

**EXPERIENCES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS IN THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT**

by

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ABSTRACT

The 1994 democratic elections marked a great turning point in the history of the South African education system. A call from many politicians and academics for dismantling apartheid education which was racially biased was subsequently made. This was supported by theorists and educational reformers such as Darling-Hammond (1996) and Sizer (1984) who suggested that an educational transformation that would provide South African learners with the necessary knowledge and skills to think critically was required. Following this call, in 1997, a National Curriculum Statement (NCS), with its accompanying assessment policy in a form of continuous assessment (CASS), was introduced in South African schools.

This study focuses on the experiences of secondary schools management teams (SMT) in the implementation of continuous assessment. This study is informed by the findings of Chisholm (2001) and Jansen & Christie (1995) who contend that the hasty implementation of CASS was extremely problematic for school managers. The objective was to explore the role of principals, deputy principals, and heads of departments (as managers of schools) in the implementation of the continuous assessment policy. Furthermore, the study aimed to investigate the kind of support the Limpopo Department of Education provides to the SMT for the successful implementation of CASS.

The study was conducted in six secondary schools in the Malamulele East Circuit, Vhembe District in Limpopo Province in the following schools: Deliwe, Dlayani, Falaza Gembani, Ndhengeza, and Yollisa and it employed a qualitative research approach. Semi-structured individual interviews were used to collect data from principals, deputy principals and heads of departments. In addition, semi-structured focus-group interviews were conducted with heads of departments in order to get in-depth understanding with regard to their experiences when implementing a continuous assessment policy.

This study found that members of the SMT in many secondary schools in the Malamulele East Circuit did not receive training for the implementation of continuous assessment and as a result,

they lack clarity in many critical aspects of this assessment policy. It has further been found that the majority of the members of the SMT lack a conceptual understanding of what CASS is and also the role they are supposed to play in its implementation. Consequently, educators are still relying much on tests to judge the performance of the learners. In the light of this, it is therefore recommended that principals, deputy principals and heads of departments be provided with extensive training which would generate a deeper conceptual understanding of this assessment policy.

KEY WORDS

Continuous Assessment

Learning Outcomes

School Management Teams

National Curriculum Statement

Principal

Educators

Learners

Implementation

Assessment

Learner performance

ACRONYMS

ASS	Assessment Standard
CASS	Continuous Assessment
CTA	Common Task Assessment
C2005	Curriculum 2005
DoE	Department of Education
FET	Further Education and Training
HOD	Head of Department
LOs	Learning Outcomes
NQF	National Qualification Framework
OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
NCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team

DECLARATION

I, Gezani Samuel Fanseka, hereby declare that this research study is my own work. It is submitted to the University of Pretoria for the Master's Degree in Education Management and Policy Studies. I declare that the dissertation has never been previously submitted by me for any degree at any other institution. I further declare that the dissertation is my work both in conception and execution and that all the sources used have been duly acknowledged.

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late mother, Nyanisi Maria Fanseka (Vusiwana Nwa' Mhlava) for the vision she had with regard to my future. In her entire life, Nwa Mhlava was a pillar of my strength and a source of motivation to all I have achieved so far, both socially and academically.

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PREAMBLE

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The dawn of a democratic government in 1994 marked a great turning point in the history of South Africa. Change in all spheres of life was expected, and education was no exception. There were two fundamental reasons, which arguably, were cited as both critical and central to the call for a change in the South African education system.

The apartheid education system was racially orientated and irrelevant to the modern global economic challenges. Many people, including academics and politicians, argued that for decades the South African education system had failed to produce a competent labour force which was not only responsive to the economic needs of this country, but also failed to contribute substantively to its growth. In addition, the legacy of apartheid left South Africa with an education system that was characterised by fragmentation, inequity in provision of funds and physical resources, questionable legitimacy, lack of a culture of teaching and learning in many schools, and a resistance to changing the way things were done in the past (Department of Education, 1997). In light of these factors it was felt that there was a need for educational transformation that would unite all racial groupings. According to the Department of Education (2003), the kind of education envisaged should be able to produce learners who would be equipped with knowledge and skills which would enable them to actively participate in the economic development of a new democratic society.

Many also argued that the new democratic South African society needed an education system which would uphold and promote the values of the new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996). In support of this, theorists and educational reformers like Martin (1992), Darling-Hammond (1996), and Sizer (1984) maintained that preparations for a democratic citizenship required more than literacy skills or knowledge about government, but required providing learners from diverse backgrounds with opportunities to learn to live and work together in this new society and the world at

large. In 1997, a new curriculum which was referred to as Outcomes Based Education (OBE) was introduced in all South African primary schools. Following this, the Department of Education made an announcement that Curriculum 2005(C2005) would be implemented as an interim syllabus and that it would remain in place until 2008 when the new curriculum for Further Education and Training (FET) would be fully implemented. The new Constitution of South Africa had provided the foundation for the development of this new curriculum, as its objectives included, inter alia, the following:

- to improve the quality of life of all the citizens of South Africa and free the potential of each person; and
- to heal the division of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights.

However, shortly after its implementation, the new curriculum was met with criticism from different sectors of South African society. Many educators criticised it for the lack of practical connections with the reality of how things were in South African classrooms. In support of this, Jansen & Christie (1999) maintained that its hasty implementation became problematic as, inter alia, learner support materials were variable in quality, and often unavailable. Following these criticisms, the Chisholm Committee was appointed by the Minister of Education (DoE 2001). The conclusion of the three months study was that the complexity of the structure and design of the curriculum had compromised the implementation process of C2005 (Chisholm, 2000). In addition, Chisholm (2000) argued that poor departmental support for teachers, weak support of teachers training, the lack of enough learning support materials and general lack of resources had negatively affected the implementation of C2005.

In response to the findings of the Chisholm Committee, the Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, decided to establish a Ministerial Review Committee. Its fundamental mandate was to refine the C2005 policy documents. According to the Department of Education (2001:21-22) the main findings that had to be addressed included the following:

- there was wide support for the curriculum changes envisaged (especially its underlying principles), but the levels of understanding of the policy and its implications were highly varied.
- there were basic flaws in the structure and design of the policy. In particular, the language was often complex and confusing (including the use of unnecessary jargon). Notions of sequence, concept development, content and progression were poorly developed, and the scope of the outcomes and learning areas resulted in crowding of the curriculum.
- follow-up support for teachers and schools was too little.
- training programmes for teachers, in concept, duration and quality, were often inadequate, especially early in the implementation process.

In an attempt to address the above listed findings, a Ministerial Project Committee was established and its main tasks included to lead, plan and to implement the refinement of the Curriculum 2005 policy documents (DoE 2001). Guided by the findings and the recommendations of the Review Committee, a National Curriculum Statement was published at the end of July 2001.

The introduction of the National Curriculum Statement and its subsequent implementation was hailed as a remarkable achievement considering the racially-orientated education system that majority of the South Africans were subjected to for many decades. Jansen & Christie (1999) confirm that the new curriculum received overwhelming support and was regarded as the most ambitious curriculum policy ever in the history of this country. The National Qualification Framework (NQF) provided a structure for this new curriculum, and through this, many changes in the South African education system were introduced. This included the introduction of levels, bands and types of qualifications and certificates envisaged in the Further Education and Training (FET) band. All these changes were, aimed at providing learners with learning opportunities which would make them competent, both in the social and economic development of the country.

2. STATEMENT PROBLEM

The South African post-apartheid educational reform initiatives by the Department of Education which culminated in the introduction of the National Curriculum Statement placed a range of challenges and demands on school management team (Botha, 2004). This new curriculum, with its outcomes-based approach, introduced new concepts, teaching and learning methods (styles) to the education system. This implied that the educator, as opposed to being a repository of all knowledge and wisdom, was required to facilitate and mediate the educational experiences of the learners. In practice, this implied that learners were required to play an active role in teaching and learning activities, unlike during the apartheid education where they were regarded as the passive recipient of knowledge (Jacobs et al., 2004). This, by implication, called for a new assessment policy to underpin and complement the new classroom dynamics. In the light of this, the Department of Education (2001) claimed that a paradigm shift was needed in assessment practice in education and training in South Africa, as a logical and essential part of the transformation envisaged in new policies.

In response to this call, a new assessment policy in the form of Continuous Assessment (CASS) was introduced. This curriculum initiative was hailed as a positive development as it also marked a shift from the traditional model of assessment which, according to Kramer (1999), was examination-orientated (summative), to the CASS which is formative in nature. The critical characteristic of this shift was to move away from an old assessment system which was judgmental to the new approach which was developmental (DoE, 2001). It is for this reason that the Department of Education (1997) claimed that assessment in NCS requires the use of tools that appropriately assess learners' achievement and encourage lifelong learning skills. Continuous Assessment was considered an appropriate model to assess learning outcomes (LOs) throughout the system and enable improvements in learning and teaching.

Following the introduction of CASS in 2001, school management teams (SMTs) under the leadership of principals have a critical role to play in its implementation. The school management teams effectively, are the ones who should play a leading role in terms of generating an in-depth understanding of how the implementation process should unfold. In view of this, it can be argued, that it was imperative that school managers should have been included in the initial process of decision-making with regard to the development of this assessment policy. Their inclusion would not only have made them ready for the implementation process, but also helped them to develop a deep conceptual knowledge of the principles underpinning its development and implementation. It is in this regard that Swanepoel (2008) argues that the necessity of involving principals and members of the SMT not only as implementers but also as shared decision-makers during the initiating, planning and management phases can no longer be emphasized. According to Lieberman (1998) change at school level cannot be successfully implemented without the support and active participation of members of the SMT. The more principals and members of the SMT participate in responsible and initiating roles in the curriculum, the more positive they feel about the change, and the more willing they would be to seriously engage in future change (Poppleton & Williamson, 2004).

In the South African context, many principals and members of the SMT were not involved in the debate which led to development of the National Curriculum Statement and Continuous Assessment. Complicating the situation further is the fact that it is alleged that some members of the SMT and educators did not receive training prior to the implementation of Continuous Assessment. What would make the situation more catastrophic, according to Swanepoel (2008), is that many principals and other members of the SMT had advanced to their current administrative posts with little or no management training. As a result, this situation has the potential to compromise the successful implementation of CASS, because to embrace transformation when one is not properly qualified or trained is quite demanding (Swanepoel, 2008). In some schools this curriculum change is disastrous, as it is driven by political imperatives, which have little to do with the realities of school activities. It is therefore debatable if an educational reform of this nature could successfully be implemented (Jansen, 1999). It is against this

background that I feel there is a need to investigate the experiences of secondary school management teams in the implementation of CASS.

3. RATIONALE

As outlined in the preceding section, the introduction of CASS and its implementation not only had an impact on the classroom practice, but also on how schools were managed. In 2000, The Department of Education (2000a) maintained that the new education dispensation required school managers to work in a democratic and participatory way with all the stakeholders affected by this change in order to build sound relationships and ensure efficient and effective delivery of this assessment policy. This, effectively, implies that the new education system requires that the functions of management be executed in a collaborative effort. This means that in the school context, it is the responsibility of all the role players, that is, SMT under the leadership of the principal, educators and parents, collectively, to ensure that this assessment policy is successfully implemented. However, for the purpose of this study, the central focus will be on investigating the experiences of the secondary school management teams in the implementation of Continuous Assessment.

In the National Curriculum Statement assessment is considered as an integral part of teaching and learning. This effectively means that assessment should form part of every lesson and that its ultimate purpose should be the attainment of the learning outcomes (LOs) by the learners. The emphasis here is not only on the cognitive development of the learners, but also on the development of their attitudes, values and knowledge. This paradigm shift in assessment has placed an enormous challenge on members of the school management teams since part of their managerial functioning the implementation of CASS is to monitor and provide classroom support to the educators. Jacobs et al. (2004) maintains that the new assessment policy requires members of the SMT in schools to play an active role in evaluating and monitoring educators' progress towards the achievement of specific skills and knowledge by the learners. This calls for the members of the SMT to demonstrate a sound conceptual knowledge of the principles underpinning

this new assessment policy. According to Early and Weidling (2004) the effective implementation of curriculum change, for instance, depends on the principal's ability to coordinate, lead and guide the implementation of ways of teaching, learning and assessment, all of which are essentially school management tasks. In this regard Ndou (2008) contends that if school management teams do not recognize and accept the need for a particular curriculum innovation they will become resistant to it and this could place the success of the curriculum in jeopardy. Failure on the part of the SMT to effectively monitor and support educators on the basis of lack of skills and knowledge can compromise the successful implementation of CASS.

My interest in this study was motivated by my personal experience as an educator. After I was promoted to the position of deputy principal, part of my daily managerial responsibility has been to monitor, evaluate and provide practical guidance on how educators should carry out their daily classroom practice. I have since learnt that members of secondary school management teams have a critical role to play in the implementation of Continuous Assessment. However, my participation in some of the principals' meetings where curriculum related issues like assessment are discussed made me realise that many members of the secondary school management team do not have adequate knowledge about how this new assessment policy should be implemented.

4. AIMS OF STUDY

The underlying aim of the curriculum reform in the South African education system is to produce learners who would be able to think critically and contribute to the upholding of democratic values. The Department of Education (2001) maintained that the curriculum change is aimed at producing more qualified South Africans by equipping them with skills for real life. In current practices of assessment, the term authentic has been widely used to connote assessment that is context-based and composed of tasks that can be applied in real world applications (Stefanakis, 1998; Stuart, 2003). However, an achievement of this feat depends on the in-depth knowledge and understanding of the

role that secondary school management teams should play in the implementation of Continuous Assessment. The overarching question is:

- What are the experiences of secondary school management teams in the implementation of Continuous Assessment?

The sub-questions that will be explored in relation to the main question are:

- What is the understanding of Continuous Assessment by secondary school management teams?
- What is the role of the SMT in the implementation of Continuous Assessment?
- What kind of support does the Department of Education provide in creating a better understanding for the implementation of Continuous Assessment?
- What successful experiences have there been of secondary school management teams in the implementation of Continuous Assessment?
- What challenges are secondary school management teams experiencing with regard to the implementation of CASS?
- What recommendations would secondary school management teams offer for the successful implementation of Continuous Assessment?

5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The introduction of Continuous Assessment as part of the South African education transformation placed a mammoth challenge on the abilities of the school management teams to effectively lead change. The school management teams, by virtue of their positions were expected not only to manage their schools, but also to mobilise educators and guide them towards the implementation of this change. This was a daunting task since they (members of the SMT) were expected to implement an educational policy which they were not a part of in terms of its formulation and development. However, since the implementation of this assessment policy in 2001, very little research has been conducted on how CASS has impacted on the professional responsibilities of the SMT.

Given this context, I believe that the experiences of SMT's in the Limpopo Province on the role that they play in implementing CASS would add valuable knowledge to the existing body of literature on curriculum change in general and CASS in particular.

