

CHAPTER ONE

PERSPECTIVES ON ASSESSMENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide a broad review of literature on issues pertaining to assessment and curriculum change. This will include a review on how the concept assessment has evolved over the past decades. In addition, this chapter aims to provide a review of the apartheid education system, its evaluation practice and the purpose that learners' performance evaluation practice used to serve during that period. The underlying objective is to highlight some of the educational factors which might have contributed significantly to the introduction of Continuous Assessment.

The chapter will also provide a review of policy documents pertaining to the National Curriculum Statement and the Continuous Assessment policy. The main objective is to highlight challenges which come along with the implementation process of a curriculum change of this magnitude.

1.2 EVOLUTION OF ASSESSMENT OVER THE YEARS

According to Reynolds & Kamphans (2003) assessment of human characteristics has been a part of life of the educational enterprise since the beginning of recorded history. In the ancient Greece and Rome, human intellectual abilities were usually measured by the use of oral questioning and response. Writing materials were not widely available for use in the schools until the late 1800s. In addition, pencils and papers ubiquitous in current environments were rarities until almost 1900. Prior to this period, it was simply not feasible to use written tests on a routine basis to assess performance levels (Lids & Elliott, 2000; Hogan, 2007). According to Hogan learners were simply quizzed orally in order to determine their mastery of curriculum content. However, over time, oral examining was also called into question, and came to be regarded as just a suitable way of examining the basic accomplishments of elementary schools. It was then argued that

the art of oral examining was far from well developed, and requirements of inspection visits to conduct these examinations did little to invigorate the curriculum (Riding & Butterfield, 1990; Airasian, 1994; Hogan, 2007).

The early 1900s marked a significant development with regard to assessment in the education cycle, particularly in the American public schools. According to Shepard (2000) in the 1900s, public concerns and opinions about education were shaped by the economic needs of the society. Consequently, the fundamental objective of curriculum design and provision of education was to teach people specific skills that were needed in society. In the light of this, a precise standard of measurements to test and assess the demonstration of skills and knowledge was required. Thorndike and his students then fostered the development and dominance of the objective test which was regarded as the single most striking feature of achievement testing in the United States from the beginning of the century to the present day (Lidz & Elliot, 2000; Reynolds & Kamphans, 2003).

According to Stefanakis (1998) more than 2000 years ago, the term assessor was used to describe a framed lawyer who sat beside the magistrate of a Roman province to instruct him in administration of laws. Today the concept assessment also means sitting beside a learner and observing, teaching, describing, collecting, recording, scoring and interpreting information about the learners' performance (Dreyer, 2008). It is for this reason that for many people, the word assessment evokes images of learners taking paper-and-pencil tests, educators scoring them, and grades being assigned to the learners on the basis of their performances (Airasian, 1994). This form of assessment is referred to as 'summative', since its fundamental objective was to 'sum up' and 'judge' what has been happening over a particular period of time. Although formal assessment instruments like tests and examinations are still part of the current notion of assessment, it is argued that there is more to classroom assessment than giving tests in order to judge and interpret the performance of the learners (Maree & Fraser, 2004).

The word 'assessment' as currently used, includes different information that educators collect in order to understand their learners, monitor their performances and most importantly, create a viable classroom culture (Dreyer, 2008). In addition, assessment includes different ways in which educators gather, synthesize, and interpret that information (Airasian, 1994; Gipps, 1994; Heywood, 2000). The underlying objective is to move away from summative to formative modes of assessment (Dreyer, 2008). This implies that the purpose of assessment has now shifted to generating information about learners' performance in order to improve and direct the teaching and learning process. This paradigm shift on assessment is viewed as a significant shift away from prediction and control, to an emphasis on meaning and understanding. We are moving away from the assessment model which was teacher-centred, de-contextualized and which emphasised memorization. Current trends in assessment advocate that authentic assessment should be learner-centred, on-going and emphasize critical thinking (Airasian, 1994, Dreyer, 2008; Frankland, 2007; Hogan, 2007). We are seeing a shift from one dimensional assessment, which only focused on knowledge, to assessment practice which includes, inter alia, assessment of learners' attitudes and values (Dreyer, 2000; Shepard, 2000; Maree & Fraser, 2004).

1.3 EVALUATION OF LEARNER PERFORMANCE PRIOR CASS IMPLEMENTATION

According to Jansen (1999) and Msila (2007) the apartheid education system was characterised by a curriculum which was very prescriptive, content heavy, detailed and authoritarian, with little space for teacher initiative. In support of this, Saliva & Ysseldyke (1995) claim that classroom practice was also characterised by a strong dependency on textbooks, while learners relied on rote learning and memorisation in order to meet the pass requirements. A close analysis of the apartheid promotional requirements as stipulated in 'A Resume of Instructional Programme in Public Schools', Report 550 (97/06) clearly reveals that the evaluation practice was summative in nature. The pass requirements stipulated that a learner must pass five instructional offerings at the following levels in the Standard 10 (currently Grade 12) final examination:

- 40% in an approved language
- 40% in one of the following: the approved language, an additional language, Mathematics, General Science, or Geography/History
- 40% in other examination instructions offering, and
- 35% in two other examination instructional offerings.

From the above promotional requirements, it seems the emphasis was on the achievement of 40%. This percentage was used as a benchmark or predetermined mark (norm) to decide whether learners should pass or fail a test/examination. In addition, during the apartheid era, evaluation of learners' performance was conceptualised as a separate activity from teaching and learning. It took the form of assessing discrete, isolated or fragmented knowledge and skills at the end of a particular section (chapter) of a syllabus. This kind of evaluation was usually in the form of a test or examination at the end of a school term or year (Saliva & Ysseldyke, 1995; Jansen & Christie, 1999; Ndou, 2008), and it was considered as a final measure of what the learners have learnt. According to Maree & Fraser (2004) educators focused their classroom instructions on teaching students how to score high marks instead of facilitating students' learning. It seemed the central focus was mainly on cognitive development with the emphasis usually on how well learners have learnt what had been taught (Airasian, 1994). The fundamental objective of evaluation therefore, was essentially to determine learners who, on the basis of their performance could progress to the next level, and those who had to be retained (Darling-Hammond, 1991; Vitali, 1993; Jacobs et al., 2004; Frankland, 2007). By implication, the assumption was that learners must vary, in other words, there must be those who were good and those who were not so good.

1.4 DISADVANTAGES OF THE TRADITIONAL EVALUATION PRACTICE

During the apartheid education system much emphasis was placed on scoring high marks, and effectively, this practice had a detrimental effect on the intellectual development of learners. According to Bott (1996) some tests with long, detailed instructions or written questions were not valid because they measured students' ability to read rather than to

perform a skill or demonstrate knowledge of the subject. As a result, many students learnt and mastered what they believed they would be examined on, in other words, they were encouraged to rote learn how to answer standardised questions, and usually, after the examinations the content was forgotten (Saliva & Ysseldyke, 1995; Frankland, 2007).

Researchers such as Haladyana et al. (1991), Vitali (1993) and Saliva & Ysseldyke (1995) have found that, apart from negative backwash effects that this kind of learning had on learners the approach also encouraged educators to skew their classroom instructions to the basic skills assessed in tests. Under pressure to improve scores, educators were tempted to abandon untested content and to focus their classroom instruction to imitate the format of standardised tests (Shepard, 1990; Darling-Hammond, 1991). They did so, because they wanted the material to be so well learned that correct responses were automatic. Frankland claims that one student at the University of Hong Kong, after realising the weaknesses of the over-reliance on tests and exams remarked that:

Examinations cannot reflect much of what you have learnt and understood in a subject. Because examinations normally focus on several hot questions, and questions are roughly of the same type every year with different figures, I have enough time to practice them well even if I start revising three days before the examination. We do most of studies just before examinations and shortly after, it is all over, I have forgotten everything I learnt. (2007:66)

Critics of examinations and standardised tests, such as Mehrens & Kaminski (1989) and Shepard (1989) claim that this practice not only hampers the total development of learners, but also narrows the curriculum, resulting in the information gathered from such tests being invalid.

