaged in activities that require them to demonstrate specific skills or develop specified products. The demonstrations can take place in a controlled environment, such as a laboratory or classroom, or in a real-life environment where the complexities faced by learners are much higher. In the latter case, the performance assessment is also called an authentic assessment, because of its real-life connotations.

Performance assessment should be based on authentic content knowledge that has been transmitted to learners. However this does not exempt teachers from observing or eliciting extrapolative demonstrations that should be inferred from learners during performance assessment. OBE accentuates teaching and learning that promote creativity

and high-order-thinking skills as shown in chapter 2. This is also supported by Fischer (1995:74), who asserts that pupils become motivated and creative when they are able to see and think of possibilities beyond the given information. This shows that teachers should be on the alert for divergent thinking that they might observe during performance assessment, which needs to be accepted as authentic demonstrations. In this way learners will be encouraged to think beyond the given information, which could have a positive influence on the culture of learning.

Herbert (1992:58-61) is of the opinion that in preparing pupils for performance assessment, teachers should inform them of the performance criteria on which they will be assessed. This helps learners to be aware of what they are expected to achieve. This motivates learners to have a sense of ownership over their learning, also to help them to understand what is expected. According to Airasian (1994:270), if what is expected in a formal performance assessment is not made clear to pupils, they may perform poorly - not because they are incapable, but due to the fact that they were not aware of the teacher's expectations and the criteria for good performance. This could have a detrimental effect on the culture of learning. When criteria of performance are explained to learners, this will show learners that assessment is meant to improve their learning, not to audit it. Wiggins (1998:43) strongly believes that assessment should be accompanied by quality feedback. This feedback should be based on performance criteria so that those learners who have performed well will be motivated to continue, and learners with specific learning weaknesses can be remediated.

According to Malan (1997:30), performance assessment displays the following pedagogical characteristics, all of which greatly promote the culture of learning: it asks learners to perform, produce, create or do something; it offers high-order thinking processes and problem-solving skills; learner's work is graded or scored with the use of assessment criteria as the basis for human judgment; it provides opportunities for learners to present and explain their work; lastly it involves learners in their own learning. It appears that this approach of assessment is representative of performances displayed by individuals in society and in real work places.

4.3.2 Portfolio Assessment In Outcomes-Based Education

The application of portfolio assessment in education has been a relatively recent phenomenon. However, it has been warmly embraced by those educators who regard traditional assessment with less enthusiasm (Popham 1995:163). Most advocates of portfolio assessment believe that it can be applied in all curricular subjects and need not necessarily be restricted to art, music and writing. Its application to other subjects will provide opportunities to experience the developmental nature of learning in all subjects. Popham (1995:164) believes that if OBE uses portfolio assessment, the following changes will be experienced with regard to assessment of learner's work: it will engage students in assessing their own progress and/or accomplishments and establishing ongoing learning goals; it will measure each student's achievement while allowing for individual differences between students; it has a goal of student self-assessment; it represents a collaborative approach of assessment; it addresses improvement, effort and achievement; and finally, it links assessment and teaching to learning. The pay-off of portfolio assessment is that instruction, learning and assessment become inextricable and strengthened. Due to the fact that appraisal of learner's work will be a central focus of instructional programs, this will encourage a renewed interest in learning (Seely 1994:57). Hence learners will have a positive attitude towards the culture of learning. According to Seely (1994:3), Paulson and Paulson offer a substantive definition of portfolio assessment in order to show its centrality to student's work. They define it as "a purposeful, integrated collection of students work showing student effort, progress or achievement in one or more areas. The collection is guided by performance standards and includes evidence of student's self-reflection and participation in setting the focus, selecting contents and judging merit."