In addition, the Limpopo Department of Education would benefit immensely from the findings and recommendations of this study as it seeks to make a meaningful contribution both in theory and practice to the existing knowledge on assessment. By relating the experiences of secondary school SMT's, this study could offer the Department of Education an understanding of some of the challenges that secondary school SMTs are experiencing in the implementation of CASS. Informed by these findings, it may be possible for the Limpopo Department of Education to develop strategies which could assist secondary school SMTs in their effort to successfully implement Continuous Assessment.

Furthermore, I hope that the findings and recommendations of this study would benefit school management teams from other provinces. The challenges and also the successful experiences of the secondary school management teams of the Malamulele area, (where the study would be conducted, could serve as a valuable lesson to secondary school management teams in other districts and provinces with regard to the implementation of CASS.

6. GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXTUALISATION

South Africa is constituted of nine provinces, namely: Gauteng, Free State, North West, Kwa-Zulu Natal, Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Northern Cape, Mpumalanga and Limpopo. Vhembe is one of the districts within the Limpopo Province (See Figure 1). It is located in the eastern side of Thohoyandou and it falls under the Thulamela Municipality. The Vhembe District is comprised of twenty-seven circuits which include Malamulele, Thohoyandou, Vumbedzi etc. Malamulele is comprised of four circuits, namely Malamulele East, North East, Central and West.

This study focuses on secondary schools under Malamulele East Circuit. The circuit stretches from Nyavani Village along the R525 Punda Maria road (which leads to the Kruger National Park) to Mtititi Village in the South-eastern part of Malamulele Township. The circuit has eleven secondary schools which are located in villages or rural areas; poor socio-economic areas where many households depend on government grants to make ends meet. As a result, the schools fall under quintile two and are regarded as non fee-paying schools. Most of these schools are characterised by over-crowding and a lack of educational resources like libraries, laboratories and school furniture. In addition, structures like School Governing Bodies (SGB) do not have the required knowledge and skills needed to raise extra funds to supplement the annual funds which they receive from the Limpopo Department of Education.

7. CONCLUSION

This preamble has provided a broad overview of the South African education system during the apartheid era. The objective was to highlight some of the critical deficiencies of the summative evaluation practice which, in my view, contributed significantly to the call for the curriculum change which culminated in the introduction of Continuous Assessment. It has also indicated how the introduction of this assessment policy had an impact on the school management teams. Finally, this preamble outlined the purpose of this study, which is to investigate the experiences of secondary school management teams in the implementation of CASS.

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 is 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.

In 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.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology that this study has employed which includes how data was collected, analyzed and interpreted. In order to collect rich data which would provide answers to the critical questions of this study, an empirical investigation based on qualitative research design was followed.

2.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Creswell (1994) a research design represents a plan according to which data will be collected. In addition, Silverman (2000) maintains that the most important consideration in the choice of a paradigm emerges from the aim of the study. In other words, the nature of the phenomenon under study determines the methodology to be used.

There are two types of research approaches, namely, qualitative and quantitative. According to Cohen et al. (2000) a quantitative approach can be defined as an inquiry into a social or human problem, based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers and analyzed with statistical procedures in order to determine whether the predictive generalization of the theory holds true. Cohen further asserts that a quantitative research method is associated with a positivist tradition and deductive in approach, relying on experimental design and statistical correlation. In contrast, a qualitative research paradigm refers to research that elicits participants' accounts of meanings, experiences or perceptions about the nature of a phenomenon under study. Its' central aim is to understand social life and meanings that people attach to everyday life. Qualitative research is therefore concerned with understanding, rather than explanations, and subjective exploration of reality from the perspective of the insider (Creswell, 1994;

McRoy, 1995). According to McMillan & Schumacher (2006) qualitative research is based on the constructivist philosophy that assumes that reality is a multilayered, interactive, shared social experience that is interpreted by individuals. The philosophy further assumes that reality is a social construction, and that is, individuals or groups of people derive or ascribe meanings to specific events, persons, process, and objects.

Informed by the objective of this study, which was to investigate the experiences of secondary school management teams (SMT) in the implementation of Continuous Assessment, I chose to conduct a qualitative research study. The rationale for choosing a qualitative approach was firstly informed by the fundamental philosophical assumption that a qualitative approach is based on, and that is, individuals construct reality by interacting with the social worlds from different dimensions or perspectives (Creswell, 1998). Guided by this, I then considered a qualitative approach as the most appropriate research paradigm through which the understanding of the secondary school management teams of what CASS is and the role they play in its implementation could be explored. In addition, a qualitative approach, with its emphasis on peoples' lived experiences, and the provision of a holistic view of what 'real life' is like (Miles & Huberman, 1994), I was able to get credible data with regard to the kind of support the Limpopo Department of Education provides to secondary school management teams for the implementation of CASS as experienced and interpreted by those who were personally affected by the process.

2.3 RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLING

This study has been conducted at Malamulele East Circuit, which is part of Vhembe District in Limpopo. Malamulele East is comprised of eleven secondary schools. However, for the purpose of this study six secondary schools were selected, namely Deliwe, Dlayani, Falaza, Gembani, Ndhengeza and Falaza. The underlying objective for selecting these schools was that they are all located in rural areas and as a result, are characterised by lack of resources and over-crowding. These factors were considered critical as they have an impact on classroom dynamics like sitting arrangement and

instructional practice, which sometimes can determine the success or failure of a curriculum change of this magnitude.

Cohen et al. (2000:92) “maintain that the quality of a piece of writing does not only stand or fall by the appropriate type of the methodology and instrumentation, but also by the suitability of the sampling strategy that is adopted”. According to Anderson (1998), a sample comprises elements of a population considered for actual inclusion in the study, or it can be viewed as a subset of subjects drawn from the population in which we are interested. Sampling is a strategy which is used to select a sample of participants chosen from the whole population in order to gain information about the larger group (McMillan & Schumcher, (2006); Johnson & Christensen, 1999). These participants are chosen on the basis of being knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon under investigation (McMillan & Schumacher 2006).

Seaberg (1988: 240) defines sample as “a small portion of the total set of objects, events or persons that together comprises the subject of study”. More often, qualitative researchers are intentionally non-random in their selection of data sources, instead sampling is purposeful. They select those individuals or objects that they believe would yield the most information about the topic under investigation (Leedy & Ormrod 2005). Furthermore, some qualitative researchers believe that there is not necessarily a single truth to be discovered. Instead, there may be multiple perspectives held by different individuals, with each perspectives having equal validity or truth (Creswell, 1998; Leedy & Ormrod 2005).

Melville & Goddard (1996) maintains that in deciding on the participants for a study, the researcher chooses a number of individuals who he/she selects according to the pre-determined criteria, for the sake of valuable contribution to increase knowledge. Guided by these views, six principals, six deputy principals and twelve heads of departments were selected for data collection in this study. In addition, two curriculum advisors were selected to participate in this study. The six secondary schools principals and deputy principals were purposefully selected since I regarded them to be information-rich and

have in-depth knowledge with regard to matters pertaining to curriculum change since they were all appointed to the position of management before CASS was implemented.

Furthermore, principals are considered to be curriculum leaders and on the basis of this they are considered to be information-rich. On the other hand, twelve heads of departments were also purposefully selected on the account that they are the ones responsible for the provisioning of curriculum support and guidance to educators. They are the middle managers who are responsible for managing and monitoring the classroom activities.

Finally, the two Curriculum Advisors were also purposefully selected in order to get informed understanding about the nature of support the Limpopo Department of Education provides to secondary school management teams for the implementation of CASS. Below is a table which provides the profiles of the participants.

Table 2: Biographical details of the participants

Name of School	Name of participant	Position	Gender	Race	Age	Experience	Subject offering
DELIWE	Benson	Principal	Male	Black	58	26	-
	Khangela	Deputy Principal	Male	Black	45	18	English
	Benny	HOD	Male	Black	50	24	EMS
	Talent	HOD	Female	Black	43	16	English
DLAYANI	Dickson	Principal	Male	Black	52	23	-
	Mbhoni	Deputy Principal	Female	Black	50	24	Life Sciences
	Fumani	HOD	Female	Black	50	20	Natural Sciences
	Moyana	HOD	Male	Black	42	23	Geography
FALAZA	Wilson	Principal	Male	Black	48	27	-
	Burisani	Deputy Principal	Male	Black	54	19	Life Sciences
	Nthabiseng	HOD	Female	Black	49	15	Economics
	Thulani	HOD	Male	Black	39	21	Maths
GEMBANI	Mapawa	Principal	Male	Black	55	21	Maths
	Khondhema	Deputy Principal	Male	Black	56	22	History
	Tumelo	HOD	Female	Black	57	27	Xitsonga
	Thapelo	HOD	Male	Black	38	17	Physical Science
Ndhengeza	Gregory	Principal	Male	Black	60	21	-
	Mbhoni	Deputy Principal	Female	Black	48	16	Afrikaans
	Khetani	HOD	Female	Black	53	23	Social Sciences

	Thandeka	HOD	Male	Black	46	20	English
YOLLISA	Daniel	Principal	Male	Black	40	25	Economics
	Tsakisa	Deputy Principal	Male	Black	46	20	B. Studies
	Carrol	HOD	Female	Black	51	21	History
	Maggy	HOD	Female	Black	38	22	Agricultural Science
	Jameson	Curr. Advisor	Male	Black	56	28	
	Peterson	Curr. Advisor	Male	Black	58	26	

The names provided in the above table are not the real names of the participants and the respective schools, but pseudonyms.

2.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Miles & Huberman (1994) maintains that qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomenon in the context-specific settings, such as a “real world setting (where) the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest”. This implies that qualitative research produces findings which are from the real-world settings where the ‘phenomenon of interest’ unfolds naturally. In this study, in-depth individual interviews and focus group interviews were used as data collecting instrument to get credible data on the experiences of secondary school principals in the implementation of the Continuous Assessment Policy.

2.4.1 Interviews

For the purpose of this study, I conducted in-depth face to face interviews with the selected principals, deputy principals and two Curriculum Advisors and with their permission, all the sessions were audio-recorded. On average, each of these interviews

took approximately thirty minutes. The rationale behind choosing interviews as the appropriate instrument for collecting data in this study is that, according to Griffee (2005:36), “interviewing is the most predominant mode of data or information collection in qualitative research”. Interviewing is perceived as ‘talking’, and talking is natural. In support of this view, Kvale (1996) defines qualitative research as an attempt to understand the world from the participants’ point of view, to unfold the meanings of peoples’ experiences (and) to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations. In addition, interviews are regarded as a two-way conversation which is initiated by the interviewer for the purpose of obtaining research relevant information. Furthermore, Seidman (1998) maintains that one interviews because one is interested in other peoples’ stories, and stories are ways of knowing.

According to Creswell (2003) one of the strengths of qualitative research, is that it enables researchers to explore the ‘hidden’ areas of peoples’ lives, attitudes and emotions-by entering their ‘sacred places’ and unraveling their ‘cover stories’. In support of this, Leedy & Ormord (2005) maintain that qualitative research focuses on phenomenon that occurs in natural setting, and that is the ‘real world’. Guided by this, all the interviews with principals, deputy principals and Curriculum Advisors took place in their respective offices.

I conducted face to face in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the principals and deputy principals of the selected schools. Taking in consideration Borg & Gall (1998)’s observation that the quality of an interview depends mainly on the skills of the researcher as an interviewer, in order to prepare questions that would not only yield rich data, but also provide answers to the critical research questions of this study, I used an interview guide or schedule. I listed and categorised all the questions according to different themes to be explored, that is impact of the curriculum change, understanding the concept ‘Continuous Assessment’, role of the SMT in the implementation of CASS, and support by the Limpopo Department of Education (See Appendix 4).

After conducting the first session of interviews with the first participant, I listened to the audio-recorded response and thereafter transcribed it verbatim. The understanding gained from the first interview helped me to probe deep during the other interview sessions (with principals and deputy principals) and get quality data with regard to the experiences of school management teams in the implementation of CASS. Participants were asked open-ended questions which enabled them to express themselves freely when relating their 'lived stories' with regard to the role they play in the implementation of CASS. Follow-up questions were pursued, with special reference to the interview guide or schedule in order to ensure that all the aspects of this study were covered. According to Cohen et al. (2003) open-ended questions are flexible, and they allow the interviewer to probe so that he/she may go into more depth if she/he chooses, or clear up any misunderstanding. Through these questions I managed to get information which clearly reflected their inner most feelings and emotions of the participants about their successful experiences and challenges thereof with regard to the implementation of continuous assessment.

I conducted two sessions of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with two Curriculum Advisors. Having met them several times in the past, during Circuit Management meetings, I found it quite easy to establish a relationship of mutual trust, openness and acceptance with them which made it easier for them to reflect their experiences. Miles & Huberman (1994) maintain that a relationship of this nature is crucial in qualitative research because the participants are not only expected to reveal their 'hidden stories', but also their 'secrets' and 'sacred' feelings about the phenomenon under investigation.

Participants were asked open ended questions and direct questions to elicit their 'inner-most feelings' about some of the challenges they experienced when providing support to secondary school management teams as experienced and interpreted by themselves, being actively involved in the implementation process. While listening to the participants I took down notes in my journal. This included participants' gestures which were noted and summarised for thorough analysis and interpretation. McMillan & Schumacher, (2006:324) maintain that "concrete, precise description from the field notes and interviews elaboration are the hallmark of qualitative research and principal patterns in the data".

2.4.2 Semi-structured focus group interviews

Schurink & Schurink (1998) describe focus group interviews as a purposive discussion of a specific topic or related topics taking place between nine to twelve people with similar backgrounds and common interests. In addition, according to Krueger (1994) focus group interviews is a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. The rationale behind using focus group interviews as a data collection instrument in this study was, according to Krueger its ability to produce concentrated amounts of data on a topic of interest. In addition, focus group interviews are cost and time effective as participants and researcher can be in the same place at the same time and as a result are able to interact on a face to face basis (Schurink & Schurink, 1998). The aim of using focus group interviews in this study was to develop a better understanding of the role that heads of departments play in the implementation of CASS.

For the purpose of this study, I conducted two sessions of focus group interviews with the Heads of Department of the selected schools and with the permission of the participants, both sessions were audio-taped. These interview sessions took approximately one hour and thirty minutes. Each session was constituted by six participants and ran for approximately one hour and thirty minutes. This has enabled the participants to prepare themselves thoroughly for the interviews. For the smooth running of the interview, I ensured that the venue was convenient for all the participants, in other words, that it was accessible and had electricity for audio-recording purposes.