Finally, another disadvantage of the traditional evaluation practice was that learners were generally not provided with information (feedback) on how to improve their performance. Instead, they were only provided with summative results, usually in the form of a number that a student had to interpret as best as he/she could (Dreyer & Loubser, 2005). According to Frankland (2007) the only kind of feedback given was in a

form of ‘corrections’ long after the task had been marked. This had little impact on the learning process as Frankland explains that, ‘feedback’ which is given long after the assessment task has been marked can only be called ‘comments’ since it has no effect on enhancing the learning process.

This kind of evaluation practice which relies heavily on tests and end of year examinations was not unique to the South African education system, but an international phenomenon. Heywood (2000) says that in the UK and commonwealth countries, the term ‘test’ is familiar. At school level there are examinations set by teachers which mirror the external examinations. The objective of these school-based exams is to teach learners how to respond to the external final examination question papers. In the United States, learners are subjected to similar examinations with the sole purpose of obtaining certain scores so that they can gain entrance or admission to higher education. Although this mode of learner performance evaluation seemed to be effective for years as it showed the potential that a particular learner had for further academic study, in practice, it did not represent the totality of a person’s achievement or range of aptitudes one might possess (Heywood, 2000). Frankland (2007) referring to experiences in Brazil, maintains that tests often do not expose learners widely to the challenges that they are likely to contend with in the job market. Frankland further indicates that many students in Brazil who failed computations and calculations in school situation did exceptionally well in out-of school contexts in similar tasks. The situation is the same in South Africa. According to Maree & Fraser (2004), many children do not achieve well in our school system but they do well in the everyday world.

1.5 CURRENT PERCEPTIONS ON ASSESSMENT

Critics of the traditional assessment, such as Resinck (1987) contend that traditional evaluation, as practiced in the past, was ineffective or irrelevant since it was unable to measure what should be the hallmark of a ‘thinking’ curriculum and the cultivation of students’ ability to apply skills and knowledge to real problems. This understanding is also shared by Van der Horst & McDonald (1997) who contend that traditional methods of evaluation (exams and tests) were unable to provide learners with appropriate

opportunities to reveal their knowledge, skills and values. It is on the basis of this understanding that current theories on assessment, like that of Shepard (2000), call for the kind of assessment which would not only assess the performance of the learners, but also play an integral role in teaching and learning. Shepard (2000) contends that authentic assessment goes beyond assessing the performance of the learners to include gathering of information about learners' performance as they work, as well as after the learning process.

It is in line with this understanding that Dreyer (2008) defines assessment as a process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what learners know, understand, and can do with their knowledge. Dreyer (2008) explains that, the process culminates when assessment results are used to improve learning. The word 'assessment' is currently used not only to determine what learners learn and the way in which they do so, but also what is taught and how it is taught. Assessment is now used as an important tool in the teaching and learning process at all levels of education and training (Dreyer, 2000; Cajkler & Addelman, 2000). For assessment to improve learning, it should provide a multidimensional picture of what students know and can do. In addition, it should respect students' diversity in ways of understanding. As schools work to prepare learners to be citizens and workers, the emphasis should be more and more on an on-going assessment as a way of improving teaching and learning (Simmons & Resnick, 1993). This practice on assessment is part of a larger paradigm shift from teacher-centred approach to a learning process in which learners should play an active role in assessing their work.

According to McCown, et al. (1996) current practice on teaching and learning advocate that, in addition to improving the conditions of learning, authentic assessment should also suggest actions which educators can take to improve the quality of their classroom instructions and teaching methods. McCowen further asserts that through the gathered information about learners' performance, educators are able to review their teaching methods and make the necessary adjustment to suit the cognitive level of the learners. In support of this Orstein & Hunkins (2009) suggest that assessment should inform the educator not only about what learners know, but also how well they adapt and understand

the subject content they are taught. Vitali (1993) argues that educators cannot get the reality of what learners know in tests and examinations if they do not have full understanding of what they want to achieve and why they should strive to achieve it.

The current framework of assessment advocates that assessment tasks or classroom activities either call upon the student's knowledge of the 'real world', or have the student complete assessable tasks which replicate 'real world' activities or process (Spady, 1988; Spady & Marshall, 1991; Frankland, 2007). Helping the learners see the connection between school and life outside the classroom can be accomplished by the kind of curriculum which is rooted in real-world topics. This implies that all the assessment tasks given to the learners should assist them develop the intellectual competences and skills needed in the broader society or work place. This involves tasks that are significant, meaningful and similar to those undertaken by other professionals like scientists, lawyers etc. in the world of job market or business enterprises. According to Frankland (2007) that schools should present to the job market students who are not only competent in one area (one dimensional prospective employee), but with a range of intellectual competences and skills which can address the current technological advancements. Frankland further contends that intention is to make the boundaries between school and the world more porous, by bringing authentic contexts into classrooms and at the same time developing habits of inquiry that will make students good thinkers and problem solvers in the world.

1.6 ASSESSMENT IN NATIONAL CURRICULUM STATEMENT (NCS)

The introduction of the National Curriculum Statement as part of the South African education transformation process marked a shift from the traditional view of the classroom practice in which a learner was perceived or described as a recipient of knowledge. In this context, a learner was regarded as an 'empty vessel' waiting to be filled with knowledge. In support of this perception, Guskey (1991) claims that an educator was described as an adult who 'banks the prescribed knowledge into the mind of a learner and as such his/her authority was neither challenged nor questioned. According

to Naicker (2006) this view was reinforced by the fact that the education department and teacher training institutions in South Africa had adopted theories of learning that supported the idea that teachers should be controllers in the classroom situation. Consequently, teaching was seen and understood in the light of providing well-established facts ('knowledge') which could not be questioned by the learners.

However, theorists such as Shepard (2000) started to challenge this view, and contended that the traditional evaluation practice undermined the inborn intellectual capacity of learners. Guskey (1991) maintains that there is no such thing as 'banking of knowledge' in learning process. Guskey further contends that knowledge is neither passively received nor mechanically reinforced. Instead, learning occurs by an active process of sense making in which individuals make their own interpretations, ways of organizing information, and approaches to problems rather than merely taking in pre-existing knowledge structures (Shepard, 2000). In addition, current perspectives on education describe learning as a construction of meaning by individuals who are involved in the process. According to this perspective, learners bring their own individual understanding of what reality is into the classroom (Shepard, 2000). This is in sharp contrast to the traditional perspective which perceived educators as adults who 'bank knowledge' in the mind of learners. The current perspective advocates that the role of educators in a classroom situation is to assist and support learners to reconcile their existing knowledge (experiences) with the new information acquired in the process of learning through creative thinking (Jacobs et al., 2004). Jacobs further asserts that this perception could be located within the theory of constructivism. According to this perspective knowledge is the construction of the individual learner, and this construction depends on individual's perception of the reality that impact on his / her sensory organs. It is assumed that learners experience and interpret the world in which they live differently, and as a result the teaching-learning dynamics should also recognise these differences (Moll & Naicker, 2002). Guided by this thinking, it was widely agreed within the South African education context that, with the introduction of CASS as a new assessment policy which would provide learners with a variety of learning opportunities is required to underpin this shift on teaching and learning.