In order to make sure that the portfolio is a systematic, purposeful and meaningful collection of a learner's work, learners should feel ownership of the portfolio. Such ownership is promoted by involving them to work accurately, for the maintenance of a higher level of learning. Popham (1995:167) also emphasizes that students must perceive the portfolio to be collections of their own and not merely temporary receptacles for products that the teacher ultimately grades. The portfolio should also not be seen as a peripheral activity whereby students occasionally gather up their work to



convince a teacher's supervisors or student's parents that good things have been going on in class. Learners should honor the portfolio as a learning process, monitor them and have control of the product since it will assist them to achieve the outcomes of learning. The learner's involvement with portfolio assessment will ultimately indicate a culture of learning in schools.

Since the primary owners of portfolio assessment are learners, they should be the ones to decide what items are to be placed in the portfolio. However, they must also base their decisions on some clearly formulated criteria. This calls for the first guiding principle - that it must be authentic in nature. Defina (1992:14) asserts that in order to ensure authenticity, teachers should help learners to identify criteria, provide models and encourage them to continually refine their criteria. In portfolio assessment learning is always perceived as evolving and changing, therefore learners should have the right to change their minds about pieces in their collections whereby new artifacts are included and old pieces lose their relevance (Lustig, 1996:33). Such activities with regard to portfolio assessment will improve learners' learning abilities and build confidence in taking decisions about their learning, hence this will cultivate a culture of learning in learners' lives.

Portfolio assessment practices are designed to evaluate student performance on an individual basis. These practices, according to Seely (1994:3), monitor and provide feedback on the educational progress of each student. The teacher's function is to interpret the gathered information according to the expected learning outcomes, and to ensure that learners have achieved the learning outcomes according to the set criteria. However, over and above these issues, portfolio assessment has an interest in the learning process of an individual learner, by considering the ways in which knowledge is represented, re-organized and new information is processed. From this perspective portfolio assessment intends to see learners achieving learning outcomes, applying assessment criteria and performance indicators independently. Such practices enhance the culture of learning.

According to Popham (1995:165), Roger (1994) contends that the real pay-off from portfolio assessment is that it enhances student self-evaluation capabilities. This is because during portfolio conferences teachers usually encourage students to come up

with a personal appraisal of their own work. Teachers are afforded opportunities of assessing learners on a multi-dimensional level. Seely (1994:4) contends that portfolio conferences provide opportunities for students and teachers to better understand the expansive nature of learning and assessment, as a result the interest in learning and instruction are expanded, which will have a positive effect on the culture of learning.

Assessment in an outcomes-based system facilitates transparency of process. Seely (1994:3) emphasizes that portfolio assessment is transparent because of its collaborative reflection wherein both teachers and learners are engaged in the evaluation process. Students evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses; the teacher examines his/her own teaching effectiveness. Together, as partners in the assessment process they are actively engaged in dialogue about learning and teaching. Seely (1994:4) feels that portfolio assessment practices are important aspects of the educational system and can play a critical role in the academic lives of learners and in the professional lives of teachers. Defina (1992:14) also feels that parents and school administrators also share in the creation of portfolio assessment. Parents share by giving comments and reviewing pieces. Principals are involved by being kept informed about the progress of learners, and by viewing the portfolio of learners in order to instill educational reform that will benefit learners.

4.3.3 Self-Assessment And Peer-Assessment

The approach of the OBE system is to support learning and teaching processes. In this respect teachers are not expected to use assessment as a measuring rod of the success and failure of learners. Instead OBE promotes assessment as a means of facilitating instructional programs on a day-to-day basis, in order to motivate learners to learn and enhance the culture of learning.

The researcher views self-assessment and peer-assessment as evidence gathering strategies, wherein learners become active partners in the assessment enterprise. Teachers serve as expert partners. Peer-assessment allows learners to share in and to contribute towards the efforts of their classmates (Van der Horst and McDonald 1997:188).