Before the start of the interviews I introduced myself and thereafter assigned or allocated all the participants with numbers from one to six. These numbers were used as 'name tags' to enable me to identify them throughout the discussion or interview session. In addition, participants were also made aware that the allocated numbers would only be used to facilitate the discussion, but for the purposes of data analysis and writing of the final report, they would be replaced with pseudonyms. Participants were also assured that everything they would share during the discussion would be treated as confidential. They

were also requested that after the discussion they should not reveal each other's identity and most importantly, they should also treat all the comments made during the discussion as confidential. Participants were further assured that there was no right or wrong answers, and that even negative comments are useful in gaining insight about the topic under discussion. Participants were thereafter seated in a circular shape so that everyone could face each other throughout the discussion. This enabled me, as the facilitator, to keep track of the discussion and through this arrangement I was able to link comments made by a particular participant with the allocated number when transcribing the audio-recorded interviews verbatim for data analysis.

Participants were asked semi-structured questions guided by topics which were to be explored, that is, understanding of continuous assessment, the role of the SMT in the implementation of CASS and support from the department of education. In addition, participants were asked direct questions to probe their responses. By following up in areas which I felt needed clarity I managed to collect rich and quality data which reflected the emotional feelings of the participants, as viewed or experienced by the people who were actively involved in the implementation process. In line with Stewart (1990), when comments related to one question are finished, I briefly summarized them, making sure there was a general agreement among the participants. While directing the discussion, I also took down notes in my journal. The notes included non-verbal behavior such as eye contact, posture and gestures between group members for analysis. At the end of each session, all the main points were summarised and clarification was sought from individual participants on issues that I felt needed further explanation.

2.5. DATA ANALYSIS

The concept 'data' refers to all the information identified and gathered in the process of a particular study. Ary et al. (2002: 465) maintain that "data analysis is the heart of qualitative research and the process that most distinguish qualitative from quantitative research. This is the most critical role of the researcher since he/she has to search, arrange and re-arrange the collected data in such a way that it can be clearly understood and

presented. In analyzing the collected data, my first step was to listen to the audio-recorded interviews several times. This was followed by transcribing all the audio-recorded interviews (including field notes) verbatim. Seidman (1991: 281) maintains that transcribing “is a crucial step, for there is the potential for massive data loss, distortion and reduction of complexity”. Field notes for both the individual and semi-structured focus group interviews were constantly consulted when transcribing the collected data. This helped me to recall the body language, facial expressions and other gestures of the participants. After transcribing the interviews, I went through the transcripts several times until I became familiar with the data and made sense of the responses of the participants. This was informed by Griffiee (2000), Marshall and Rossman (1999) who suggest that reading, reading and reading once more through the data forces the researcher to become familiar with the data in an intimate way.

Qualitative research requires logical reasoning, organizing data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among the categories, making specific observations and then drawing inferences about larger and more general phenomenon (Griffiee, 2005). Following this, emerging different sets of information with regard to the implementation of CASS were organized in categories and given codes. Leedy & Ormrod, (2005, 150) maintain that “analysis in qualitative research is a systematic process of selecting, categorizing, comparing and synthesizing and interpreting data to provide explanations of the single phenomenon of interest”. According to Cohen et al. (2001) coding is a process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data. Selective coding was used to identify and determine recurring categories. This proved helpful since through these codes I managed to work out commonalities and differences in the participants’ responses with regard to the successful experiences of secondary school management teams in the implementation of CASS. Finally, themes which focused and supported the experiences of secondary school management teams in the implementation CASS were summarised, interpreted and regarded as the findings of this study. For this study, the interpretation of the findings was presented in a narrative form, with direct quotations supporting the interpretations.

2.6 TRUSTWORTHY

According to Creswell (1998) trustworthiness concerns convincing the audience and the self that the findings of the inquiry are worth paying attention to and taking account of. Guided by this, the strategies employed in ensuring the trustworthiness of this study relate to the credibility and transferability of the findings.

2.7 CREDIBILITY

According to Schulze (2002) credibility refers to ensuring that the research was conducted in such a way that the phenomenon under study was accurately described. This is regarded as the most critical elements of determining the trustworthiness of the findings and inferences from qualitative research. For the purpose of this study, trustworthiness was achieved by ensuring data were collected in the natural setting to reflect lived experiences. I personally visited schools and interviewed the participants. In addition, in order to verify the accuracy of the findings, all the participants were given the opportunity to read through the transcripts of the interviews in order to check if the transcriptions were correct before a comprehensive integration of the findings (Leedy & Ormord, 2005).

2.8 TRANSFERABILITY OF FINDINGS

According to Schulze (2002) transferability determines whether the results of a particular study can be applicable to another context, as opposed to quantitative research where the researcher is looking for results that can be generalized.

2.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Schulze (2002) ethical measures are principles which the researcher should abide himself/herself by when conducting research. For the purpose of this study, the following research principles or ethics were followed.

2.10 PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY

Borg & Gall (1989:104) maintain that when working with any administrative hierarchy like schools it is imperative to follow appropriate channels. In addition, McMillan & Schumacher (2006) say that in order to conduct research at an institution such as a university or school, approval for conducting the research should be obtained before data is collected. Informed by this, I firstly applied for a permission to the Provincial Head of Department of Limpopo to conduct a research study (See Appendix 1). Upon receiving the permission, I then applied for permission to the Circuit Manager of Malamulele East to visits principals of the selected secondary schools. The purpose of the visit was to meet all the participants and explain to them the nature of my studies before the process of data collection gets underway. This is supported by Pilot & Hungler (1995) who mentions that while the granting of permission by relevant authority is important, it also lets people on the ground know what the study seeks to accomplish.

2.11 ACCESSING THE PARTICIPANTS

Borg & Gall (1989: 104) “maintain that when working with any administrative hierarchy such as school district, it is very important to follow appropriate channels of authority”. In compliance with this observation or protocol, upon receiving permission from the Circuit Manager, I then telephonically secured appointments with principals of the selected schools. I also requested principals to provide me with contact numbers of two heads of departments from their respective schools.

Upon receiving their approval, I then visited their schools. These preliminary visits (to the selected schools) proved significant because they provided me with the opportunity to meeting the participants personally beforehand and establishing a healthy working relationship with them. In addition, these visits proved critical since many participants, upon realizing that I too, was a deputy principal, who presumably was also going through what they were experiencing, showed greater eagerness and willingness to participate in my study.

Furthermore, through these visits I also managed to arrange with them convenient times for the interviews as I did not want to disrupt the smooth running of their schools. It was difficult to arrange convenient times for interviews as some of the principals and deputy principals preferred to be interviewed in the afternoon, citing tight schedules during school hours. Due to this arrangement, in some instances, I would conduct one session of interview with the principal and went back in the afternoon for another session with the deputy principal. However, despite these challenges I managed to access all the selected participants.

2.12 INFORMED CONSENT

Upon receiving permission from the Circuit Manager I then secured appointments with all the principals of the selected schools to visit their schools and to also recommend two heads of departments who can participate in this study. Anderson (1998: 16) maintains that “all human behavior is subjected to ethical principles and rules, and that research practice is no exception”. One of the most important principles for ethical acceptability is informed consent (Cohen et al., 2003; Anderson, 1998). Participants should be informed beforehand about the objective and the benefit of the research. For the purpose of this study, I firstly explained to all the participants the purpose of this study, and thereafter indicated to them that their participation in this study is voluntary. I also indicated to them that they were free to withdraw from the study without advancing reason(s) for their decision. I further explained to them that the research objectives were secondary to their well-being and as such every action taken would always place their interests above those of the study. They were thereafter presented with the Consent Forms which they were requested to read and thereafter sign as shown in (See Appendix 3.

2.13 CONFIDENTIALITY

According to McMillan & Schumacher (2006) qualitative research is more likely to be personally intrusive than quantitative. McMullan & Schumacher further say that information on participants should be regarded as confidential unless otherwise agreed on

through informed consent. Ethical issues such as confidentiality indicate an awareness and recognition of the rights of individual in undertaking research (Anderson, 1998). For the purpose of this study, participants (principals, deputy principals and curriculum advisors) were assured that the information they would provide would be treated as confidential and also be used only for the purpose of this study. In addition, participants were also guaranteed anonymity in any recorded or published material.

2.14 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a framework of the research methodology that was employed in this study. Given the central objective of this study was to investigate the experiences of secondary school SMT in the implementation of CASS, it was decided that the study would be qualitative in nature. This was informed by the fact that qualitative research seeks to understand the social phenomenon under investigation from the participants' perspective. In addition, for the purpose of this study, data were collected from the natural setting, that is schools. Furthermore, the chapter has provided a breakdown of the research methods that was followed in collecting data. In order to collect data which would be rich, all the participants were purposefully solicited. Secondary school principals, deputy principals and heads of departments are key personnel in the implementation of curriculum change and as such, they were regarded as knowledgeable and rich sources of information. In this study in-depth interviews and focus group interviews were used as data collecting instruments to gain insight with regard to the experiences secondary school management teams in the implementation of Continuous Assessment in the Revised National Curriculum Statement.

CHAPTER THREE

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of this study was to investigate the experiences of secondary school management teams (SMT) in the implementation of continuous assessment. This chapter provides views of the participants on the following critical questions:

- What is the understanding of Continuous Assessment by secondary school management teams?
- What is the role of the SMT in the implementation of Continuous Assessment?
- What kind of support does the Limpopo Department of Education provide in creating a better understanding in the implementation of Continuous Assessment?
- What have been the successful experiences of secondary school management teams in the implementation of Continuous Assessment?
- What are the challenges which secondary school management teams are experiencing with regard to the implementation of Continuous Assessment?
- What recommendations would secondary school management teams offer for the successful implementation of Continuous Assessment?

3.2 PARTICIPANTS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONCEPT 'CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT'

The findings of this study based on the views of the participants with regard to their understanding of Continuous Assessment will be discussed under the following headings:

- The significance of the introduction of Continuous Assessment.
- What is Continuous Assessment?
- Purpose of assessment.
- Advantages and disadvantages of CASS

3.2.1 Significance of the introduction of CASS

According to Jansen & Christie (1999: 247) “it has been widely agreed in education circles in South Africa that a paradigm shift in assessment is required in order to ensure that assessment practices guide, support and underpin our transformative outcomes-based model for education and training. It has been realized after many decades that the apartheid assessment policy emphasizes much on teaching students how to score high marks instead of better facilitating the students’ learning (Saliva & Ysseldyke, 1995). Critics of this practice includes Arasian (1994) who argues that the central focus was mainly on learners’ cognitive performance, usually on how well learners have learned what has been taught

The majority of the participants interviewed in this study shared the same sentiment that the introduction of the Continuous Assessment Policy in the South African education system marked a major breakthrough from the apartheid assessment policy. Participants indicated that the traditional evaluation practice was exam-orientated (summative) and teacher-centered in practice. According to the participants CASS generates information in order to inform and guide instructional activities. This was confirmed by Danval who remarked that the introduction of CASS was necessary and long overdue considering the educational ills of the apartheid education. In addition participants claimed that the introduction of CASS marked a dramatic shift from the traditional evaluation practice which was characterized by tests and end of the year examination to the policy which promotes learning and self-discovery on the part of the learners.

Their understanding of the significance of the introduction of continuous assessment is supported by Frankland (2007) who says that current trends on assessment advocate that authentic assessment should be learner-centred, an on-going process and that much emphasis should be placed on critical thinking. In addition, (Maree & Fraser, 2004) contends that we are seeing a shift from one dimensional assessment which focused on knowledge, to an assessment policy which will include attitudes and values. This view was also confirmed by Peterson who said that majority of the learners produced during

the apartheid education system were mentally shallow and could not look at things critically. Participants said that now that the focus is on the mental development than memorizing knowledge, learners will be able to discover their true potential.

Furthermore, while authors like Jansen & Christie (1999) claim that it has been widely agreed in the South African education circles that the introduction of CASS was a milestone towards overhauling the South African education system and in support of this, participants interviewed in this study indicated that apart from educational transformation motive, the process also had a political agenda. Participants argued that for many decades the apartheid assessment policy had failed to produce learners who were able to make a positive impact on the growth of the South African economy. This was confirmed by Tumelo (head of department) when she remarked:

For a number of years, South Africa failed to produce a competent workforce which could meet the demands of our labour market and contribute substantively to the growth of our economy.

Benny added that much emphasis was placed on acquiring knowledge contributed immensely to the ignorance of other skills and potential that learners who were not mentally gifted could have exploited and earned a better living. Khetani claimed that the high number of foreigners in the South African job market who were occupying key positions was a classical testimony that the apartheid education system was a flop in terms of producing competent and skillful workforce required by our labour market.

It is for this reason that we have many foreigners in our country who are occupying key positions which require certain expertise and skills which many South Africans do not possess.

However, there were some participants who were critical of this change in assessment claiming that the traditional evaluation practice was, in practice, better than CASS as it was easy to administer and manage. This became evident when Thapelo remarked that:

Continuous Assessment is such a difficult assessment policy to understand and implement in the classroom situation because of the learning outcomes and assessment standards. In the past, learners were simply given tests, awarded marks and eventually got promoted on the basis of their performance.

They further remarked that traditional tests were a reliable instrument to assess the performance of the learners as learners were subjected to similar questions which were objectively marked by educators for the purpose of awarding marks or scores. According to Benny this was a simple and straightforward task which did not involve analyzing marks with the aim of trying to find why learners had failed. Thulani also said: “There was no need for us to analyze the performance of the learners very closely as the general understanding was that learners who had failed did not prepare themselves well for the test”. She added that their failure served as a motivator through which they were able to put more effort in their preparation for the following test.

Participants were also concerned about the educational motives behind the introduction of CASS as the assessment policy in the Revised National Curriculum. They said that this assessment policy was imposed on them, hence their morale was very low and they were not highly motivated to implement it. This was confirmed by the remarks made by Tumelo who said: “I think the timing on the implementation of CASS was not correct as at school level SMT and teachers were not consulted when this policy was formulated or developed”. Participants said that the experiences and practical knowledge of the SMT, as leading figures at school with regard to the South African classroom context, should have been given a thorough consideration when CASS was developed. In support of participants’ view, Hargreaves et al. (1998) contend that the significance of their involvement (particularly principals) has been widely reported in many research publications such as Hargreaves et al. (1998) that change at school level cannot be successfully be implemented without the support and active participation of members of the SMT. Popleton & Williamson (2004) also claim that the more principals and members of the SMT participate in initiation and developmental roles with regard to curriculum related matters, the more positive they feel about change, and more willing to actively engage themselves in the implementation process.

3.2.2 Defining Continuous Assessment

When participants were asked about their understanding of the concept ‘Continuous Assessment’, they seemed to have a common understanding that CASS is a continuous gathering of information about learners’ performance in order to measure or assess their level of achievement. This was demonstrated by Nthabiseng quoted from a policy document that:

Continuous Assessment is a planned process of identifying, gathering, and also interpreting information about the performance of learners. It involves four steps, generating and collecting evidence of achievement, evaluating this evidence against outcomes, recording the findings of the information to understand and thereby assist the learners’ development and improve the process of learning and teaching.