In the context of NCS, assessment is informed by the learning outcomes and assessment standards. According to Dreyer & Loubser (2005) assessment standards (ASs) are what can be referred to as guidelines that are used to determine what should be taught and learned. Essentially, assessment standards are linked to learning outcomes (LOs) and represent benchmarks learners need to attain. They are descriptive minimum requirements which are linked to specific grades which determine whether or not learners are able to progress to the next grade (Mere & Fraser, 2004). This implies that assessment centres entirely unlearning outcomes because they (LOs) describe the goals that the learners are supposed to achieve. A learning outcome is a statement of a desired task, skill or set of behavior which a learner should be able to demonstrate at the end of a learning experience. In essence, it is an ability to demonstrate, at the end of a learning experience, a pre-determined task, skill or set of behavior in a manner that involves understanding and truthfulness (Jacobs et al., 2004). Without written learning outcomes, educators will be unable to say whether the real outcome has been achieved and, therefore, assessment will be unreliable (Jacobs et al., 2004:91). In the South African Quality Assurance (SAQA) unit standard, assessment standards are defined as a description of the required type and quality of evidence against which candidates are to be assessed. In other words, without assessment standards, there can be no standardized assessment (DoE, 2007).

1.7 DEFINING CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

Van der Dreyer & Loubser (2005) define continuous assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning, not just a means of monitoring or auditing learners' performance. The term 'continuous assessment' is used to describe the constant process of assessment that spans throughout the entire learning process (Dreyer 2008:16). In addition, according to Jansen & Christie (1999) continuous assessment merely refers to a general description of an approach which is designed to encourage learners to develop and demonstrate competence in a variety of ways and across numerous contexts throughout any learning programme and it is an integral part of their own daily professional competence. Furthermore, Le Grange & Reddy (1998) and the Department of Education (2005b:4)

define continuous assessment as an on-going process that takes place through the whole learning process. Effectively, assessment starts when learning starts and continues throughout the learning process (Sieborger & Macintosh, 2002; Leahy et al., 2005).

The learning process involves activities that are undertaken throughout the year, using various kinds of assessment forms that ensure a fair and representative sampling of the learning outcomes and assessment standards (DoE 2007). Assessment must be used to support classroom instructions, and it is therefore *for* learning, rather than *of* learning. This calls for a change in the culture of classroom so that students no longer try to feign competency or work to perform well on tests as an end in themselves rather than an activity as part of the learning process (Shepard, 2000). This shift is not unique to the South African education system, but also to countries such as Australia and New Zealand who are also using outcomes-based education (Dreyer, 2008).

Critics such as Berlach (2004) contend that the National Curriculum Statement suffers from assessment overload because educators are expected to produce never-ending tomes of evidence, usually in the form of student portfolios. This, according to Towers (1992) has increased the responsibilities placed on the teacher, who must adapt the new classroom instruction to each learner. An individual teacher must continually monitor each student's work, determine what skills and tasks each student has mastered, and provide immediate feedback. This is- not an easy instructional task in a class of 25 or more. This situation prompted Berlach (2004) to ask, "Is it any wonder that teachers are weakening at the knees?" Berlach further comments that it is little wonder that disgruntled teachers are leaving the profession in droves. Ewing (2003) also stated that teacher attrition in Australia is so serious, that it is being increasingly recognised as a threat to the very viability of the new curriculum, and to a larger extent, of the educational system. It is therefore imperative that the SMT, under the leadership of the principal, develop a deep understanding of what CASS entails, and of the principles that underpin its development so that they could be able to implement the policy.

1.8 ASSESSMENT TYPES IN NATIONAL CURRICULUM STATEMENT

Although summative assessment was a dominant feature during the apartheid education system, it still forms part of Continuous Assessment. In addition to summative assessment, CASS also incorporates other types of assessment, such as formative and diagnostic assessment.

I.8.1. Summative assessment

Summative assessment refers to the type of assessment that takes place at the end of a learning experience (Van der Horst & McDonald, 1997; Jacobs et al., 2004). According to Goos & Moni (2001), summative assessment comes at the end of a process or activity, when it is difficult to alter or rectify what has already occurred. The fundamental objective of this kind of assessment is to assess mastery of the prescribed subject content and allocate learners scores or marks which are later used for award level and classification of qualifications (Heywood, 2000; Biggs, 2003). According to Maree & Fraser (2004) assessment is used to make judgement about learners' achievement at a particular point (usually at the end) of a learning programme or grade in order to measure progress made during the learning process against specified learning outcomes and assessment standards. This means that this is the kind of assessment which produces a measure that sums up someone's achievement and has no other real use except to describe what has been achieved (Dreyer, 2008). Proponents of summative assessment argue that tests and examinations are reliable, repeatable and even objective as all students write the same test under similar conditions. It is often seen as an objective form of assessment as educators are detached from the process and observe things from a distance (Maree & Fraser, 2004). This implies that the responses of those who are involved in the process objectively reflect their potential since they were not influenced by the inputs from educators.

1.8.2 Formative assessment

According to Riding & Butterfield (1990), formative assessment refers to the kind of assessment that occurs during the instructional phase, and is aimed at informing the educator about the progress which has been made during the learning process and what still needs to be learned. According to Harris & Bell (1994), formative assessment is a “learn as you go process” as it helps learners answer questions like: “Where am I going?”, or How can I close the gap? Boud (1986: 27) affirms that formative assessment takes place during the learning process. The underlying objective is to improve learning, as it indicates to the learners and educators whether the targeted learning outcomes have been achieved and where learners are not doing well. Significantly, formative assessment is grounded on two principles which are critical for the intellectual development of the learners; firstly, it indicates where growth is to be promoted, rather than leaving it to the ‘natural’ process of development, and secondly, it provides a model of self-directed learning (Boud, 1992; Brown & Knight, 1998; Dreyer, 2008). To achieve this, there must be meaningful communication between learners and educators. At its best, formative assessment is embedded in the context of the classroom where, in practice, the actual learning process takes place as it facilitates and fosters mental growth. This implies that the authenticity of formative assessment lies in the meaningfulness of the interactive process between the learner and the educator. The process, in practice, requires educators, as part of the learning process, to actively engage learners in discussing their performance.

1.8.3 Diagnostic assessment

Traditionally, diagnostic assessment was conducted at the beginning of a lesson. Shepard (1990) contends that consistent with the principle that new learning is shaped by prior knowledge and cultural practices, classroom practices should include assessment of learners’ relevant knowledge and experience, not only to inform teaching, but also to draw learners into the habit of reflecting on their knowledge resources. The understanding was that when learners are asked questions at the beginning of a lesson or

learning activity, they are able to make connections between what they already know and the new content.

However, Shepard (2000) contends that as classroom discourse patterns have changed, assessing background knowledge should also disappear as a separate pretest step and become a part of scaffolding and ongoing checks for understanding. Diagnostic assessment is designed to probe deeper into the causes of learning difficulties that were left unresolved by formative assessment (Shepard, 1990; McMillan, 1997; Dreyer, 2008). According to McMillan (1997) diagnostic assessment attempts to answer such questions as, “Are the students having difficulty in reading?” Diagnostic assessment focuses on difficulties encountered during the learning process. Learning is a continuous process and learners learn in different ways and at different paces (DoE, 2000b). It cannot be assumed that learners will always understand things in a similar way. Some learners experience learning barriers or difficulties. Gronlund (2003) argues that when a learner’s learning problems are so persistent that they cannot be resolved by corrective prescriptions of formative assessment, a more intensive study of the learner’s learning difficulties is necessary.