This indicates that both these strategies will meet and fulfill two important critical outcomes that have been set up by SAQA. Self-assessment will enable learners to organize and manage oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively. On the other hand, peer-assessment will help learners to work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organization or community, as stated in section 4.2.3. According to Van der Horst and McDonald (1997:189), both self-assessment and peer-assessment deserve special attention in the South African educational context, because most South African learners have often been spoon-fed in the past and therefore have not learnt to think for themselves. Self assessment and peer assessment will empower learners to make judgments about the quality of their work, to construct plausible explanations when evaluating their work, and enable them to set future objectives. This would have a positive impact on the culture of learning. These strategies are not only relevant for school children, they also appear to be important for self-regulated learning at all ages (Naicker 1999:34).

Initially, it will be difficult for learners to assess themselves and their peers because they may not be used to evaluating their own work or that of their peers, simply because schools have traditionally not asked them to make decisions about what they or their peers have done (Defina 1992:27). Lustig (1996:27) argues that the best way to overcome this objection is to prepare students to be critical evaluators. This will not only mean that they become better critical evaluators of their peers, but also better analysts of their own work. Lustig (*ibid.*) further suggests that teachers will probably have to model self-evaluation techniques, demonstrate assessment criteria and also give guidelines on how students should internalize and apply standards of assessment to their work as well as to the work of others. This will uplift the learner's experience with regard to learning and assessment and the interest of learning will be promoted.

Outcomes-based education wants to ensure that assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. This is why in the Draft Assessment Policy of the General Education and Training of RSA (1998:19) it is emphasized that teachers should use a variety of assessment strategies in order to provide a wide range of opportunities to enable learners to know how to assess their own work. Whenever learners are assessed by their peers or by himself or herself, they become involved in the assessment process because they are not threatened. They also begin to recognize the limitations and success

of their learning, with the result that they learn from this process. Satterley (1989:279) also argues that many educational researchers see both self-assessment and peer-assessment as encouraging more active interest on the part of children. The reason is that these approaches are more informative during learning than summative statements; they also help pupils to understand the reasons for their own educational performance. These approaches encourage an individualized approach to assessment, which in turn enhances motivation and supports the development of self-directed, self-monitoring young people who might not otherwise reach a realistic appraisal of their own skills and abilities. This has the effect of motivating pupils to have the desire to attain the outcomes of learning.

4.3.4 Continuous Assessment As An Outcomes-Based Assessment Strategy

Fraser (1999:34) maintains that many authors of educational literature see the practice of continuous assessment as a paradigm shift from promotion decisions based on the results of a single test or examinations, to the ongoing formative assessment of the learner, which is associated with feedback to monitor the strengths and weaknesses of learners' performance. Continuous assessment henceforth would promote the culture of learning, since the emphasis of such assessment is on the continuous diagnostic assessment of learners' work over a period of time, rather than on performance in a once-off examination or test. Pretorius (1998:83) feels that such an approach to teaching and learning aims at ensuring success through intervention. This will support the learner in the accomplishment of clearly stated outcomes of learning.

The most important value of continuous assessment is the fact that tasks or learning content can be broken down into different components and that each of these can then be assessed during teaching and learning. Hence continuous assessment has clear teaching and learning aims. It also motivates learners because it recognizes previous experiences and present abilities, since both learners and teachers will be actively involved in assessing performance in terms of the different facets of reality. This can have a positive impact on the culture of learning in schools.

Continuous assessment promotes the principle of conceptualization, because it stresses what learners know, how learners construct meaning, and how they articulate what they understand. Von Glaserfeld (1995:186) believes that continuous assessment has as its

essence that of assessing concept formulation. He bases his idea on the fact that concepts and conceptual relations are mental structures that are unique and cannot be carried over from one mind to another. He argues that concepts have to be built individually by each learner, yet teachers have the responsibility of orienting the learner's constructive process during assessment and specifically during continuous assessment. This indicates that continuous assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning processes as indicated in chapter 1.