Carrol said: “CASS is the kind of assessment which involves assessing learners regularly and the process forms part of everyday teaching and learning”. Participants further indicated that Continuous Assessment is not a ‘once-off’ kind of an activity, but a continuous process.

Participants’ understanding of the concept CASS is also supported by Van der Horst & McDonald (1997:172) who define continuous assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning, not just a means of monitoring or auditing learners’ performance. This view is also shared by Dreyer (2008: 16) who claims that the term ‘continuous assessment’ is used to describe the constant process of assessment that spans throughout the entire learning process. In addition, the Namibian Education Department in (Jacobs et al., 2004) suggests that assessment is continuous if it occurs at various times as part of the instruction, and it follows a lesson.

The South African Department of Education (2007) contends that assessment in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) is driven and guided by the achievement of the

Assessment Standards (ASs) and Learning Outcomes (LOs), which can be defined or described as the statement of the intended goals or results of teaching and learning. This is also supported by Meree & Fraser (2004: 41) who define learning outcomes (LOs) and assessment standards (ASs) as “the descriptive minimum requirements which are linked to specific grades which determine whether or not learners are able to progress to the next grade”. In support of this, Jacobs et al. (2004: 89) says that: claim, “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. It is for this reason that Jacobs et al. (2004: 91) further contend that “without a written learning outcome the educator will be unable to say whether the real outcome has been achieved and, therefore, assessment will be unreliable”.

Participants in this study were in agreement that the performance of the learners in CASS is measured against the achievement learning outcomes and assessment standards. They further indicated that unlike in the past where there were no targets against which the performance of learners was measured in CASS through learning outcomes, learners are made aware of the skills or knowledge they will be expected to demonstrate at the end of the lesson. When asked: *What are the learning outcomes and what do they represent in this assessment policy and the National Curriculum Statement?* The majority of the participants in this study failed to demonstrate a deep understanding of what learning outcomes and assessment standards are and the role they play in the current assessment approach. It was only Tumelo, Benny, Maggy and Moyana who demonstrated a common understanding of what LOs and ASs are, and described them as the ‘criteria’ which provided evidence which assist educators to judge what learners were able to do or not. They further indicated learning outcomes and assessment standards represent the kind of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes which learners must achieve or demonstrate in order for them to progress from one grade to the other.

Many participants particularly school principals struggled to demonstrate a clear understanding of the role that LOs and ASs play in both teaching and learning. This was demonstrated by Mapawa who hesitantly claimed that learning outcomes were what in

the past (referring to the apartheid education system) were referred to as aims or objectives of a lesson. He added that in fact they are statements which educators aim to realize or achieve at the end of a lesson.

3.2.3 Objectives of conducting informal assessment

Informal assessment refers to all the information that educators gather about the performance of the learners from various sources other than structured testing or exam procedures (Dreyer, 2008; Peckham & Sutherland, 2000). In line with the above definition, participants indicated that in continuous assessment educators are required to continuously assess the performance of the learners, not only through tests, but also through daily activities like class work, homework and assignments. Participants felt that these activities, despite being considered informal, play a significant role in promoting effective learning if used in a positive way. Thapelo remarked: “Through activities like home work and oral presentations, learners are able to realise where they are still lacking in terms of mastering the required skills or subject content”. In addition, they argued that although the marks achieved through these activities were not recorded for promotional purposes, they play a critical role in indicating to them if learners were understanding what they are being taught or not. Moyana indicated that it is sometimes only after learners have failed a particular task that one is able to realise that the kind teaching method used to present a particular section of subject content was ineffective. Authors like Arasian (1994), Mentowski (2006) are also in agreement with the participants that the information gathered through some of these activities varies from learner to learner and from lesson to lesson. As a result, they are rarely recorded or saved in the formal records instead they are mainly used to guide educators on their interactions with learners during instructional and non-instructional classroom encounters.

Participants indicated that learners react differently to instructional activities and as a result through information gathered from informal activities, they are able to identify learners with learning difficulties or problems at an early stage of the learning process. Tumelo supported this by saying that:

Although learners in a classroom situation are taught at the same time, they grasp information at a different pace hence we have fast learners and slow learners. Activities like class work and home work assist us to identify learners who are yet to master particular skills before we engage them in the informal tasks like tests.

Jamson and Peterson (Curriculum Advisors) also shared the same view that informal assessment plays a critical role in promoting effective learning. However, they were doubtful if the SMT, as the ‘watch-dogs’ of the implementation of CASS, were closely monitoring the administration of these (informal tasks) and ensured that they were given with the intended purpose of monitoring the progress of the learners. Jamson (Curriculum Advisor) remarked that “it looks like informal tasks are still given to the learners with the traditional view of ‘winding’ the clock when educators do not have substantive information to present to the learners”. In support of this Peterson claimed that in many schools he had visited he found that there were assignments and homework which had been structured in a manner which resembled the old assessment practices and completely irrelevant to the requirements of CASS. Curriculum Advisors also indicated that this practice reveals that the introduction of CASS did not have a strong impact on the understanding of some of the educators, particularly those who had served the education system even during the apartheid period.

3.2.4 Objectives of conducting formal assessment

Participants were aware that although continuous assessment is formative in nature in practice it incorporates summative assessment. They claimed that apart from informal activities, learners are assessed formally. According to the participants this takes the form of well-structured and standardized tests, projects and oral presentations in which learners are awarded marks. Gregory said that “... apart from this (informal activities) learners are assessed formally through tasks like tests, research projects and practical activities in which we give them scores which subsequently form part of the 75% and 25% of their overall year mark in the GET and FET Band, respectively”. The Department of Education (2005b) confirms that the Revised National Curriculum Statement requires that

a formal year programme of assessment should be developed. This is aimed at monitoring the performances of the learners formally and continuously. Theorists, like Ebel (1979) maintains that tests and examination have a positive influence on education, and therefore end-of-year exams and CASS should complement one another.

3.3 PARTICIPANTS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT

When participants were asked what the purpose of Continuous Assessment is, as compared to the evaluation practice, they indicated that in CASS learners were assessed for different purposes which, in return, assisted them to make a wide range of decisions in the classroom. Participants were critical of the apartheid assessment policy arguing that it was content based and exam focused. Benson and Talent indicated that the old assessment policy was for promotional purpose hence marks and percentages were the dominant features. Tumelo added that during the apartheid era “teaching and learning were geared towards ensuring that learners pass the final examination”. Participants’ criticism of the objective of assessment during the apartheid education system is supported by authors like Darling-Hammond (1991), Frankland (2007), Jacobs et al., (2004) who argue that during the apartheid education, the purpose of assessment was to determine learners who, on the basis of their performance had to progress to the next grade and those who had to be retained.

According to Mothata et al. (2003:86) “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 the learner and teacher rather (than) for accountability to some outside body or programme”. This supports Leahy et al. (2005:19)’s view that the ultimate aim of assessment is to improve teaching, the curriculum and conditions for learners’ learning. Participants claimed that with the introduction of CASS the purpose of assessing learners has shifted from grading in order to determine those that should progress or retained, to holistic development of the learners (formative). They indicated that for assessment to be authentic, it must be aimed at promoting and improving both the teaching and learning process. This was confirmed by Dickson who said: “the ultimate

aim of assessment in the NCS is to ensure that learners are able to realize what they know best and what they do not know”. Participants indicated that this kind of assessment keeps learners motivated and educationally focused.

Participants unanimously agreed that one of the fundamental objectives underlying the assessment of the performance of the learners is to provide them with feedback. Tsakisa claimed that feedback, when provided with the aim of improving the performance of the learners, was like a ‘mirror’ in which a learner is able to look into and see what he/she can do best and what he/she cannot do. According to the participants, teaching becomes meaningful and interesting only when learners are provided with feedback on how they are performing towards achieving the targeted learning outcomes or goals. This was demonstrated by Maggy who remarked that teaching was no longer a one dimensional activity. According to her, “the current approach on assessment involves regular interaction or exchanges of views with learners in a form of giving them meaningful feedback, particularly in aspects which they did not perform well”. Khetani added that “the current generation of the learners is too inquisitive and critical. They do not simply accept any explanation given to them without asking questions as to why things are like that. Sometimes they will stop a lesson and ask for clarity on certain concepts of a lesson”. Participants claimed that this kind of classroom environment plays a critical role in promoting effective learning as it makes learners feel motivated and eager to explore new things.

According to Arasian (1994: 6) teachers are constantly on the lookout for learners who are having learning, emotional, or social problems in the classroom so that they could be provided with the necessary support in their learning process. Arasian further claims teachers try to identify these problems, document their frequency, understand their basis, and select remedial activities. Participants in this study expressed a common understanding that the significance of analysing the performance of the learners was to identify learners who seem to struggle to achieve the targeted learning outcomes so that they could be supported. Tumelo claimed that after each formal task, marks were recorded and analysed using a rating scale. She added that through this kind of exercise

they were able to identify learners who were lagging behind in terms of achieving the learning outcomes. Participants indicated that when learners who seem to be struggling are provided with support, they feel motivated and subsequently begin to improve their performance.

When participants were asked about the strategies they used to support learners with learning problems or difficulties, they had divergent views with regard to the kind of supportive strategies (remedial activities) they use to improve the performance of the learners. This, according to the participants, was due to the fact that there was a range of factors which contribute significantly to learners failing to achieve the set learning outcomes. They indicated that some of the factors contributing to learners underperforming were behavioral and inherited from their parents or ancestors which, in their understanding, required special knowledge outside the scope of their profession. Maggy explained it in this way:

We all know and understand that learners come to school with a common purpose and that is to learn. However, their progress in terms of mastering the skills subject content differs due to different factors. Some, for example under-perform due to behavioral disorders of which there is very little one can do to improve the situation.

In challenging this assertion, Khetani and Benny said that in their school they had established a Health Advisory Committee which, apart from elected educators to serve in the committee, includes personnel from other career paths like nursing, pastors and retired police personnel to support learners with learning problems that are beyond educators' abilities. Khetani further indicated that the primary responsibility of the committee was to gather the necessary information about the family background of the affected learner(s) and if need be, provide him/her with proper counseling.

In addition, participants indicated that some of the learners underperform due to lack of internal motivation, rather than learning difficulties. They claimed that in instances like this, the involvement of parents had proved to be the best strategy in igniting the seriousness

and motivation for effective learning. Benny said that it was through making parents aware of the attitudes of their children towards learning that sometimes make learners improve their performance. This was confirmed by Gregory who said that “At our school last year (2009) we had a group of learners in Grade 9 who had a tendency of not writing tasks and dodging classes. It was after I reported them to their parents that they became serious and many of them passed at the end of the year”. They further indicated that after making parents aware of the attitude of their learners, some parents even went to the extent of monitoring their learners when they were at home and ensured that they also studied during the time which they were supposed to do so. Their understanding is in agreement with the view of the Department of Education (2005b) which suggests that parental involvement in teaching, learning and assessment has been identified as one of the critical factors leading to a successful schooling experience.

Furthermore, participants indicated that learners who seem to be having learning problems were given extra-lessons. They said that after marks or scores for all the formal tasks have been recorded in the mark sheet and analysed using a rating scale, it was easy to see learners who were doing well and those that were struggling. Thapelo said: “This exercise although taxing, gives us a clear indication of learners who consistently perform at a particular level. For example, those whose performance is at Level 6 (Meritorious) and Level 7 (Outstanding) are encouraged not to go down”. Participants indicated that they often target learners who perform at Level 1 (Not achieved) and Level 2 (Elementary). According to the participants, these learners are taken out of the mainstream classes, grouped together and provided extra-lessons in the afternoon. In support of this, Maggy claimed: “Underperforming learners usually pick up learning momentum when they are grouped together because they are not intimidated by the high performance of gifted learners”. Mapawa indicated that at their school they even invite educators from good performing schools to come and teach them on Saturday. He added: “We also encourage our educators who offer learning areas in which learners did not do well to observe the presentation of the lesson so that they could learn new approaches from these educators”. In addition, participants indicated that this strategy works because the majority of the learners end up passing at the end of the year. Nthabiseng said that in

the 2009 matric results, there were two learners at her school who during the course of the year were classified as underperformers, but surprisingly did very well in the final examination.

3.4 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TRADITIONAL EVALUATION PRACTICE AND CASS

3.4.1 Continuous assessment as an integral of teaching and learning

According to Le Grange & Reddy (1998) continuous assessment is an on-going process which forms an integral part of teaching and learning. This implies that assessment starts when the process of learning starts and continues throughout the lesson (Leahy et al., 2005). In line with this definition, participants claimed that, unlike in the past where assessment was separated from teaching, continuous assessment forms part of the everyday learning activity. In support of this, Moyana said: “In every lesson that I plan, I must ensure that there is an assessment task. It could be in the form oral presentation or class work depending on the LOs that I want to test them on”. According to the participants this has positive effects since educators are able to identify learners who seem to have some difficulties in understanding some of the concepts of the lesson. They said that this was in contrast to what happened in the past when they had to wait for the end of the term or a particular period to have insight into how learners were coping with the subject matter. This was confirmed by Khondhema who said that:

In the past it used to take us a series of tests to identify learners who were not doing well. Now that assessment takes place at any stage of a lesson we find it easier to identify learners who are struggling to achieve the learning outcomes and eventually assist them forthwith.

In addition, participants claimed that this approach enhances learning as learners were constantly provided with valuable information which makes them realise the limitations of their work and correct their mistakes while the lesson was continuing. Khangela remarked that this exercise has positive effects on the development of the learners as they were periodically monitored and nurtured. Their understanding is also supported by

Shepard (2000) who contends that if assessment insights are to be used to promote learning rather than awarding scores, it has to occur in the middle of instruction, not just at end points.

3.4.2 CASS is transparent and learner-centered in approach

During the Apartheid education system, assessment was viewed as a private matter between an educator and learner where learning and experiences of a student had no wider audience than the educator himself/herself (Boud, 1997). In contrast, Riding & Butterfield (1990) contend that in continuous assessment specific principles of classroom assessment require that expectations and immediate steps for improvement be made visible to the learners and that students be actively involved in evaluating their own work. The success of this model though, according to Butterfield (1990) depends upon the educator having clear objectives and upon learners knowing what these objectives are at the beginning of the lesson.

In addition, Jacobs et al. (2004: 60) claim that learners must be more active than they were in the old system. They should take responsibility for their own learning, while teachers should act as facilitators and motivators to help each learner achieve the required outcomes. Participants were also very critical of the past evaluation practice, arguing that the approach was teacher-centred and lacked clarity on what was going to be assessed and also how it was going to be assessed. With regard to continuous assessment, participants indicated that the approach is transparent and learner-centred. They claimed that at the beginning of the lesson, through clearly defined learning outcomes and assessment standards, learners are made aware of the kind of skills they would be expected to demonstrate at the end of the lesson. This became evident when Mapawa explained:

What happens is that at the beginning of each learning activity, we firstly discuss the learning outcomes which are going to be assessed with the learners. This makes the learners to be focused as they are aware of what will be expected of them at the end of the lesson.