The main purpose of diagnostic assessment is to identify learners’ success and failures so that adjustments in instruction and learning can be made (McMillan, 1997; Lidz & Elliott, 2000). However, for diagnostic assessment to be effective and improve the performance of learners the question asked to test their pre-knowledge should be appropriately challenging. In reality, the questions should neither be too easy nor difficult for the learners. According to Salvia & Ysseldyke (1995), if an educator asks questions for obvious and simple information, they become boring because the information does not require much effort to master. This is equally the same when learners are exposed to complex concepts they become less interested as the information does not motivate them to make an attempt. Instead, the information must require a reasonable effort from learners in order to master it.

1.9 METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

Traditionally, most formal institutionalised educational assessment was controlled unilaterally by educators who set criteria for assessment, marked learners' work and provided varying degrees of feedback to the learners (Harris & Bell, 1994; Stuart, 2003). In the current practice, in addition to well-structured formal tasks, which educators administer and pass judgement on how learners have fared, it is also required that they use other methods of assessment, such as peer-assessment and self-assessment which substantively provide learners with the opportunity to assess their own work. In practice, this implies that in continuous assessment, it is a learner who takes centre stage in both directing his/her course of learning and assessment of his/her performance.

1.9.1 Self-assessment

Self-assessment implies a self-directed learning process where a learner sets his/her own criteria, judges his/her performance against these criteria and ultimately makes a decision based on his/her own judgement (Resnick, 1993; Harris & Bell, 1994; Jacobs et al., 2004). Boud (1992) describes self-assessment as the learning process in which learners set goals, specify the criteria that defines whether those goals have been met, describe evidence that would be presented, set out a case for claiming that goals have been met, wholly or in part. Self-assessment involves students taking responsibility for monitoring and making judgement about aspects pertaining to their own learning process. Self-assessment, depending on the context, can be seen as a way of assessing the product of learning, but in practice it is the learning process in itself (Boud, 1986). This implies that, self-assessment is formative or developmental in nature as the ultimate goal is for learners to gain a better insight in their own learning process.

By assessing their own work, learners begin to recognise the limitations of their own work. In addition, when learners are actively engaged or involved in assessing their own work, they gain better insight into the kind of assessment technique employed and as a result, they are more likely to learn from it (Van der Horst & McDonald, 1997; Steyn & Kamper, 2006). The more learners are involved in assessing and recording their own

performance, the more they will know how and what to improve. In addition, this helps learners become responsible and independent (Boud, 1995, Bryan & Clegg, 2006; Dreyer, 2008). According to Boud (1992) that learners will be expected to practice self-assessment in every area of their lives on completing their studies or graduation, and it is good that these abilities are nurtured and developed when they are still young. Tied to this view of learners being developed to becoming responsible and independent future citizens, Riding & Butterfield (1990) asserts that students should be engaged in self-assessment not only to take responsibility for their own learning but to develop meta-cognitive skills by learning to apply the standards that define quality work.

According to Shepard (2000) the success of this model depends upon both educators and learners having a clear understanding of the objectives or learning outcomes that are to be achieved or demonstrated at the end of the learning activity. In practice, specific principles of classroom assessment require that expectations and intermediate steps for improvement are made visible to students and that students be actively involved in evaluating their own work (Klenowski, 1995; Bott, 1996; Stuart, 2003). In English studies, for example, for learners to be able to write coherent and logical essays, learners must firstly be taught how to assess the first drafts of their piece of writing before submitting the final piece to the educator for assessment. This practice fosters self-reliance and the ability to work independently on the part of the learners. What is significant is that educators should not just assume that learners will automatically know how to assess their own work. Linked to this is the understanding that mere provision of explicit criteria will not enable learning in all the ways desired if they are imposed autocratically and mechanically applied (Wolf & Reardon, 1996). Instead, learners should be guided through the process so that they can fully understand what is expected of them. Students have to be actively engaged in debates about what criteria or learning outcomes are, so that they can be able to apply them correctly to their own work (Klenowski, 1995).

1.9.2. Peer assessment

A peer is someone who is either of the same age as you, or in a similar position to you. In a classroom context, learners in the same class or grade at school are each other's peers (Jacobs et al., 2004). Van der Horst & McDonald (1997) describe peer assessment as the process whereby learners give their own opinion of their group's performance compared to the outcomes they should have achieved. In addition, peer-assessment entails one learner or a group of learners assessing the work of other learners or another learner (Harris & Bell, 1994; Goos & Moni, 2001; Dreyer, 2008).

The advantage of self-assessment is that learners often learn more from the comments made by their peers than by their educators. Learners tend to regard comments from their peers as much less intimidating than comments from teachers (Crooks, 1988; Airasian, 1994; Dreyer, 2008). Another advantage of peer-assessment is that when learners become actively involved in assessing other learners' work, they are more likely to learn and improve their performance through the comments and feedback made by their peers. In practice, peer-assessment is not a process carried out by educators, but a participative process carried out by learners themselves (Brown et al., 1997). This implies that the traditional relationship between educators and learners should be democratised and collaborative to recognise learners' perspectives (Lunt, 1993). However, it is important that educators stress the importance of positive or constructive comments, and make it clear to the learners that the aim of peer-assessment is to support and not to criticise each other (Stiggins, 1997; Steyn & Kamper, 2006; Dreyer, 2008).

The disadvantage of peer assessment is that in the context where there is no proper monitoring of learners, it may serve to favour the bullies and disadvantage the quiet members, despite what contributions have been made (Knight & Brown, 1998).

1.10 Forms of assessment

In the context of NCS, educators are required to assess learning progress on a daily basis during the learning process. Educators collect information or evidence in order to help them make decisions about the learners' learning, the success of the instruction, and the social climate of their classroom (Airasian, 1994; Bryan & Clegg, 2006). In doing so educators, use both informal and formal assessment.

1.10.1 Informal assessment

According to Dreyer (2008) informal assessment refers to all the information that educators gather about learners' performance from sources other than structured testing procedures. Informal assessment plays an important role in gathering information about the performance of the learners in the National Curriculum Statement (Peckham & Sutherland, 2000; Jacobs et al., 2004). This process of gathering information can be in a form of giving homework, responding to a set of questions orally, or giving learners short assignments tasks to complete individually or in groups. The information gathered through these activities varies from learner to learner and lesson to lesson and as a result, they are rarely recorded or saved in the formal records. Instead they are mainly used to guide and inform educators about what learners can do and what they cannot do during instructional and non-instructional classroom encounters (Airasian, 1994; Mentowski, 2006). Brown et al. (1997) maintain that the underlying objective of conducting this kind of assessment is to monitor learners' progress, and how to gauge their reaction to classroom instructions while undertaking certain activities. Brown et al. further asserts that this enables educators to identify possible learning difficulties and behavioral problems so that such learners could be provided with the necessary support.

1.10.2 Formal assessment

According to the Department of Education (2002), Grade 9 (old standard 7) marks the end of the General Education and Training band (GET), as well as compulsory schooling

in the South African education system. The GET band focuses on providing learners with a broad foundation of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to enable them to carry on with Further Education and Training (FET) programmes or leave school to take up a career (DoE 1998). The incorporation of ‘continuous formative assessment’ in the GET phase is intended to promote continuous learning (and lifelong learning skills) and to enable the assessment of competence and complex performances.