Most educators would agree that continuous assessment can be an authentic assessment, and also that it has a sound educational assessment principle, since it draws its technicalities from a variety of assessment techniques. It does not give results of teaching and learning by merely interpreting "one-shot" evaluation as traditional test results do (Fraser, 1999:35). Advocates of continuous assessment believe that complex learning outcomes require several assessment tasks so that learners can demonstrate their understanding in a variety of contexts (Jacobs, 1999:32). This suggests that in order for teachers to apply continuous assessment effectively, they need to have highly skilled professional teaching abilities in order to understand and be able to apply these sound educational assessment principles, and so benefit the culture of learning.

Van der Horst and McDonald (1997:190) maintain that the purpose of continuous assessment is to support the learner developmentally and to supply feedback to both the teacher and the learner. To accentuate its authenticity, continuous assessment takes place while learners are actively involved in daily classroom activities. Kotze (1999:32) also points out that it has an essence of modeling and monitoring functions to inform on the quality and progress made by learners. It also helps teachers to infer from the learners' behavior what is going on in the learners' heads while they are actively involved with learning activities.

Fraser (1999:35) is of the opinion that continuous assessment could be a prominent component of assessing the three main categories that are set out in critical cross-field outcomes, namely skills, knowledge and attitudes. These are the outcomes that help learners, teachers and parents to celebrate an individual learner's accomplishments, regardless of how they compare to other children or grade-level expectations. Since these categories involve informal daily assessment of different aspects of curriculum,

this ensures that content is not the only focus. This enhances the learners potential to succeed.

Continuous assessment promotes interaction amongst three important aspects in the didactical situation, that is teacher, learner and learning content. When these aspects interact with one another, teachers appear not to be the sole authority of the source of knowledge, the content to be learned is not the only source of learning experience, and the learners are not be the only receivers of knowledge. Continuous assessment fosters reciprocal practice within this situation, wherein learners form concepts, teachers provide the skills for forming such concepts, and the learning content assists both teachers and learners to draw information from their variety of educational backgrounds. Killen (2002b:17), Mays (2000:14) and Masitsa (1995:75) agree with Von Glaserfeld (1995:186) that continuous assessment has an essence of assessing concept formulation in schools. While on the contrary is a positive learning experience for promotion the culture of learning in schools.

Olivier (1998:45) argues that OBE proponents strongly believe in a holistic approach with regard to educative teaching. They believe that teaching and learning processes should not only be about knowledge and content, but should aim to construct a well functioning being. Continuous assessment plays a very important role in meeting this educational demand. Its assessment techniques do not only concentrate on knowledge and content, they also measure skills, attitudes and the application or employment thereof. Kotze (1999:33) also asserts that continuous assessment as its secondary function relates to aspects such as motivation and discipline as well as the affective domain. This shows that it is a well-balanced educational assessment approach, which will produce a sound culture of learning.

Furthermore, continuous assessment is a challenging concept in education, especially as a means of achieving the high aspirations of OBE. Beyer (1995:7) feels that it evaluates a product while that product is in the process of being developed and created, to help shape it into its final form. To Melton (1996:420), it is essential as an agent of feedback to students on their performance, as well as a means of guiding students on what they need to do, to remedy apparent weaknesses. The general idea emerging from the aforementioned is that of repetition and development, more development, diagnosis or

gauging competence, making relevant changes and determining how learners can be helped. These steps will provide a fertile ground for developing a learning culture.

In essence the nature of continuous assessment is forward looking and pro-active. Kotze (1999:40) states that the framework for continuous assessment will depend on specific assessment criteria, and generally, its planning should include the following questions:

- What does a teacher want to achieve?
- In what context and when should continuous assessment be done?
- Who should obtain the information?
- How is the information obtained?
- What does a teacher want to find out at each stage or level of teaching and learning?

Answers to these questions will involve numerous assessment techniques, such as diagnostic assessment, achievement-based assessment, self-assessment, peer-assessment, performance assessment, teacher-made tests, observation sheets and portfolio assessment, and lastly, recognition of prior learning. These multiple assessment techniques will enable teachers to apply a sound pedagogical knowledge of each technique. This could improve the quality of teaching and learning processes, for learners to achieve qualitative learning outcomes for the benefit of the culture of learning.