Participants' understanding is that this helps learners to be motivated as they perceive learning as an interactive process which also contributes significantly to their mental development.

When asked what kind of assessment methods they used to actively engage learners in both learning and assessment practice, participants had a common understanding that involving learners in assessment activities is one of the basic principles of continuous assessment. They indicated that in order to promote effective and stimulating learning, they are required to create opportunities for learners to share ideas and assess their own work. This became evident when Benny said: "It is within the framework of this assessment policy that learners should be afforded opportunities to assess their own work through assessment methods like self-assessment, peer-assessment and group work activity". However participants were concerned that the classroom dynamics of their schools were not conducive for these kinds of assessment activities because of overcrowding. Burisani confirmed this when he said: "In a classroom of about eighty learners, just imagine how many days it would take me to listen to individual learners' reports on how they thought their peers had performed". In support of the SMT's claim that overcrowding was one of the critical factors impacting negatively on educators' ability to engage learners in assessment activities like self-assessment and peer-assessment, Jamson and Peterson confirmed that many schools do not have adequate classroom. They also indicated that this was a serious challenge which the SMT could not successfully address on their own without the intervention of Limpopo Department of Education.

3.4.3 Learners are assessed holistically

Participants demonstrated a common understanding that, unlike during the apartheid education system, where the performances of the learners were assessed only on how learners had mastered the subject content, in CASS learners are assessed holistically. They indicated that in continuous assessment, all the attributes which make a learner 'a complete and balanced human being' are assessed. They were critical of the apartheid assessment practices in which learners were expected to memorize the subject content in

order to pass at the end of the year. They said that, in the past, many learners who probably could have been musicians, soccerites, dancers and so on were denied opportunities to discover their true potential because much emphasis was on the acquisition of the prescribed knowledge. Participants' understandings are supported by Heywood (2000) who contends that the subject content assessed during the apartheid education system did not represent the totality of a person's achievement or range of aptitudes that some of the learners possessed. In addition, Riding & Butterfield (1990) claim that on numerous occasions, many of the skills which were not adequately tested by such a system were those skills considered to be of particular value after learners had completed part of their education. Tumelo added that it was encouraging to note that learner-development was no longer focusing much on the mental aspect, but also on the physical aspect of a child. This understanding is also supported by Somers & Skirova (2002), who contend that the current debate on assessment is that for assessment to be authentic and be able to develop the intellectual capacity and skills of the learners it must mirror the world outside the classroom in a realistic way.

However, the majority of the participants lacked insight and clarity on values and attitudes which should be incorporated in both teaching and assessment. When asked: *Which attitudes and values, according to the NCS, are you supposed to incorporate in your everyday teaching and assessment?* Participants came up with the following concepts: 'honesty', 'love', 'patriotic', and 'passionate'. However, others said that they were not sure of the kind of values and attitude they were expected to teach learners, but they believed that they were imbedded in the learning activities they always give to the learners. This was confirmed by Carrol who said: "Although I am not sure of the kind of attitude I should teach my learners, I believe they form part of what I teach them every day".

3.5 DISADVANTAGES OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

3.5.1 CASS involves a lot of paperwork

Participants had divergent views with regard to the disadvantages of CASS. Many of them believed that continuous assessment involved a lot of reading and paper work which in their view was time consuming. They said that they spent a lot of time analysing the performance of learners and updating their portfolios than teaching. Mbhoni remarked that “the past assessment policy was much easier to administer because educators were not required to analyse marks”. Peter added that “CASS has now turned educators into full time administrators”. Participants’ concerns are shared by Barlach (2004) who contends that the new curriculum suffers from assessment overload. This has increased the responsibility placed on educators, who must also adapt the new classroom instruction to each learner. Although it was not yet officially communicated to schools by the National Department of Education, participants were delighted after receiving the news that learners’ portfolios were going to be phased out. They felt that the idea, if implemented would take much pressure off educators’ shoulders.

3.5.2 CASS promotes laziness among learners

Many participants were critical of the principle of CASS which advocates that no learner must be disadvantaged on the basis of being absent from school when other learners were assessed either due to illness or other circumstances. Participants claimed that other learners take advantage of this arrangement and deliberately absent themselves from school knowing that they would be given a second chance. Participants were concerned that this practice works against the objectives behind the introduction of CASS which, among others, is to make learners think critically. Participants indicated that the arrangement promotes laziness among learners instead of motivating them to learn. Maggy remarked, “I think this is unfair since by the time such learners were given a chance to write that task they already have an idea of what the task was all about”. They further indicated that, although such learners, as per policy, were required to fill the

forms as evidence that they were absent from school by the time others learners wrote the task. Participants claimed that the practice did not promote effective assessment as sometimes they were obliged to give those learners a chance to write the task missed since they were afraid that their lack of marks might negatively affect the results of the school at the end of the year.

3.6 ROLE OF THE SMT IN IMPLEMENTATION OF CASS

According to Botha (2004) school management teams (including the principal) should not only be experts on managerial and administrative duties, but also in areas of teaching and learning or classroom practice. This implies that members of the SMT have a great responsibility of providing clarity and guidance to the educators on how CASS should effectively be implemented. Participants had different views on the role of the SMT in the implementation of CASS. However, participants have unanimously indicated that school management teams have a significant role to play in the following areas which, in their views, are critical for the successful implantation of CASS.

- Planning for the availability and management of support materials,
- Managing the administration of assessment,
- Managing the development of staff,
- Managing and supervision of educators' work,
- Managing classroom visits,
- Managing school based assessment moderation.

3.6.1 Planning for the availability and management of support materials

According to Marx (1981) the SMT, as part of their planning, must ensure that the required resources are available for the realization of targeted goals. Participants have indicated that the SMT (in the context of CASS) has the responsibility of ensuring that educators have all the necessary policy documents like assessment guidelines and subject policy statements for guidance and reference. They said that these policy documents play

a critical role in terms guiding educators how to structure lesson plans and identifying the learning outcomes which are supposed to be assessed. Khangela confirmed this when he said: “through constant reading and reference to the subject curriculum statement, for example, one gets a deep understanding of the subject content that one is supposed to focus on and the kind of formal tasks which one must give to learners”. In appreciation for the critical role that availability of policy documents plays to the successful implementation of CASS, Benson remarked that he considered policy documents like the assessment guidelines the ‘Holy Bible’ of CASS since one could not do without them. Peterson said that the SMT, in liaison with the curriculum section, have the responsibility to ensure that all the required resources for the successful implementation of CASS are available at school for educators to use. He further emphasised that there was no way in which educators would have successful implementing this policy without an informed understanding of how the LOs integrate with the ASs.

However, members of the SMT were concerned that some educators do not properly follow the assessment guidelines and other relevant assessment policy documents when drawing lesson plans and setting formal assessment tasks. When asked the question: *What do you think could be the reason(s) for these educators to have negative attitudes towards using these documents?* Participants attributed educators’ failure to properly follow the policy guidance to two factors. They said that the first reason could be that many educators did not receive formal training for the implementation of CASS, and as a result they probably find it easy and convenient to stick to what they knew best. Dreyer & Loubser (2005) contend that many educators are still teaching in traditional ways and assessment similar is still based on the traditional pencil and paper.

3.6.2 Managing the administration of continuous assessment

Participants agreed that it was part of their managerial responsibilities to ensure that there is a School Assessment Plan to direct and coordinate the administering of formal assessment tasks. Participants described this assessment plan as a composite plan which shows the date and term of a year in which a particular formal assessment task, as per

learning area in different bands or phases would be written. They further indicated that although it is a document through which the SMT could use to monitor the administration of formal tasks at school level, the Department of Education uses it as a tool to bring parents on board in terms of monitoring the progress and performance of their children. According to the participants, it was believed that through this plan, parents would be able to see if their children were being assessed regularly and also to see how they were performing so that they could make the necessary intervention and provide support. Maree & Fraser (2004), contend that educators need to involve parents from the start of the school year by explaining the assessment that is going to take place during the year.

The significance of the School Assessment Plan was also emphasised by the Curriculum Advisors. This became evident when Peterson remarked: “It is mandatory that a school must have this plan not only for internal use, but also for monitoring and the provision of support by the District or Provincial officials”. However, Curriculum Advisors were also concerned that in some of the schools they had visited there were no School Assessment Plans. They claimed that in schools where they were available, educators were not following them when giving formal tasks. Jamson summed it by saying that:

The Department of Education is doing its best to make sure that schools are given the necessary support for the successful implementation of CASS. However, it is discouraging to find that in many schools educators are still giving informal tasks at their own pace, which in my view, compromises the pace setters issued by the Department.

Curriculum Advisors said that in their own interpretation, the unavailability of the Annual School Assessment Plan at schools does not only indicate that assessment was not conducted according to the requirements of NCS, but also illustrates that parents were not being involved, as required by policy.

3.6.3 Managing staff development

In this continuous assessment approach, educators are required to demonstrate a high level of competency on how to facilitate the learning process, using facilitative methods and variety of assessment techniques (Wolf & Reardon, 1996). Spady (1993), suggests that to achieve this, the SMT must create opportunities during the course of the day for educators to meet and discuss ways in which they can improve their teaching methods and assessment techniques in order to improve the performance of learners. Participants indicated that one of the key responsibilities of the SMT is to ensure that educators are always capacitated with the latest skills and knowledge about the CASS. They said that when educators meet and share their classroom experiences other educators (particularly newly appointed ones) feel motivated in such a way that after such meetings they are anxious to go and try what they have learnt. Tumelo confirmed this when he said: “It is the responsibility of the SMT to ensure that there is a staff development programme early at the beginning of the year. He said that part of the activities of this programme, inter alia, the provision of the in-service training to keep educators updated with the latest development in the education system”. In addition, Peterson confirmed that the SMT has the responsibility of ensuring that newly appointed educators are inducted and provided with the necessary skills required for the successful implementation of continuous assessment. In support of this, Joseph, (2003) contends that educators need change, and it is clear that they need support in the form of in-service training so that they could cope with the challenges which comes along with the implementation process of a curriculum change of this nature. If adequate pre-and in-service training is continuously provided, educators would be able to implement assessment strategies that meet high standards. This requires the support and guidance of the SMT.

3.6.4 Management and supervision of educators’ work

Participants demonstrated a common understanding that it is the responsibility of the SMT to ensure that when educators go to their respective classes, they have ‘one objective’ in mind, and that is to deliver quality educational information to learners. This

can only be realized by ensuring that educators go to the class with proper lesson plans which are informed by work schedules which are also in compliance with the NCS requirements. Participants indicated that it is the responsibility of the SMT to ensure that the availability of the Work Schedule is always a pre-requisite for quality teaching and learning as it is the programme which not only directs the teaching and learning process, but also reflects the learning outcomes and assessment standards which are supposed to be assessed. Khetani remarked: “My responsibility is to make sure that all educators in my department have Work Schedules at the beginning of the year”. This was also supported by Jamson who indicated that when they visited schools, part of their objective was to check if the SMT have evidence to prove that they constantly supervise and ensure that educators have lesson plans when they go classes.

In addition, participants indicated that as part of the monitoring process the SMT must, collect learners’ portfolios on a quarterly basis and control them. The underlying objective of this exercise is to check if learners were assessed regularly not only through formal assessment tasks, but also through informal assessment tasks. Participants claimed that it was through controlling learners’ portfolios that as managers, they were able to see how learners were progressing towards the achievement of the learning outcomes. They further said that by controlling learners’ portfolios they were able to see if learners were given regular feedback in all the assessment tasks they were given or assessed on.

3.6.5 Managing classroom visits

Participants had different views with regard to the significance of conducting class visits as part of providing support and guidance to educators for the successful implementation of continuous assessment. Of the six selected secondary schools only participants from Gembani and Ndhengeza demonstrated a common understanding that it was part of their managerial responsibilities of the SMT to ensure that class visits were conducted on a regular basis. Gregory said that at his school they have a programme which indicates how class visits would be conducted. He added: “We never experienced any form of resistance from our educators because they have realized they through the feedback provided by

members of the SMT at the end of the lesson, educators are able to see areas where they are still lacking in terms knowledge and classroom management”. Some participants said that through classroom observation, members of the SMT were therefore, able to determine how educators who need support could be developed and guided on how they could make improvement on their instructional methods or classroom management. In addition, Benny felt that it was through being in the classroom that they could be able to see if things like sitting arrangement and teaching methods used by educators really promote learners’ participation and group work activities.

In support of the participants’ views, Jacobs et al. (2004: 270) contend that “it cannot be assumed that educators always have the required conceptual knowledge to make valid assessment judgement. At times educators make poor judgement”. Gold & Evans (1998: 119) contend that educators claim that the only way a manager can really know how the other members of the staff teach the agreed curriculum is by entering the classroom. According to Orstein & Huskins (2009), it is during such classroom visits where members of the SMT should demonstrate their knowledge of assessment by conducting demonstration lessons to both educators and learners.

However, participants from other selected schools vehemently opposed and criticized the idea of conducting class visits. They indicated that they did not conduct class visits at their schools as educators consider the exercise a ‘witch-hunt’ and a fault finding mission by the SMT. They said that classroom visits, by implications, undermine the competence of educators to work confidently and independently with the learners. Consequently, critical learners view educators incompetent hence they were being followed by their seniors. In criticizing this practice, Thandeka remarked that there was no need for him to follow educators to their classes as if he, himself was an expert with regard to CASS. In support of this Maggy said “Honestly speaking, some of these educators have better insight and understand about what CASS entails than many of us, and as such I don’t see the value of subjecting them under unnecessary pressure by following them to the class”

In confirming that in some schools members of the SMT do not conduct classroom visits, Jamson and Peterson claimed that in some of the schools they had visited for monitoring and support there were virtually no evidence in the portfolios of the SMT to show that members of the SMT do sometimes conduct class visits. According to them such circumstances raises doubts if the SMT had the capacity to provide the kind of leadership and classroom support required for the successful implementation of this policy. In justifying his claim, Peterson said that given the fact that there is a vast difference in the approach between CASS and the apartheid policy, there was no doubt that educators would need assistance and support in developing classroom dynamics in which learners would be in the centre of the learning process. He then concluded by asking a question, “Who should then take a lead if principals and heads of departments do not have the requisite knowledge and skills to do that?”