Apart from informal assessment which plays an integral part of daily learning activities, the National Curriculum Statement requires that a formal year programme of assessment be developed to coordinate the administration of formal assessment activities. This, according to the Department of Education (2005a) is aimed at monitoring learners’ progress formally and continuously throughout the year. According to the Department of Education (2002) a learner passes Grade 9 on the basis of demonstrating competence in more than half of the 66 specific outcomes that reflect a balance and weighted spread over all eight learning areas. Formal assessment is conducted throughout the year by engaging learners in various formal school-based assessment activities and the marks awarded account for 75% of the overall pass mark. In addition to this, there is an external summative assessment component, referred to as ‘Common Tasks Assessment’ (CTA) that contributes 25% to the overall pass mark (DoE 2007).

Table 1: Rating Scale of achievement for the National Curriculum Statement Grade 10-12 (General).

7	Outstanding	80-100
6	Meritorious	70-79
5	Substantial	60-69
4	Adequate	50-59
3	Moderate	40-49
2	Elementary	30-39
1	Not Achieved	0-29

The above table plays a very critical role in analyzing learner performance as, following this rating scale, educators are able to categorise learners on the basis of how they performed in a particular task. Learners who got between 0-29, for example, are regarded as not achieved and as a result, an educator may decide to give them support by giving extra lessons in the afternoon or during week-ends in order to improve their performance. In addition, learners who got between 80-100 marks are regarded to have performed outstandingly.

According to the National Curriculum statement for Grade 10-12, Subject Assessment Guidelines, CASS, in the Further and Training Band, consists of tasks undertaken during the school year and end-of-year examination. Unlike in the GET Band, the marks allocated to assessment tasks completed during the school year account for 25% and the end-of-year examination mark contributes as 75% of the total mark. In addition, according to the National Senior Certificate: Qualification at Level 4 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), to obtain the National Senior Certificate a learner must achieved 40% (level 4) in three subjects, one of which is an official language at Home Language Level, and 30% (level 3) in another three subjects.

From the above assessment structures (for GET and FET Bands secondary school level), it can be understood that continuous assessment, although it is interpreted as an ‘on-going’ process, also incorporates summative assessment. This is supported by Jansen & Christie (1999) who maintain that to assume that an aggregate of marks collected throughout the year is a suitable indicator of competence at the end of the year is problematic. There is still a need for the end of the term or year assessment in the form of tests and exams as was the case during the apartheid education system. Ebel (1997) contends that tests and examinations have a positive influence on education. According Jansen & Christie, (1999) contends that end-of-year examination compensate for the standard error inherent in the marks or scores awarded in a single activity during the course of the year. In addition, sometimes potentially good students fail in the final examinations due to factors such as examination stress and illness (Heywood, 2000). Both assessments (continuous assessment and examinations) evaluate outcomes and competences specified in the learning programmes (Jacobs et al., 2004:281).

What is significant is that when educators want to use tests to assess the extent to which an individual learner has mastered a particular skill, it is important that competences that he/she would be expected to demonstrate at the end of the lesson be specified (Saliva & Ysseldyke, 1995). This enables learners to be actively involved not only in the learning process, but also in assessing their work. It also imperative that decisions that educators arrive at about the performance of learners should include information about learner's progress drawn from formative assessments made throughout the learning process like oral presentations, projects and other activities.

1.11 PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT

During apartheid education, the fundamental purpose of conducting assessment was for placement or promotional purposes. The information collected during assessment only provided general information about the learners' performance, and rarely suggested specific directions to guide their instruction or study to teachers and learners.

It view of some of these shortfalls in assessment, Shepard (2000) suggests that the purpose of assessment in the classroom situation must also be changed fundamentally so that it is used to help students learn and to improve instruction rather than being used only to rank students or certify the end products of learning. Assessment in the context of the National Curriculum Statement is understood as a form of public accountability for the achievement of the learning outcomes (Jansen & Christie, 1999; Leahy et al., 2005; Lumina, 2005). Airasian (1994:7) points out that, educators assess for a variety of purpose because they are required to make a broad range of decisions with regard to their classrooms activities. It is therefore imperative that the purpose of assessment should inter alia, include the following: improving teaching and learning, providing feedback and support and accounting to parents and other stakeholders.

1.11.1 Improving teaching and learning

Firstly, current practice on assessment is that assessment must be seen as part of the learning activity which is aimed at guiding and supporting learners. Mothata et al. (2003: 86) confirm that “the overall message (emerging from the new approach in assessment) is that assessment is now more about learning than testing; assessment for the benefit of a learner and his/her educator”. This implies that assessment must be understood as a learning activity which is aimed at facilitating, enhancing and illuminating the process and products of learning. Such assessment activities must primarily focus on fostering intellectual growth or development and self-discovery on the part of a learner (Van der Horst & McDonald, 1997; Jacobs et al., 2004). If learners are presented with more challenging and complex problems, and are provided with the necessary support to solve these problems, they will develop deeper understandings of how to solve them (McCown et al., 1996; Stiggins, 1997; Gronlund, 2003).

Secondly, assessment should also serve as a window to teaching or classroom instructions (Dreyer, 2008). Authentic assessment must involve activities like documentation of curriculum content and the development of teaching strategies to assist learners improve their performance. It must reflect weakness of the teaching instruction(s) and suggest actions or ways in which educators can improve the educational development of the learners and instructional programmes. This implies that educators should use assessment not only to actively and continuously assess a learner’s progress but also to acquire useful data to inform their own instructional practice (Stiggins, 2004). In the classroom situation, through assessment activities, educators may gain insight into a child’s thinking and be able to realise the kind of help he/she must give in order to make the learning process more stimulating (Shepard, 2000). Van der Horst & McDonald (1997) refer to this as ‘curriculum alignment’.

1.11.2 Provision of feedback and support

Continuous Assessment is formative (developmental) in nature and is embedded in the principle of the provision of regular feedback about the performance of the learners. This is in contrast to the traditional evaluation practice which rarely provided meaningful feedback to the learners for the purpose of improving the teaching and learning process. Teaching and learning becomes meaningful and stimulating when learners are continuously provided with feedback on how they are progressing towards the attainment of the intended learning outcomes during the learning process. Brown et al. state that:

The purpose of feedback is to help a person to improve what he or she is doing. It follows that feedback has to be useful and acceptable to the receiver. To meet these criteria, feedback has to be specific, accurate, timely, clear, focused upon the attainable and expressed in a way which will encourage a person to think, and if he or she thinks it is necessary to change (1997: 4).

Feedback has the greatest effect on learning only when it is given continuously during the teaching and learning process (Frankland, 2007). The advantage of this kind of learning environment is that learners are able to correct their mistakes under the supervision of educators. According to Jansen & Christie (1999), if an atmosphere can be created where peer and educator assessment taking the form of constructive criticism is accepted as non-threatening and supportive, motivated learners will increase their rate of progress and extend their thirst for learning. With the necessary support from the educators, learners would be able to reflect on their abilities and thus enable educators to identify learners' strengths and weaknesses. Airasian (1994) maintains that educators should constantly be on the lookout for learners who experience learning barriers, or social problems in the classroom. Consequently, they should try to identify these problems, analyse and understand their basis in order to plan for suitable remedial activities. Guskey (2005) maintains that the feedback which is given as soon as possible after the assessment has occurred can influence the next step in the learning process.