4.3.5 Criterion-Referenced Assessment Within An Outcomes-Based Paradigm Of Thinking

Lorber and Pierce (1983:133) describe criterion-referenced assessment as follows: “Evaluating students to determine their abilities relative to objectives involved, comparing each students’ performance with certain present standards or criteria”. This kind of evaluation is known as criterion-referenced assessment and is an integral part of the use of precise instructional objectives. The purpose of this type of evaluation is to

determine who can demonstrate specific competencies. To achieve this, precise instructional objectives are stated which include the evaluation criteria. The evaluation becomes a matter of observing who can achieve the minimum acceptable standard.

According to King and Van den Berg (1992:20), this approach seeks to compare a learners' performance with that of other learners, but in terms of the requirements of the tasks itself. For this form of assessment therefore, the task has to be defined and a decision has to be taken about what constitutes achievement of that task. To obtain excellent marks learners should be able to demonstrate particular abilities and skills – that he/she has mastered the task at hand. This suggests that criterion-referencing gauges a student's performance by measuring whether a child has mastered specific learning objectives, rather than comparing one student with another. This could motivate learners because teachers judge the performance of the learners' work based on an agreed set of criteria.

Malan (1997:29) explains that in criterion-referenced assessment the norm that has to be attained is not a predetermined mark, but the demonstration of a particular ability or competence. The descriptions of the abilities that learners have to demonstrate are referred to as criteria - because learner performance is measured against these criteria this form of assessment is called criterion-referenced-assessment. Gipps, Stobart and Lawton (1989:75) are of the opinion that, teachers and pupils need to have a clear idea of what is required with regard to criteria so that they can measure themselves against the required criteria.

However this does not suggest that learners should chiefly achieve stated objectives only, as in the traditional way where objectives are organized hierarchically and learners are expected to follow the same sequence. This could be inimical to the culture of learning. Instead, criterion-referenced assessment in OBE attempts to ensure fair and equitable judgments by informing teachers to identify, formulate and make known the criteria which they intend using during the assessment process (Malan 1997:39). Fraser (1999:16) states that the idea is to move the focus of education and training practitioners and learners away from memorization of content as an end in itself, towards a more thematic approach by which learners work with content in pursuit of larger

understanding. Effectively learners will be expected to translate content into meaning and meaningful action. This could promote the culture of learning.

Pretorius (1998:83) asserts that the criterion-referenced approach means that the focus moves from comparison to the assessment of an individuals' performance against agreed criteria. This simply means that each learner becomes aware of what is required of him/her in order to achieve good results for any particular task, and that they are credited with exactly what he/she achieves independently of anyone else's achievement. The independent practice should have a positive effect on the culture of learning.

Spady (1994a:40) sees criterion-referencing as authentic assessment by virtue that it assesses criteria by letting the learners demonstrate the pertinent outcomes that the tasks require. The teacher then gathers the pertinent information on a learners' performance and determines whether that information or evidence matches, meets or exceeds the criteria that define the essential components of the performance. This could have prominence in the culture of learning, because teachers will generate evidence and make judgments of an individual's competence against specified descriptions of acceptable criteria. According to Fraser (1999:17), this type of assessment can only be effective when teaching has been designed in relation to criteria which are attainable, observable and measurable, and which arise directly from performance competencies.

Van der Wagen and Ridley (1997:48) point out that in criterion-referenced assessment the assessment evidence is compared with the requirements of the standard. This allows criterion-referenced assessment to accommodate a broad range of learner achievement by defining a range of learning quality. Therefore standard-referenced assessment is linked to criterion-reference assessment – the latter only prescribes the criteria a learner should meet in order to demonstrate that he/she has achieved a learning outcome.