3.6.6 Managing school based assessment moderation

Participants demonstrated a clear understanding of the fact that conducting school based assessment moderation is one of the critical roles of the SMT for the successful implementation of continuous assessment. They indicated that school based assessment moderation is divided into stages, namely pre-moderation and post-moderation. According to them, pre-moderation was all about ensuring that all formal tasks were moderated before they were given to learners. *What aspects are you looking for when you conduct moderation?* In response, participants said that in pre-moderation they usually check if the questions set were standardised and also if they asses the understanding of the learners towards they achievement of the targeted learning outcomes and assessment standards. Participants indicated that they also check if the questions set assess all the cognitive level of the learners and if marks had been distributed accordingly. Participants said that in post-moderation they check if educators have followed the set marking guidelines or rubric when marking the scripts of the learners and also if marks were distributed according to the memorandum.

When asked how different the current role is from the one the SMT played during the apartheid education system with regard to assessment, in response many participants claimed that their current role with regard to assessment was very demanding and exhaustive as they were required to read many policy documents. They claimed that in CASS, for one to exercise his/her role effectively, one must have a clear understanding of the LOs and ASs which are supposed to be assessed in all the learning areas.

In disagreement, Burisni and Maggy claimed that in their own analysis there were no difference between what they did during the apartheid assessment policy and what they were doing in the implementation of CASS. They argued that what had actually changed in their views was the assessment policy not their role. In their view, the role of monitoring the delivery of quality teaching through classroom visits was not a new exercise since even in the past they used to so.

3.7 SUPPORT PROVIDED TO THE SMT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CASS

The discussion on the kind of support provided by Limpopo Department of Education to the secondary school management teams for the successful implementation of CASS will be discussed under two sections: support prior to the implementation process and support during the implementation process.

3.7.1 Support provided by the department prior the implementation process

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”. In addition, Naicker (2006) argues that given the history of the South African education system which was characterised by poor training, it can be argued that teacher training (development) should have been a priority in the implementation of continuous assessment. Contrary to what many authors have observed, many participants claimed that they were not provided with training for the successful implementation of CASS. They claimed that as a result of lack of knowledge, the early

stages of the implementation process were challenging and frustrating as educators looked up to them for guidance and clarification of certain concepts. In expressing the kind of frustration he went through, Danval said “The lack of direction in terms of what I was supposed to tell my educators had a negative impact on my confidence and leadership abilities. Honestly speaking, I felt very much disconnected to this profession”.

However, there were participants who excitedly claimed that they were mentally ready for implementation process since they were fortunate to have been part of those who had received one week training organised by the Department of Education. They indicated that although the training was more of a classroom orientation, at least it helped them since they came back with an idea of what they were supposed to do when they get into the classroom. It is for this reason that some of the members of the SMT who received training claimed that they went there not to be provided with knowledge and skills to guide the process, but by virtue of being educators who were offering those subjects. In support of this, Khetani remarked that the focus of the training was mainly on assisting them to understand how to develop lessons plans which are learner-centred in approach and incorporates assessment activities. Fumani summed it up by saying that:

I am the Head of Department for Natural Sciences at our school and I also had an opportunity of attending the workshop which was organized for Life Sciences educators before the new curriculum was implemented. What I had observed was that the focus was on helping us understand how to conduct a lesson in a facilitative approach incorporating various assessment methods.

Jamson and Peterson also admitted that the objective of the workshops was to provide educators with basic skills so that they could be able to make a swift paradigm shift from their traditional way of teaching to facilitative approach and be able to assess learners continuously.

3.7.2 Effect of the training

According to Naicker (2006), continuous assessment requires educators to be innovative and qualitatively effective in facilitating the learning process. Naicker (2006) contends though, that being qualitatively effective is an intellectual task and therefore the intellectual tools in the form of training must be provided. Although many participants who had received training were appreciative of the conceptual knowledge gained after attending the workshop, they were critical of its effect for the successful implementation CASS. Many participants were concerned that the time allocated for training was too short. In their views, CASS is such a complex assessment policy with many integrated aspects which needed adequate time not only to understand, but also to apply in a real classroom situation. Peterson concurred with the participants' concern that the time allocated was too short to unpack all the aspects of CASS except to focus on what educators were supposed to do in the class.

Participants were also concerned that some of the trainers or facilitators lacked the required conceptual knowledge of what CASS is all about and how it should be implemented. Participants expressed doubt as to whether some of those trainers had actually received training before they were assigned the responsibility of conducting workshops of such magnitude. In providing details of what the workshops were all about, Benny said:

Let us take for instance they want to teach us how to present a lesson which incorporates self-assessment in the classroom situation. Instead of firstly demonstrating to us, they would ask each group to draw a lesson plan and thereafter ask us to make presentation. Surprisingly, after our presentation they would not tell us if what we did was what they expected or not.

In support of participants' concerns, Nieuwenhuis (2003) explains that the current framework of thinking requires educators to be dynamic, creative and innovative since fundamental objective of CASS is to illuminate and improve the performance of the learners. This kind of dynamism does not emerge if the 'training' and orientation are

restricted to policy goals. Instead, the training should be of in-depth nature that takes on board theories about knowledge and relationship between theories and practice (Guskey, 1991; Naicker, 2006).

3.7.3 Support provided during the implementation process

- **Workshops for SMT at circuit level**

When participants were asked what kind of support the Limpopo Department of Education provides to the SMT for the successful implementation of CASS, they were in agreement that the Limpopo Department of Education, always organizes a one-day workshop on a quarterly basis in order to equip the SMT with the required skills and knowledge to manage and monitor the implementation process. According to participants, the focus of the workshop was mainly on showing them how to conduct school-based moderation. The central objective was to ensure that members of the SMT are able to judge if a formal task is of the required standard and also complies with the requirements of this policy. This was confirmed by Jamson and Peterson who remarked: “We continuously hold assessment meetings or organize workshops for school management teams in which we show them how a standardized task should look like and other aspects of assessment which they should look for when they conduct moderation at school level”.

- **Visits to schools by the Curriculum Advisors**

Participants were in agreement that Curriculum Advisors also visit schools for monitoring and provision of support for the implementation of CASS. They indicated that when Curriculum Advisors visit their schools they often request to meet the HOD and the educators for the subject which they intend to provide support. According to the participants the purpose of such visits are usually informed by some of the mistakes they might have picked or detected during the cluster moderation. This includes, amongst others, things like the use of wrong recording mark sheet, or a question paper which in

their analysis was not of the required standard. Talent remarked that they sometimes asked for educators' portfolios in order to check if there were lesson plans, work schedules and pace setters. The impression was that the kind of support provided to schools for the SMT's focused much on moderation. This was confirmed by Benson who, out of frustration, said "I no longer attend their workshops because there is nothing new that one comes back with, except school based moderation".

When asked if the support provided by the Department of Education was adequate for the successful implementation of CASS, participates unreservedly indicated that the support provided was not adequate. According to them, there were still many aspects of assessment that they would like to be supported on for the successful implementation of CASS. Participants were concerned that, in practice, CASS is not all about moderation, but assisting learners to improve their performance and discover their true potential. Their view was that the support provided should focus on equipping educators with skills and knowledge necessary to help learners who seem to have learning problems. In emphasizing the significance of this, Benny indicated that there were many Grade eight learners at his school were still struggling to read and write some of the English words and that many educators were unable to provide them with the necessary educational support in order for them to master the skills. Nthabiseng also indicated that at her school one educator once sought advice from her about learners who were consistently underperforming in Accounting. She concluded by saying "Really I didn't have a clue where to start. I think this is the kind of knowledge and skills we need most as heads of departments".

3.8. SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCES OF THE SMT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CASS

Participants had different views with regard to what they considered as their successful experiences in the implementation of continuous assessment. Many participants remarked that despite the fact that they had no practical knowledge of the assessment policy, they managed to allay the fear that some educators had with regard to this change in assessment and motivated them to get the implementation process underway. Dickson

also indicated that the expectations of the other stakeholders were high and this brought much fear to everybody who was involved in the process. He concluded by saying: “Despite all these, as a leader I had to motivate and keep the confidence of educators high”. The understanding of the participants is also shared by Wang & Punc (1987) who believe that educators’ perception in the implementation of change depends on many variables, including the extent that fears and uncertainties associated with change are alleviated”. These comments confirm the earlier contention that the early stages of CASS implementation were very demanding and frustrating for the SMT.

In addition, the majority of the participants used the Grade 12 end-of-year examination results as a yardstick through which they measured their success with regard to the implementation of CASS. Tumelo said that for the past three years their school got position one in their circuit in the Grade 12 results. According to him, that was a great success as it showed that their internal assessment standard was high and also at the level of the external examination. Maggy who also claimed that her school always performed at above 80% and that they were justified in being proud of their achievement when considering how the school performed in the past (referring to the apartheid education system). She then remarked: “it shows that we adapted very well and quickly to this change in assessment”. In support of this, Peterson excitedly said that given the fact that a number of examinations had been written and accreted by Umalusi, he considered his effort in ensuring that informal tasks for History in the Circuit complied with CASS requirements a great success. This comment confirms the contention discussed earlier in this study that the kind of support provided by the Department of Education was limited to providing the SMT with knowledge to conduct school based moderation.

3.9 FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE SUCCESS OF THE SMT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CASS

On what they attributed their success to, participants interviewed in this study had divergent views on what they could attribute their successful experiences to. However, they demonstrated a common understanding on the following factors:

3.9.1 Reading policy guidelines

Many participants particularly principals and deputy principals attributed their success in leading and managing CASS implementation to extensive reading of policy documents. Khetani indicated that in the absence of practical knowledge about what CASS entails, she had to keep on reading the policy documents. In a way of showing how extensive the reading was, she concluded by saying: “it was like when one was about to sit for the final examination”.

3.9.2 Support from educators

Although earlier on during the interviews process, some participants claimed that it was frustrating and embarrassing since they had to rely on some of the educators who received training to get the implementation process started. Later on some were very much appreciative of the support they received from their educators. They claimed that educators who were trained had to take a lead and guide the SMT and other educators on what was supposed to be done. This became evident when Dickson remarked, “I was fortunate to have had three educators who were trained and their knowledge made a great difference in terms of leading us to where we are today with regard the implementation of this policy”.

3.9.3 Attending workshops

Despite having expressed the concern earlier on that the time allocated for the training of educators was very short, some of the participants were appreciative of the little knowledge gained in those workshops. They said that although the focus was not on the role members of the SMT were supposed to play, but the information gained through the training laid the foundation for a better understanding of what they had to do in terms of providing support and guidance for others who did not receive training.

3.10 CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY SMT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CASS

After analysing the data collected from the participants interviewed in this study, it emerged that the following were considered challenges in the implementation of CASS:

3.10.1 Lack of parental involvement

According to the Department of Education (2005b), parental involvement in teaching, learning and assessment has been identified as one of the critical factors leading to a successful schooling. All participants have agreed that against the background of educational transformation, parents have a critical role to play in the education of their children. However, participants were concerned that many parents do not actively participate in the education of their children. They indicated that ideally parents were expected to visit schools on a regular basis and enquire about the performance of their children. This would help them have insight into some of the learning difficulties their children often experience at school and develop ways in which they could support them at home.

In expressing her concern about the lack of parental involvement, Maggy remarked: “I consider the homes of our learners as a first level of formal education. It is through support and motivation that they receive at home which makes learners perform at the highest level”. Tumelo claimed that at his school parents do come in large numbers when invited, particularly when school closes for end of term when they know that they would get the report cards for their children. However, Tumelo was concerned that the majority of them remain silent when they were engaged on discussing issues related to the performance of their children. In support of this, Joseph (2003) claims that parents, particularly from poor and disadvantaged communities feel that they are ill-equipped to understand the way of assessment, and prefer the old system where percentages were allocated to tests and examinations.

3.10.2 Over-crowding

Participants have unanimously agreed that due to a lack of infrastructure, over-crowding was a common experience in many secondary schools in Malamulele East Circuit. They claimed that classroom enrolment in many schools was as high as seventy learners, and this makes it difficult to engage learners in meaningful group discussions. Moyana claimed that at his school some of the classes had more than eighty learners and that in his Geography class for example, he had eighty-six learners. She then asked: “Can you imagine how difficult it is to control such a big class?” In confirming how frustrating it is to manage an over-crowded class, Burisani had the following to say:

I understand that CASS encourages us to engage learners in group discussion and thereafter give them opportunity to report back. However, the conditions that we work in sometimes force us to stick to the basics. How many periods do you think it would take to listen to feedback of a class of eighty learners? You should remember that the department pushes us to complete the syllabus by the end of the second quarter or term.

In support of the SMT’s concern, Barlach (2004) contends that an individual educator must continuously monitor each learner’s work, determine what skills and tasks each student has mastered, and provide immediate feedback-not an easy instructional task in a class of 25 or more.

3.10.3 Poor command of the language of learning and teaching

According to Crooks (1988), learners often learn more from the comments which are made by their peers than educators. They tend to understand or perceive comments from their peers as much less intimidating than comments from educators. Participants agreed that CASS is learner-centred in approach which demands an extensive reading and research of information on the part of learners. They indicated that for learners to be able to cope with this challenge, they have to be proficient in the language teaching and learning, that is, English. However, participants were concerned that many learners

lacked good command of the English language, and as a result it is difficult for them express their views even if they were given opportunities. Participants further indicated that although there were few learners who could confidently expressed themselves in English, they claimed that during open discussion less talkative learners hide behind the ideas of those intelligent learners. They felt that the practice often makes it difficult for them to see the true potential of learners who are less talkative.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter focused mainly on the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the responses of the participants interviewed in this study. Participants' experiences in the implementation of CASS were analyzed purely on the basis of how they responded to the questions they were asked during the interviews. The following chapter will present a summary of the findings of this study

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a summary of the main findings of this study, and the implications of the findings to CASS implementation. It will also present the conclusions and recommendations this study. The conclusions drawn are based on the problem, research questions and the objective of this study. As part of the conclusion, this chapter will briefly outline the recommendations as informed by the views of the participants.

4.2 THE MAIN PROBLEM, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study was; to explore the understanding of the secondary school management teams of continuous assessment, the role of the secondary school management teams in the implementation of CASS, the kind of support provided by the Limpopo Department of Education, the successful experiences and challenges experienced by secondary school management teams in the implementation of CASS. In responding to the above questions, the study had to focus on what the literature say with regard to issues pertaining to curriculum and assessment change. In addition, the data collected through semi-structured and focus-group interviews, also provided answers to the research questions.

4.3 MAIN FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY

4.3.1 Findings on participants' conceptual understanding of CASS

Guided by the objective of this study which was to investigate the experiences of secondary school management teams in the implementation of CASS, my introductory question was aimed at getting insights as to the participants' understanding of the concept 'Continuous Assessment'. In addition, the questions were also aimed at eliciting

participants' views on the significance of this assessment policy, its introduction and implementation thereof in the South African education system.