1.11.3 Accounting to the parents

According to the Department of Education (2000c) in line with the principles of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) one of the purposes of assessment is to provide a detailed report to the parents and other role-players or stakeholders on the levels of achievement of the learners during the learning process. In addition, this helps parents to build a profile of the learners' achievement across the curriculum. This implies that it is important that at the beginning of the year parents and all the other stakeholders outside the school environment be made familiar with what the assessment policy entails and how it is going to be conducted. It is believed that the home environment plays a critical role in the academic development of learners. An essential factor in the home is the involvement of and support provided by parents in the education of learners. Parental involvement in teaching, learning and assessment has been identified as one of the critical factors leading to a successful schooling experience (DoE, 2005b). However, one of the problems experienced by educators is the lack of parental involvement during and after assessment. Parents, particularly from poor and disadvantaged communities often feel they are ill-equipped to understand the new assessment policy, and prefer the old system where a percentage was allocated to a test or examination (Vandeyar & Killen, 2003; Joseph, 2003).

1.12 ADVANTAGES OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

According to Steyn et al. (1999) the traditional assessment was built on the metaphor of an educator being a 'fair judge', while on the other hand continuous assessment is built on the metaphor of being a 'window into students' mind'. Although educators are still understood as primary assessors of learners' performance, they model effective assessment techniques in the development of assessment procedures which include learners' participation. Through clearly defined learning outcomes (LOs) and assessment standards (ASs), learners are made aware of how they are progressing in their learning. This has a positive effect on the learning process, since learners are able to correct their weaknesses as they learn, hence the term 'developmental'. Jacobs et al. (2004) maintain

that in the classroom where educators employ a participative approach to teaching, the teacher-learner relationship is dynamic rather than static and predictable. To accomplish this, the teaching and learning process should be seen as a dialogue between an educator and the learner. This implies that at the beginning of a learning activity, learners should be made aware of the kind of skills or knowledge they will be expected to demonstrate at the end the learning process. In practice, CASS envisions a classroom environment in which learners use assessment to understand what success look like and also how to do better next time (Frederiksen & White, 1989; Stiggins, 2004). This is in contrast to the apartheid assessment policy which was teacher-centred. This implies that assessment is not a process done to them, but a participative process in which students themselves are involved (Wiggins, 1989; Boud, 1992).

1.13 DISADVANTAGES OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

In the light of the disadvantages of CASS as discussed in the preceding section, it can be argued that the introduction of this policy has transformed the South African classroom dynamics for the better. However, it has been noted that both the SMT and educators are working under tremendous pressure in order to cope with the increased workload because of the amount of paperwork involved in the management of CASS. With special reference to Australia, Berlch (2004) contends that the new curriculum suffers from assessment overload. Educators are expected to produce tones of evidence, usually in the form of learner portfolios. This according to Towers (1992) has increased the responsibilities placed on educators, who must adapt the new classroom instruction to each learner. An individual educator must continuously monitor each learner's work, determine what skills and tasks each learner has mastered, and provide immediate feedback. This is not an easy instructional task, particularly in an over-crowded classroom.

1.14 FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED WHEN FACILITATING CURRICULUM CHANGE

In the curriculum change process, implementation begins with the initial attempt by teachers to effect the innovations into the classroom situation. According to Ndou (2008), this the most difficult phase of the change process since it is at this stage where most of the shortcomings begin to emerge. Although according to many researchers, in the context of NCS, many educators appeared to be willing to implement CASS, the shift and adaptation to this assessment policy seemed insurmountable (Jansen & Christie, 1999; Joseph, 2003; Vandeyar & Killen, 2003). This could, inter alia, be attributed to the following factors.

Firstly, the educators' understanding of what CASS is and how the many assessment techniques should be appropriately applied, seemed to be problematic (Bisseker, 1999; Msila, 2007; Ndou, 2008). Most teachers understood continuous assessment to mean that learners should be tested more frequently, which subsequently resulted in inevitable problems of accounting and record keeping in the classroom, distracting educators from effective teaching (Howie, 2001; Vandeyar & Killen, 2003; Ndou, 2008). Another factor which is critical towards the successful implementation of curriculum reform is the initial mismatch between the educators 'residual ideologies' and the principles underlying curriculum innovation (Aschbacher, 1993; Bennie & Newstead, 1999). To change the fundamental beliefs and instructional practices of educators is much harder than implementing the change itself. Vitali (1993) maintains that change in instructional practices of educators remains a central key element to the successful curriculum change, without change in instructional practices improvement in learners learning process cannot be expected. In the implementation of CASS, with no practical conceptual knowledge of how to align or adapt their traditional teaching methods to the new assessment policy, educators reverted to drilling methods and other traditional modes of assessment like regular testing (Jansen & Christie, 1999; Lumina, 2005) This has the potential to compromise the successful implementation of continuous assessment.

1.15 THE ROLE OF SMT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CASS

During apartheid education, school management teams, under the leadership of the principal, were understood to be actively involved in managerial and administrative responsibilities. The general understanding was that central to the daily functions of principals was ensuring that schools remained focused on learning and teaching (Botha, 2004). Although this role remains relevant and highly significant even in the current system, Johnson (1997) suggests that school management teams (including the principal) should not only be experts in managerial and administrative duties, but also in areas of teaching and learning in classroom practice. Effectively, this requires that members of the SMT offer clarity and vision on how curriculum changes could be effectively implemented and managed (Jafta, 2000). According to Ndou (2008), school management teams have an important role to play in aligning the current practices and plans to strategies, structures and systems, and this is critical to the achievement of the intended objectives of the current curriculum changes. It is therefore critical that for the successful implementation of CASS, members of the SMT should, in addition to the conceptual knowledge of this policy, also have a clear understanding of the role they are supposed to play. This must include planning and provision of guidance and classroom support to educators.

1.16 PLANNING FOR CASS IMPLEMENTATION

According to Van der Westhuizen (1995), planning is the ability to establish systematically goal-directed courses of action, strategies and priorities. Marx (1981) regards planning as the management task which is concerned with deliberately reflecting on the objectives of the organization, the resources, as well as the activities involved, and drawing up the most suitable plan for effectively achieving these objectives. According to the Department of Education (2007), planning takes place at two levels; macro and meso-planning.

1.16.1 Macro-planning

In a school situation, macro-planning involves determining the curricular activities which would take place during the course of a particular academic year. In the context of CASS, as part of the broader planning for the successful implementation of this policy, educators are required to submit assessment programmes in the learning areas that they are offering (informed by the assessment guidelines) to the school management teams. Guided by these assessment programmes from individual educators, the SMT is required to draw a composite School Annual Assessment Plan in order to co-ordinate and facilitate the administering of both formal and informal tasks. According to the Government Gazette (no 29467 of 2006), this plan should also be issued to other stakeholders, such as parents and students. The involvement of these stakeholders is in line with the South African Schools Act of 1996, which advocates the idea of involving parents in all educational activities or matters of their learners. The fundamental objective is to create an opportunity for parents to be actively involved in the education of their children. Parental involvement in teaching, learning and assessment has been identified as one of the critical factors leading to successful schooling (DoE, 2005b). However, Dreyer, (2008) asserts that the South African education system suffers a lack of parental involvement, particularly in communities which are characterised by poverty and high rate of unemployment.

1.16.2 Meso-planning

Meso-planning involves planning across learning programmes for all phases or bands at school level for the achievement of the goals. Planning and management at this level assists school management teams to prevent curriculum overload. It is the kind of planning which addresses important issues of classroom management and support. In the context of the National Curriculum Statement, meso-planning refers to an activity in which, as part of planning, principals and management teams schedule time for curricular activities like in-service training or staff development, or sit on curriculum advisory committees as resource personnel and refine the school mission (Allais, 2008).