Killen (2002b:6) feels that, unfortunately, criterion-referenced assessment may narrowly lead teachers to believe that there is a fine line between competency and lack of competence. He further states that in reality this line is very broad and blurred, and it becomes increasingly less distinct as the complexity of the outcome being demonstrated increases (Killen 2002b:7). For this reason, Van der Wagen and Ridley (1997:49), Kramer (1999:33) and Popham (1993:144) feel that, to overcome this problem,

standards-referenced assessment needs to be linked to criterion-referenced assessment, since it provides a meaningful description of a full (open-ended) range of learner achievements. Thus it preserves the notions of excellence that are embedded in traditional grading systems, but attaches clear, tangible meaning to the judgments and reports that teachers make about what learners can do with things they learn.

Killen (2002:6) and Van der Wagen and Ridley (1997:47) believe that, in standards-referenced assessment, performance criteria are spelt out in the standards, and all learners are assessed against these standards. The terminology used in OBE to report the learner's achievement is either the learner "achieved against the standards" or "has not yet achieved". The terms "pass" and "fail" are a thing of the past, and learners do not need to compete against one another for the perfect bell curve in their results (see 3.2.3.4).

Kramer (1999:34) indicates that an understanding of the differences between norm-referenced assessment and criterion-referenced assessment is that in the latter assessment an individual learners' performance is judged against the performance criteria, while norm-referenced assessment compares learners with one another. Criterion-referenced assessment, through the process of establishing standards, starts by describing the type of evidence that needs to be gathered in order to measure whether learners have "low achieved", "satisfactory achieved" or "high achieved". According to Killen (2002b:7) these dimensions provide a very useful framework for thinking about learner achievement and defining standards. They also enable teachers to change the key assessment question from "Have learners achieved the outcomes?" to "How well has each learner achieved the outcomes?" (See section 1.1). Such questions of assessment show the interest and enjoyment that teachers could have when assessing learners' work; as a result a culture of learning could be promoted in schools.

Hymes et al (1991:13) state that new alternative assessment methods are being developed from criterion-referenced assessment. It is believed that these will have a tremendous influence on the culture of learning, because of their reliance on measurement to decide when a learner is ready to move on. Virtually all the new alternative assessment techniques being developed around the nation are by definition criterion-referenced. It is unusual, however, to see such tests referred to as criterion-

referenced tests, because generally, that term is only reserved for the more traditional pencil-and-paper instruments.

4.4 SUMMARY

Section 4.1 illustrated that assessment approaches within OBE differ from traditional assessments that focused on measuring the **quantity** of learned knowledge. OBE assessment is geared towards empowering learners to acquire enduring knowledge. Even if curriculum episodes have long been ended, this would have a positive effect on the culture of learning.

This chapter has established that learning outcomes do not need to be memorized in order to be reproduced as indicated in section 4.2.1. Through OBE assessment, learners should be able to do what they have learned at the end of the learning experience. According to literature, the demonstration of outcomes is in two phases, firstly, learners should be able to demonstrate specific outcomes within a certain learning context, which will enable learners to demonstrate it across the curriculum phase.

The literature review has revealed that although OBE adheres to multi-dimensional assessment of learning in order to achieve learning outcomes, there are criteria that are used to give directions to learners in order to reach the culmination stage of performance. These include assessment criteria (discussed in section 4.2.4), performance indicators (4.2.5) and range statements (discussed in 4.2.6). All these criteria give the authentic directions that learners should follow in order to achieve the desirable learning outcomes.

The literature study has also shown that strategies of OBE assessment are not meant to trap learners, but are there to improve the level of higher learning and assist learners to perform brilliantly, in order to promote the culture of learning. Section 4.3.2 highlighted the collaborative aspects of working together amongst teachers, learners, school administrators and parents. This section indicated that assessment of OBE enables all partners who are involved with learning to understand the nature of assessment. This

enables learners to practice self-assessment, which will promote the culture of learning. Section 4.3.4 indicated that through continuous assessment OBE would support both teaching and learning so that learners should regard learning as a lifelong process, for the improvement of the culture of learning.

The next chapter discusses the methodology of the empirical investigation.