The majority of the participants held the view that the introduction of continuous assessment and its subsequent implementation was a remarkable achievement in terms of transforming the South African education system. They indicated that the implementation of continuous assessment has marked a significant shift from the apartheid assessment policy which was summative in nature to an assessment policy which is formative in approach. In addition, participants demonstrated an understanding of what CASS is. They defined continuous assessment as an on-going process of gathering, analyzing and interpretation of learners' performance in order to assess their level of achievement. Participants further indicated that assessment in the current approach forms part of everyday teaching and learning activities.

They clearly demonstrated that assessment of learners in continuous assessment centres entirely upon learning outcomes. Participants described learning outcomes as goals that learners are supposed to achieve at the end of the learning process. They claimed that without written learning outcomes (LOs) educators cannot say whether the targeted skills or knowledge had been achieved or not. Participants also indicated that the attainment of the learning outcomes is assessed through formal and informal assessment tasks.

However, what has emerged from the collected data is that many members of the SMTs, particularly principals, lacked a clear understanding of what learning outcomes and assessment standards represent in the National Curriculum Statement. By implication, CASS calls for members of the SMT to demonstrate a sound conceptual knowledge of the principles underpinning this assessment policy. It is likely that this lack of conceptual knowledge of what learning outcomes and assessment standards represents in the NCS will compromise the educational objectives which had informed the development of this assessment policy.

4.4. PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT

Although participants expressed different views on why learners are assessed, they had a common understanding around improvement of teaching and learning; provision of feedback; provision of remedial work to the learners and accounting to the parents.

4.4.1 Improvement of teaching and learning

The findings of this study have revealed that participants were clear of the fundamental objectives of regular (continuous) assessment of the learners' performance. In comparison with the traditional (past) evaluation practice in which assessment was mainly for promotional purpose, participants have unanimously agreed that the implementation of CASS has shifted focus from promoting learners to improving the process of teaching and learning. They indicated that authentic assessment should aim at assisting learners to discover their true potential by demonstrating what they know best. In addition, they said that assessment should assist learners realize areas where they are still lacking and also how they can make improvement in such areas.

4.4.2 Provision of feedback and support to learners

Participants agreed that another objective underlying continuous assessment is to provide feedback to the learners. They indicated that learning becomes meaningful and interesting only when learners are provided with meaningful feedback on how they performed towards achieving targeted learning outcomes. Participants claimed that feedback which is given as soon as possible after assessment has occurred influences the next step in the learning process.

4.4.3 Provision of remedial work to the learners

With regard to remedial work, participants have demonstrated a common understanding that the significance of recording, analyzing and interpreting the performance of the learners is to identify learners who have learning problems so that they could be provided with the necessary support. The collected data has revealed that the most commonly used strategy to support learners with difficulties in learning is the provision of extra-lesson.

4.5 STRATEGIES USED TO SUPPORT LEARNERS WITH LEARNING PROBLEMS

Although participants had different views with regard to the strategies they employ to support learners with learning problems or difficulties, they all agreed that giving extra-lessons and involving parents has made a great difference.

4.5.1 Provision of extra-lesson

It has emerged that struggling learners are identified and isolated from the main stream classes so that they could be given remedial work in a form of extra-lessons. Participants have indicated that learners with learning problems are given extra-lessons both in the afternoon and week-ends especially on Saturdays.

4.5.2 Parental involvement

Participants agreed that involving parents, particularly of learners who have a negative attitude towards school work, has proved to be a successful strategy in improving the performance of the learners. Details on parental involvement will be discussed shortly.

4.6 ADVANTAGES OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

4.6.1 CASS as an integral part of teaching and learning

Participants demonstrated an understanding that, continuous assessment, unlike in the old curriculum, is not something that one thinks about at the end of a lesson, instead it must be an integral part of the planning, teaching and learning process. They indicated that this approach improves learning as learners are constantly provided with valuable information which makes them realize the limitations of their work, and in this way they are able to correct their mistakes while the learning process is continuing.

4.6.2 CASS is learner-centred in approach

Participants agreed that the past evaluation practice was teacher-centered in approach and lacked clarity on what had to be assessed and also how assessment was going to be conducted. With regard to continuous assessment, participants agreed that the process is transparent and learner-centred as learners are made aware of the LOs which they would be expected to demonstrate at the end of the lesson. They indicated that it should not be assumed that, in the classroom situation, learners will automatically know the skills or knowledge they will be expected to demonstrate at the end of a lesson. Participants said learners should actively be engaged in discussion about the kind of criteria or learning outcomes they would be expected to demonstrate at the end of the lesson.

4.6.3 CASS uses various assessment methods

The collected data has revealed that participants are aware of the fact that in continuous assessment, educators are required to create opportunities for learners to assess their own work through methods like self-assessment, peer-assessment and others. However, it has been found in this study that conditions in many schools within the Malamulele East Circuit are not created for learners to be actively engaged in classroom activities like self-assessment and peer-assessment. Participants claimed that they find it difficult to engage

learners in group work activities because classes were congested with educator-learner ratios ranging from 1: 50 to 1: 70.

This implies that in many schools learners were still seated in the traditional arrangement of desks in rows, with educators employing traditional teaching methods of standing in front of the class.

4.6.4 Learners are assessed holistically

Participants have agreed that one of the greatest limitations of the old assessment policy was that the performance of the learners was judged only on how learners had mastered the subject content. They claimed that this practice had compromised the unidentified or untapped skills of many learners through which they could have developed and earned a better living. In addition, although participants were aware that in continuous assessment educators are required to assess knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, it has emerged that participants were not clear of the kind of values and attitudes they were supposed to incorporate in their lessons and assessment activities. This implies that similar to the apartheid education system, the emphasis is still on the acquisition of knowledge. This compromises a central objective of CASS, which advocates that learners should be assessed holistically.

4.7 DISADVANTAGES OF CASS

The majority of the participants were in agreement that CASS is time consuming as it involves a lot of reading. They indicated that, consequently they usually spend much more time at school doing administrative work than teaching.

4.8 FINDINGS ON THE ROLE OF THE SMT IN CASS IMPLEMENTATION

Participants in this study have indicated the following managerial responsibilities for the SMT are as being central for the successful implementation of CASS.

4.8.1 Planning for the availability of support materials

Participants have agreed that as part of their planning, the SMTs have the responsibility of ensuring that educators have all the required policy documents for the successful implementation of CASS. However, it has emerged that despite the availability of these documents in schools, there were educators who are not following the assessment guidelines when drawing lesson plans and setting formal tasks.

In addition, participants had a common understanding that the SMT has the responsibility of ensuring that there is a School Annual Assessment Plan to co-ordinate and manage the administration of formal tasks. They emphasised that it is mandatory that a school must have the Annual Assessment Plan not only for internal use, but also for monitoring and the provision of support by District or Provincial officials.

4.8.2 Managing in-service training for educators

With regard to in-service training, participants agreed as members of the SMT that they sometimes organize in-service training, more especially for newly appointed educators to induct and provide them with knowledge and skills required for the successful implementation of CASS.

4.8.3 Managing and supervising educators' work

It has emerged that participants in this study agreed that it is the responsibility of the SMT to ensure that educators have work schedules and lesson plans for effective teaching and learning. They emphasized that managing and supervising educators' work must include the control of learners' portfolios in order to see if learners are assessed and provided with meaningful feedback on a regular basis.

4.8.4 Managing classroom visits

Of the six selected secondary schools for data collection in this study, only participants from two secondary schools indicated that at their schools there is a school development plan which provides for the development of staff members. They indicated that under the leadership of the principal they always ensure that classroom visits are conducted once per term. In contrast, it has been found that members of the SMT in the other four secondary schools do not conduct classroom visits because educators consider such activities a fault finding mission and degrading.

4.8.5 Managing school based assessment moderation

Participants have unanimously agreed that conducting school based assessment moderation is a central activity for the successful implementation of CASS. They indicated that it is their responsibility as members of the SMT to ensure that formal tasks are moderated before they are given to the learners. In addition, participants were in agreement that it is also part of their managerial duties to ensure that scripts of the learners are moderated after they have been marked by educators. They believed that this helps them to see if educators are following the marking guideline when marking the scripts and also if marks were allocated as indicated in the marking guideline.

4.9 FINDINGS ON THE SUPPORT PROVIDED TO THE SMT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

4.9.1 Support before the implementation process

With regard to the support provided by the Limpopo Department of Education before the implementation process, the majority of the participants, particularly deputy principals and heads of departments, agreed that they attended a one week workshop organized by the Limpopo Department of Education. However, it has been found that many principals were not provided with training.

Participants further revealed that the trainings provided were ineffective because the time allocated for such training was too short. The implication is that educators who attended the workshops went back to their schools after training without in-depth conceptual knowledge of how CASS should be implemented. The findings of Jansen & Christie (1999) in the study conducted in KwaZulu-Natal and the Mpumalanga Province showed that the training was one short workshop per grade without follow-up. This has serious implications, since without a deep understanding of the classroom dynamics which came along with CASS, many educators are likely to resort to the traditional methods of teaching and assessment.

4.9.2 Support provided during the implementation process

Participants have agreed that in an attempt to provide them with the necessary skills and knowledge for the successful implementation of CASS, the Limpopo Department of Education, through Curriculum Advisors, organizes one-day workshop (usually once per quarter) at the circuit for the provision of support to the SMT. They indicated that the underlying aim is to provide members of the school management teams with skills and knowledge mainly to conduct school based assessment moderation. However, participants were concerned that the support provided was not enough for the successful implementation of CASS, as other critical aspects, for example, provision of support to learners learning difficulties, are being ignored at the expense of school based moderation.

4.10 FINDINGS ON THE SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCES OF THE SMT

4.10.1 Producing quality results in Grade 12

It has been found that the majority of the participants, as was the case during the apartheid education system, were still using Grade 12 results as a yardstick through which they measure their success with regard to the implementation of CASS. They indicated that the fact that learners in Grade 12 were passing in great numbers was

evidence that their internal assessment standard was equivalent to the external examination accredited by Umalusi. It has also emerged that traditional concepts like ‘passing’ and ‘failing’ were still dominant in minds of majority of the participants. This further confirms the earlier contention that some of the educators are still trapped in the traditional assessment practices.

4.10.2 Conducting school based assessment moderation

Participants indicated that, although they were not provided with proper training as members of the SMT for managing and provision of classroom support to educators, they were at least able to conduct school based assessment moderation.

4.11 FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF CASS

Although participants had divergent views on what they attributed their successful experiences to, they were in agreement on the following:

4.11.1 Reading policy documents

The majority of the participants, particularly principals, attributed their success in the implementation of CASS to extensive reading of the policy documents. They indicated that since the majority of them did not receive training, they had no option than to read pamphlets and booklets distributed by the Limpopo Department of Education on CASS.

4.11.2 Support from the educators

The majority of the participants attributed their success to the support they received from educators, particularly those who had an opportunity of attending the one week workshops.

4.12 FINDINGS ON CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY THE SMT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CASS

4.12.1 Lack of parental involvement

Participants agreed that parents have a critical role to play in both the successful implementation of CASS and the improvement of the performance of learners. However, participants were concerned that majority of the parents of the learners in secondary schools in the Malamulele East Circuit were not actively involved in the implementation of CASS. Participants attributed this to lack of functional literacy amongst the majority of the parents.

4.12.2 Over-crowding

Participants unanimously agreed that educators were unable to engage learners effectively in assessing their work, due to over-crowding. They claimed that in a classroom where learners were approximately seventy, they found it practically impossible to create opportunities for the learners to assess their work. This has a serious implication for the successful implementation of CASS as the situation compromises assessment methods like, peer-assessment, self-assessment and group work activities which are critical for improving the performance of the learners.

4.12.3 Poor command of the language of teaching and learning

Participants were in agreement that the majority of the learners in schools in the Malamulele East Circuit were unable to express themselves in the language of learning (English). They indicated that CASS, being learner-centred in approach, requires extensive reading on the part of the learners. The failure of the majority of learners to express themselves proficiently in English hinders them from exchanging ideas with other learners, which is vital in improving their understanding of the subject matter.

4.13 RECOMMENDATIONS

The introduction of the Continuous Assessment policy in the South African education system has arguably had an impact on the role of the secondary school management teams. It is against this background that the underlying objective of this study was to investigate the experiences of secondary school management teams (SMT) in the implementation of CASS. This investigation was informed by the following critical issues with regard to the SMT, namely, the conceptual knowledge of CASS, their successful experiences, challenges and their role in the implementation process.

Guided by the findings of empirical investigation, the implications and conclusions drawn in this study, the following recommendations are made:

- (a) Principals, deputy principals, and heads of department should be provided with extensive training for a period longer than a week in order to get a deep conceptual understanding of this assessment policy. A deep understanding of complex and broad concepts like CASS cannot be achieved in one week. It is only after an extensive training that an ideological shift from the traditional evaluation practice to the modern approach in assessment can be achieved. Guskey (1991) contends that dynamic responses to diversity do not emerge if the training and orientation are restricted to policy goals. Instead, the training should be of in-depth nature that takes on board theories about knowledge and relationship between theories and practice.
- (b) Curriculum Advisors should also be provided with extensive training which goes beyond the knowledge of conducting school based assessment moderation. This would enable them to provide the SMT with the kind of support which in practice illuminates and assists learners to improve their performance. Naicker (2003) maintains that it is difficult to orientate or train others if one does not possess a sound understanding of the epistemological issues and how they impact on thinking, practices and transformation in general.

- (c) The support provided by the Curriculum Advisors should not be limited to conducting workshops for the SMT. Instead their visits to schools should be extended to classroom practices so that they could be able to see if the classroom dynamics comply with current approaches of teaching and assessment.
- (d) The Limpopo Department of Education must ensure that schools have adequate resources, like classrooms or enough educators in order to address learner congestion. This would enable educators to have a reasonable number of learners in class to engage in group work activities.

4.13.1 Recommendations for future research

Although the objective of this study, was to investigate the experiences of secondary school management teams in the implementation of CASS, like in any study, other contentious issues with regard to CASS, although outside the scope of this study, emerged. In the light of this, I would therefore recommend that the following pertinent areas with regard to this assessment policy be further investigated

- (a) One of the limitations of this study was that there was no female participant amongst those selected principals interviewed for this study. I would have preferred to get the views of female principals on how these changes in curriculum and assessment impacted on them, unfortunately, by the time this study was conducted, all the secondary schools under Malamulele East were led by male principals. My understanding is that the impact of change varies from one individual to another on the basis of gender, cultural background and racial lines.
- (b) I would also recommend that the research sample be expanded and include schools located in urban areas and former model C. This would enable the researcher to collect rich and quality data which would be representative of a wider population (demographics) of South Africa.

- (c) I have noted it with a great concern that the findings of this study would have been conclusive if I had used in-depth individual interviews as the only data collecting method for all the selected participants or interviewees. One of the limitations of focus groups (used as one of the data collection tool in this study) is that some of the participants have the tendency to hide behind the ideas of other participants when responding to some of the questions.