Furthermore, members of the SMT, according to the Department of Education (2000c) are also responsible for the standard of CASS mark produced at school. This implies that the SMT has the responsibility for ensuring that all the formal tasks are moderated before they are given to the learners. This is to ascertain that all the tasks given to the learners are of the required standard and to address the targeted learning outcomes and assessment standards as specified in the subject assessment guidelines. However, it seems some members of the secondary schools SMTs lack practical knowledge to manage and monitor the successful implementation of continuous assessment. This, according to Jansen & Christie (1999) could be attributed to the lack of training on their part prior to the implementation of this assessment policy.

1.16.3 Create conducive environment

The curriculum change in the South African education system has placed a wide range of challenges on the role of the school management team. The introduction of continuous assessment as part of this curriculum transformation has called for the SMT to create an environment conducive for the successful implementation of this change. According to Dean (2005) change demands ingenious leadership who sets the pace, takes direction and aligns people by motivating and inspiring individuals to keep moving ahead. In the school context, in order to effectively manage curriculum changes, school management teams should take into account both the degree to which the school community will be affected by the change and the degree to which the school community is aware of the change (Ndou, 2008). This implies that the SMT, under the leadership of the principal, must ensure that, educators and all the affected stakeholders, in other words, parents have a clear understanding of how the envisaged change should be successfully implemented. This is critical in managing change, as according to Mokoena (2001) people within a particular organisation respond to change differently; some experience and regard change as instability and thus respond to it with fear, resistance, anxiety and demoralization. It is imperative that members of the SMT have a sound knowledge about the new assessment policy so that they could be able to allay fear, anxiety and doubt among educators. This

would boost the confidence of educators and they would be able to quickly adapt to the demands and challenges of this new assessment policy.

1.16.4 Provision of classroom support

The leadership qualities needed to implement the National Curriculum Statement and Continuous Assessment are daunting, and as result, require skilled members of the school management teams (Gipps, 1994). In the current framework of teaching and learning, assessment is one strategy that educators can use to help learners to learn. However, it cannot be assumed that educators always have the required conceptual knowledge to make a valid assessment or judgment. At times educators make poor judgments (Jacobs et al., 2004). Given that new ideas about the role of assessment are likely to be at odds with the traditional beliefs, educators will therefore need assistance to understand how the principles of the new assessment policy work and also to develop a classroom culture with learners being at the centre of the learning process (Lunt, 1993; Klenowski, 1995; Joseph, 2003). In the light of this, principals and members of SMT have a critical role to play in ensuring that educators are well versed with the different techniques of assessment and that they are capable of applying them appropriately.

According to the Department of Education (2005b), a school management team is challenged through practice and support to extend broader management action plans to classroom practice. Jacobs et al. (2004) contend that principals and school management teams are responsible for improving the methods of assessment used by teachers. Linked to this is the development of new strategies to help teachers interpret and use the results of their assessment. Offering professional development in the design of high-quality classroom assessments is one way that members of the school management teams can support the application of the practice (Stiggins, 2004; Guskey, 2005). This entails assessing, regulating and constantly monitoring the teaching and learning to ensure that failure of the attainment of the objective are minimized. Some teachers believe that the only way in which a school manager can really know how the other members of the

teaching staff teach what is in the curriculum is by monitoring classroom activities (Gold & Evans, 1998).

The consequences of continuous assessment are quite different from the traditional assessment. For example, its fundamental objective includes enhancing the opportunity to learn and improve performance of the learners. However, Wolf & Reardon (1996) maintains that if an assessment programme is to evoke more stimulating, intellectually challenging tasks for students, the school management team should make time available for educators to meet together and discuss or plan assessment activities. Educators must have opportunities during the school day to collaborate on the analysis of student work and to plan appropriate instructional improvements. Schools can convey the significance of this work by providing time for educators to meet to discuss matters pertaining to assessment since it is an integral part of teachers' responsibilities (Spady, 1988). This entails knowledge and skills to determine what students already know and still need to know. Building teachers' capacity to use assessment in this way requires the support and guidance of the SMT (Wiggins, 1989). Active participation and engagement in constructive debate on what kind of outcomes should be assessed and how they should be measured is critical in effecting classroom activities associated with CASS. This gives educators an opportunity to collectively reflect on their practices and look for ways to improve them.

Furthermore, as part of classroom support, members of the school management team should also conduct classroom visits and observe how educators administer assessment. According to Orstein & Hunkins (2009) it is during such classroom visits where members of the SMT should demonstrate their knowledge of assessment by conducting demonstration lessons to both the educators and learners.

The new framework of assessment (CASS) requires the SMT to be well versed in principles which underpin this assessment mode. This implies that for CASS to be successfully implemented in a school or school system, the principal and members of the SMT must be practically involved and give guidance on how learners should be assessed.

However, this does not automatically emerge without an in-depth training of principals and SMT on how the implementation process should be carried out and also how educators should be supported in their classroom activities (Naicker, 2006). The provision of classroom support and guidance to educators during the implementation of CASS in South Africa was inadequate, if not lacking (Dreyer, 2008). This could be attributed to the fact that many principals and heads of departments at school level did not receive training prior to the implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement (Jansen & Christie, 1999; Joseph, 2003; Vandeyar & Killen, 2003). The writers further assert that as a result the management of most schools did not provide the necessary support required to 'cascade' the assessment model effectively. Given this complex scenario, it remains to be seen if this lack of practical knowledge on the part of secondary school management teams would not have a profound effect on the successful implementation of CASS. The lack of curriculum knowledge, which could, at times, have the potential to hamper the successful implementation of curriculum reform, is not unique to South Africa. Hogan (2007) point out that in the United Kingdom, many principals are sorely lacking in curricular and instructional expertise. When they give attention to curricular activities, they often do so from a managerial perspective. This implies that successful implementation of CASS not only depends on the conceptual understanding of educators, but largely on how the SMT play their role in terms of managing the implementation process.

1.17 Implications of CASS implementation on SMT

The underlying principles of this new assessment mode not only have an impact on classroom practice, but most importantly also on how schools should be managed. Traditionally, in the South African context, the key function of the principal was to manage and administer the academic affairs of the school (Jacobs et al., 2004). The understanding was that principals were the sole figures responsible for proper management of the school. All the decisions around matters which affect the school were made by the principal and passed down through a clearly defined hierarchy in other

words, principal to heads of department (HODs) to the educators and then to the learners (Jafta 2000).

However, the current practice is that principals should work in a collaborative way with all the stakeholders, that is, educators and parents, for the successful delivery of this new assessment policy (DoE 2000b). Heywood (2000) says that because assessment is the principle guarantor of quality assurance in education, it is important that politicians, parents (particularly those in the management of educational institutions), and educators understand the factors which govern the quality of assessment techniques used, as well as the role that assessment plays in the learning and instruction. For this reason they should all have a defensible theory of learning. This calls for principals to quickly review their leadership style and work collaboratively with all the stakeholders. It is in this regard that Gutting and Butler (1999) maintain that for principals to be effective in this ever changing educational dispensation, the challenge is to redefine the functions of leadership, since this is crucial towards creating a democratic environment. The concept 'participatory management' means that all interested parties must have a say in decision-making (Steyn et al., 1999:116). This can be achieved through the devolution of power and shared decision-making that encourages people to change and address educational problems. There must be proper consultation with all the parties before a final decision is reached. In the context of CASS implementation, the principal and SMT must ensure that educators and parents, in particular, actively participate in the implementation process of the envisaged curriculum change. It is therefore imperative that school management teams are challenged to play their managerial role which, inter alia, includes creating an environment which encourages all the stakeholders to actively participate in the implementation of CASS.

1.18 Educators' training for the implementation of CASS

The implementation of the National Curriculum Statement has marked a significant shift on how educators should conduct their classroom activities. This is because proponents of continuous assessment call for students to demonstrate their mastery of a common set

of skills (knowledge) in different periods of time (Shepard, 2000). To achieve this, a new approach in managing classroom activities is required. This calls for educators to demonstrate an in-depth knowledge (understanding) of how the new assessment policy works and its challenges, including how to plan stimulating learning programmes in an integrated way. In addition, educators are required to demonstrate a high level of competency on how to facilitate the learning process, using facilitative method(s) and how to use a variety of assessment techniques (Wolf & Reardon, 1996; Jansen & Christie, 1999). This approach has shifted focus from teacher-centred to a learner-centred approach, where educators should make learning outcomes known to the learners before the learning process starts (Shepard, 1990). This argument that educators must make a shift and begin to align their learning activities to assessment becomes relevant only in countries where teacher development and training are considered to be an integrated part of curriculum change. According to Msila (2007:157), “if society is to embrace the new identity partly through formal education, teachers need to be consulted and trained so that the implementation in the classroom can be hassle-free”. The successful implementation of curriculum reform depends on the kind of training and support educators receive. Given the history of the South African education system which was characterized by poor teacher training (Jansen & Christie, 1999; Naicker, 2006), it can be argued that teacher development should have been a priority in both the development and introduction of CASS.

In an effort to provide educators with the required skills and content knowledge, at the beginning of the year 2006, workshops for secondary schools educators were organised in Limpopo to get them ready for the successful implementation of this new assessment policy. However, the findings of many researchers, for example, Jansen & Christie (1999) and Joseph (2003), in the implementation of CASS revealed that the ‘cascade model of training’ proved to be inadequate, and this can be attributed to a number of contextual factors or dynamics. Although many educators seemed to be ready and willing to implement this curriculum reform successfully, training was generally insufficient and inappropriate (Siyakwazi, 1998; Bisseker, 1999; Jansen & Christie, 1999; Naicker, 2006). A study conducted in Kwazulu-Natal and Mpumalanga Provinces showed that the

training was one short workshop per grade, without follow-up (Jansen & Christie 1999). This implies that conditions for better understanding of the content knowledge that informs classroom practices which would facilitate and enhance learning, were not created for teachers. The current framework of thinking requires educators to be dynamic, creative and innovative, since the fundamental objective of assessment is to 'illuminate' and improve the performance of the learners. In other words, anything is possible in the classroom where universal laws do not apply to the specificities of diverse context (Nieuwenhuis, 2003). However, these dynamic responses to diversity do not emerge if the 'training' and orientation are restricted to policy goals. Instead, the training should be of an in-depth nature that takes on board theories about knowledge and the relationship between theories and practice (Vitali, 1993; Guskey, 1991; Naicker, 2006). In the implementation of CASS, the training did not contrast sufficiently with the radical departure of the RNCS at a theoretical level in relation to the apartheid curriculum. It is for this reason that early findings of researchers such as Joseph (2003) have revealed that many educators were still stuck in the traditional methods of teaching which are characterised by over-reliance on textbooks.

Continuous assessment requires educators to be innovative and qualitatively effective in facilitating the learning process. However, being qualitatively effective is an intellectual task and therefore the intellectual tools in a form of training must be provided (Naicker, 2006). Naicker further asserts that a sound theoretical framework provides the intellectual tools to understanding assumptions, models, practices and tools for the new assessment policy. It is the exposure of this nature which could make educators and members of school management teams quickly move away from the traditional teaching and assessment.

Furthermore, the available literature on the implementation of the new curriculum has revealed that some of the facilitators' content knowledge seemed to be inadequate (Jansen & Christie, 1999). Ndou (2008) argues that teaching and learning support services in many provinces were not established, and in those provinces where they existed, officials were not appointed or lacked the necessary capacity to offer the required

support. Naicker (2006:3) maintains that “it is extremely difficult to orientate or train others if one does not possess sound understanding of epistemological issues and how they impact thinking, practices and transformation in general”. Educators are critical human resources in the implementation of curriculum change, and as a result, the Department of Education must play a critical role in ensuring that members of the SMT are provided with extensive training and classroom support for the successful implementation of Continuous Assessment.

1.19 ATTITUDES OF EDUCATORS TOWARDS CASS

According to Wang & Punc (1987), educators’ participation in the implementation of curriculum change depends on many variables, this includes the extent that fears and uncertainties associated with change are alleviated. In addition, educators need skills and in-depth understandings of what the curriculum change entails. This includes an understanding of new concepts or terminologies (jargon) like ‘learning outcomes’ and assessment standards (Somers & Skirova, 2002; Leahy et al., 2005).

In referring to the report of the Grade 1 educators workshop for the implementation of RNCS conducted in Benoni/Brakpan, Kindon (in Jansen & Christie, 1999:242) says that “many of our educators have thrown themselves into the process with incredible energy”. They have also worked for long hours to become familiar with the various policy documents. In addition, they have produced excellent worksheets, recording documents and reports to send to the parents. However, some educators complained that the language was not user-friendly and as a result, they could not cope with the theory and philosophy of the new curriculum. These challenges prompted many educators to withdraw themselves from the implementation process and to resort to their traditional ways of teaching and assessment. Ho & Yip (2003) observed that many teachers are still teaching in ways similar to the talk and chalk, desk-in-rows classroom and one can assume that assessment is still based on the traditional way of paper and pencil.

In addition, it has been found that most of the English Second Language educators in South Africa still rely on more traditional ways of teaching and assessment (Dreyer, 2008). This practice has serious implications for the successful implementation of CASS as it contradicts the ideal of learner-centred and outcomes-orientated curriculum (Bissety, 2000). This continued reliance on traditional practice by educators can be attributed to the fact that the majority of them (including members of the SMT) did not receive training for the implementation of this assessment policy. Educators need to change, and it is clear that they need support in the form of training or in-service training for them to cope with the demands or challenges that come along with the implementation of CASS. If adequate pre-and in-service training is continuously provided, teachers would be able to implement assessment strategies that meet high standards (Joseph, 2003). Considering the demands of the NCS in South Africa, one cannot but agree that teachers are in urgent need of training, especially in the area of assessment.

1.20 CONCLUSION

The demise of apartheid education which, by nature, was characterised by inequity in provision of resources and racially orientated, contributed significantly to the call for a radical change in the South African education system. In response to this general outcry for a radical educational transformation in 2006 a new curriculum in the form of a National Curriculum Statement and continuous assessment were introduced in Grade 10 in all South African secondary schools. This change in the education system was hailed and also perceived as a positive step towards the advancement of the principles of the new South African Constitution. In addition, the change was understood as a milestone towards making the education system responsive to the continued global economic changes and challenges.

The implementation process of NCS and CASS thereof, marked a dramatic change in both the teaching and learning styles. In practice, this curriculum change marked a radical shift from the traditional method of teaching where a learner was regarded as a passive recipient of knowledge to the modern approach in which a learner is an active participant

of the construction of knowledge. The introduction of CASS not only had an impact on educators as mediators of classroom practice but also on the school management teams. Members of school management teams are now challenged to demonstrate their capacity, conceptual knowledge and understanding, not only of how this assessment policy should be implemented in the classroom, but also how educators should be supported.

This chapter has provided a theoretical framework of understanding on how CASS was implemented and the implications thereof for the role of the secondary school management teams in both leading and managing the process. This was done by reviewing the assessment policy of both the old and new curriculum. This was followed by a close analysis of some of the contextual factors which had informed this paradigm shift on assessment.

The next chapter will provide answers on the objective underpinning this study of which is to explore the experiences of secondary school management teams in the implementation of CASS in the Malamulele East Circuit (Vhembe) in Limpopo Province.