- (e) In consideration of the findings that attributes like values and attitudes are largely ignored when learners are assessed, the experiences of educators and learners in the implementation of continuous assessment would be an interesting topic for further study. A topic like this would provide reliable data with regard to how educators conduct classroom activities like peer-assessment, self-assessment and group assessment in the classrooms which are characterized by over-crowding.

4.14 CONCLUSION

The collected data revealed that there is still continuation of the apartheid perception of using the final examination marks or percentages as a benchmark for measuring the performance of the learners. This, in practice, is in contrast to the fundamental objective of CASS, which is to develop learners holistically. If the kind of support provided to schools by the Department of Education through the Curriculum Advisors, continues to focus on capacitating the SMTs to conduct school based assessment moderation as revealed by this study, the situation will remain the same for years to come. In addition, the Department of Education must ensure that the focus of the support provided to schools shifts from moderation to assisting the SMTs to understand their role, particularly with regard to the classroom situation. Hopefully, through such an endeavor, the SMTs and educators would begin to realize how assessment methods like self-assessment and peer-assessment not only play a critical role in enhancing the performance of the learners, but also in the development of learners.

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APPENDIX 1: APPLICATION FOR A PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



Faculty of Education/Fakulteit
Opvoedkunde
School of Educational Studies/Skool van
Opvoedkundige Studies
Department of Education Management
and Policy Studies/Departement
Onderwysbestuur en Beleidstudies

ENQ: Fanseka Gezani Samuel
Cell: 072 7864 566

Box 915
Malamulele
0982
12 July 2009

The Head of Department
Limpopo Department of Education
P/Bag 9486
POLOKWANE
0700

SIR

APPLICATION FOR A PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS UNDER MALAMULELE EAST CIRCUIT IN VHEMBE DISTRICT

I, Fanseka Gezani Samuel, a part-time student registered for a Master's degree in Education Management Law and Policy at the University of Pretoria, hereby apply for a permission to conduct research in the following secondary schools found in the above-mentioned area: Deliwe, Dlayani, Falaza, Gembani, Ndhengeza, Yollisa.

As part of the requirements for the completion of my study, I therefore have to conduct a research, of which my supervisor is Prof Juliet Perumal. The topic of my study is: The experiences of secondary school management teams (SMT) in the implementation of Continuous Assessment (CASS) in the Malamulele East Circuit.

The critical questions that will inform this study are:

- What is the understanding of secondary school management teams of Continuous Assessment?
- What is the role of secondary school management teams in the implementation of Continuous Assessment?
- What kind of support does the Limpopo Department of Education provide to secondary school management teams in creating a better understanding in the implementation of CASS?
- What have been the successful experiences of secondary school management teams in the - implementation of CASS?
- What challenges do secondary school management teams experience in the implementation of CASS?
- What recommendations would secondary school management teams offer for the successful implementation of CASS?

My participants in this study will be secondary school principals, deputy principals and heads of department. An individual semi-structured interview will be conducted with principals, deputy principals and curriculum advisors. In addition, two sessions of semi-structured focus-group interviews with heads of departments of secondary schools will also be conducted. With the permission of the participants, all the interviews will be audio-recorded and each session will last approximately one hour and thirty minutes. The objective will be to get insight on the experiences of secondary school management teams (SMT) in the implementation of CASS.

Should you have queries regarding this application or my study, you may contact me at 072 7864 566 or alternatively my supervisor at 083 428 6355.

Yours faithfully



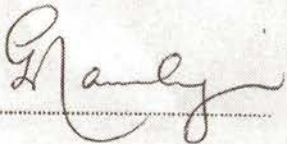
Fanseka G.S. (Applicant)

Date-----

Prof Juliet Perumal (Supervisor)

Date-----

APPENDIX 2: APPROVAL LETTER FROM DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

	<h1>LIMPOPO</h1> <p>PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA</p>	<p>Private Bag X2250 SIBASA 0970 Tel: (015) 962 1313 962 1331 Fax (015) 962 6039 (015) 962 3674</p>
<hr/> DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION <hr/>		
<p>Ref: 14/7/R Enq: M.S. Matibe Tel: 015 962 5716</p>		
<p>Mr. FANSEKA GEZANI SAMUEL P.O Box 915 MALAMULELE 0952</p>		
<p>APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN MALAMULELE EAST CIRCUIT</p>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The above matter has reference.2. Your application to conduct research in the Secondary schools that you have mentioned under Malamulele Circuit has been granted.3. Please take note that the permission is subject to ensuring that your interactions with SMT members do not disrupt the teaching and learning activities in the selected schools.4. Kindly inform the circuit Manager and Principal of affected schools well in advance of your visit.5. Wishing you the best in your endeavor's for academic achievements.		
		<p>14/08/2009</p>
DISTRICT SENIOR MANAGER		DATE
<hr/> <p>VHEMBE DISTRICT THOHYANDOU GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS; OLD PARLIAMENT; BLOCK D <i>The heartland of South Africa - Development is about people</i></p> <hr/>		

APPENDIX 3: REQUEST TO CONDUCT STUDY



P.O. BOX 915
MALAMULELE
0982
12 June 2007

SIR/MADAM

I, Gezani Samuel Fanseka, a deputy principal at Dlamani High School hereby apply for a permission to conduct a research study at your school. I am currently completing my Master's Degree in Education Management Law and Policy at the University of Pretoria on a part time basis.

The topic of my studies is: The experiences of secondary school management teams in the implementation of Continuous Assessment. As part of my study, I would like to conduct in-depth interviews with you (as a principal of the school), deputy principal and focus-group interviews with two of heads of departments of your school.

The interviews will be conducted at your school in the afternoon or at times which would not disrupt the smooth running of the school. Should you have any further queries or questions with regard to this study, please contact me on 072 7864 566 or my supervisor on 083 428 6355.

Your understanding and cooperation in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully
Fanseka Gezani Samuel
Deputy Principal

APPENDIX 4a: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN MY RESEARCH



ENQ: Fanseka Gezani Samuel
Cell: 072 7864 566

P.O.Box 915
Malamulele
0982
12 June 2009

The Principal / Deputy Principal/ Curriculum Advisor

SIR / MADAM

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A MASTERS DEGREE RESEARCH DISSERTATION

I, Fanseka G. S., a Master's Degree student in Education Management, Law and Policy Studies at the University of Pretoria, hereby invite you to participate in my research study. The topic of my research is: The experiences of secondary school management teams in the implementation of Continuous Assessment.

The underlying objective of this study is to provide answers to the following critical questions:

- What is the understanding of secondary school management teams (SMT) of CASS?
- What is the role of secondary school management teams in the implementation of CASS?

- What kind of support does the Limpopo Department of Education provide to the SMT in the implementation of CASS?
- What have been the successful experiences of secondary school management teams in the implementation of CASS?
- What are the challenges which secondary school teams are experiencing with regard to the implementation of CASS?
- What recommendations would secondary school management teams offer for the successful implementation of CASS?

I will conduct one session of interview which will last approximately one hour thirty minutes with you. In addition, I must inform you that with your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded. Furthermore, the information that you will provide during data collection would be confidential and that in no way your identity would be revealed, instead a pseudonym will be used. Your participation in this study is voluntary and as such you will be free to opt out at any given time.

Your understanding and readiness to participate in this study will be highly appreciated.

For any queries regarding this study or this application you can contact me at 072 7864 566 or alternatively my supervisor Prof Juliet Perumal at 083 428 6355

Yours faithfully

Fanseka G.S. (Researcher)

Date_____

Prof. Juliet Perumal (Supervisor)

Date_____

APPENDIX 4b: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY



Faculty of Education/Fakulteit
Opvoedkunde
School of Educational Studies/Skool van
Opvoedkundige Studies
Department of Education Management
and Policy Studies/Departement
Onderwysbestuur en Beleidstudies

ENQ: Fanseka Gezani Samuel
Cell: 072 7864 566

P.O.Box 915
Malamulele
0982
15 July 2009

The Head of Department
_____ Secondary School
Box 1869
Malamulele
0982

SIR/MADAM

INVITATION FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN MY RESEARCH FOR A MASTERS DEGREE

I, Fanseka Gezani Samuel, a part-time student registered for a Master's degree in Education Management Law and Policy at the University of Pretoria, hereby invite you to participate in my research study. As part of the requirements for the completion of my study, I therefore have to conduct a research, of which my supervisor is Prof Juliet Perumal.

The topic of my study: The experiences of secondary school management teams in the implementation of Continuous Assessment in the Malamulele East Circuit.

The critical question that will inform this study are:

- What is the understanding of secondary school management teams in the implementation of Continuous Assessment?
- What is the role of secondary school management teams in the implementation of Continuous Assessment (CASS)?
- What kind of support does the Limpopo Department of Education provide to the secondary school management teams in creating a better understanding in the implementation of CASS?
- What have been the successful experiences of secondary school management teams in the implementation of CASS?
- What challenges do secondary school management teams experience in the implementation of CAS?
- What recommendations would secondary school management teams offer for the successful implementation of CASS?

I will conduct one session of semi-structured Focus –Group interview with you which I hope will last for approximately one hour and thirty minutes with you. In addition I must inform you that with your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded. Your participation in this study is voluntary and as such you will be free to withdraw your participation from this study without stating reasons and you will in no way be harmed by so doing.

Your understanding and readiness to participate in this study will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Fanseka G.S (Applicant)

Date-----

Prof Juliet Perumal (Supervisor)

Date-----

APPENDIX 5: PARTICIPANTS' LETTER OF CONSENT



PART: A

(To be signed by all research participants)

I.....have voluntarily consented to participate in the Master's Degree research of Mr. Fanseka G.S. I also understand that the data collected, analysis, interpretation and findings thereof, will form part of the main body of his Masters Research Report which will then be submitted to the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. I further understand that the information I will provide in this study may be published in academic journals and at conferences. I have been guaranteed that the information I will provide in this study would be treated with utmost confidentiality.

At my request I will be given a copy of this consent form.

_____ Date _____

Participant

_____ Date _____

Researcher: Fanseka Gezani Samuel

_____ Date _____

APPENDIX 5: PART B: CONSENT FORM FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS



Faculty of Education/Fakulteit
Opvoedkunde
School of Educational Studies/Skool van
Opvoedkundige Studies
Department of Education Management
and Policy Studies/Departement
Onderwysbestuur en Beleidstudies

(To be signed by all research participants)

I-----have voluntarily consented to participate in the Master's degree research of Mr Fanseka Gezani Samuel. I hereby exempt the University of Pretoria and Mr Fanseka G.S. (as student of the university) from any liability from any negative effect that may arise in the course of this study, unless the injury or damage has been caused by the negligence of the student himself. I also understand that the collected data, the analysis, interpretation and findings thereof, will form part of the main body of his Masters Research Report which will then be submitted to the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. I further understand that the information I will provide in this study may be published in academic journals and conferences.

At request I will be given access to my own data and also a copy of this consent form to keep.

Participant

Date-----

Date-----

Researcher: Fanseka Gezani Samuel

Supervisor: Prof Juliet Perumal

Date-----

APPENDIX 6:

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PRINCIPALS AND DEPUTY PRINCIPALS

A. IMPACT OF CHANGE

1. Since 1994, South African education system was characterized by curriculum reform which resulted in the introduction of Continuous Assessment. In your view, do you think this change was necessary? Why?
2. Were you ready for the implementation of this new assessment policy?
3. Did the Limpopo Department of Education provide you with formal training to prepare you for the implementation of this assessment policy prior to the implementation process?
 - (a) If yes, how effective were these training in terms of generating an understanding of the role you were supposed to play for the successful implementation of CASS?
 - (b) If no, what impact did the lack of formal training have on your role to implement CASS?
4. What did you do to ensure that other stakeholders, that is teachers, learners and parents were ready for the successful implementation of CASS?

B. UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT (CASS)

1. What is your understanding of Continuous Assessment?
2. As informed by the assessment guidelines and other policy documents, what is CASS?
3. How different is the current assessment policy from the one used during the apartheid education system?
4. What do you think are the advantages of Continuous Assessment?
5. What do you think are the disadvantages of Continuous Assessment?
6. What role are you playing to ensure the successful implementation of Continuous Assessment?

7. How different is the current role from the one you played during the apartheid education system with regard to assessment?
8. How is the attitude of the educators to this new assessment policy?
9. What kind of support do you provide to them to ensure that Continuous Assessment is successfully implemented?
10. How is the attitude of the learners to this assessment policy?
11. What factors pose a challenge in the implementation of Continuous Assessment?
12. How are you dealing with these challenges?
13. What have been your successful experiences in the implementation of CASS?
14. What would you attribute your success to?

C. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

1. The current education system encourages parents to be actively involved in the education of their children, which strategies do you employ in ensuring that they also play a role in the implementation of CASS?
2. How effective are these strategies?
3. How significant is their involvement in the implementation of CASS?
4. What challenges are you experiencing regarding the involvement of parents in the implementation of CASS?
5. How successfully are you dealing with these challenges?

D. SUPPORT FROM THE LIMPOPO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

1. What kind of support does the Limpopo Department of Education provide for the successful implementation of CASS?
2. In your view, do you think the support is enough for the implementation of CASS?
3. What recommendations would you offer the successful implementation?

APPENDIX 7:

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS

A. IMPACT OF CURRICULUM CHANGE

1. Since 1994 South African education system was characterized by curriculum reform which resulted in the implementation of Continuous Assessment, in your view how significant was this change?
2. Did you attend the workshop(s) organized by the Limpopo Department of Education prior to the implementation of this new assessment policy?
 - (a) If yes, what effect has the training had on preparing you for the implementation of Continuous Assessment?
 - (b) In your view, was the training adequate for the successful implementation of CASS?
 - (c) If no, what effect has the lack of training had in preparing you for the implementation of this new assessment policy?
 - (d) How did you cope with the challenges of implementing this new assessment policy without a sound conceptual knowledge?
 - (e) What do you think the Limpopo Department of Education could have done to prepare you for the implementation of CASS?

B. ROLE OF HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS

1. In the context of the Revised National Curriculum Statement, what is Continuous Assessment?
2. In your own analysis, how is CASS different from the old assessment policy used during the apartheid education?
3. What are the advantages of Continuous Assessment?
4. What are the disadvantages of Continuous Assessment?
5. As a Head of Department, what is your role in ensuring that this new assessment policy is successfully implemented?

6. How different is the current role from the one you played during the apartheid education system with regard to assessment?
7. As a member of the f SMT who professionally works direct with educators, how do you view the attitude of educators towards CASS?
8. What kind of classroom support do you provide to educators for the successful implementation of CASS?
9. How is the attitude of the learners towards the learners towards this new assessment policy?
10. What factors pose a challenge in the implementation of CASS?
11. How are you dealing with these challenges?
12. What have been your successful experiences in the implementation of CASS?
13. What would you attribute your success to?

C. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

1. The current education system encourages parents to play an active role in the education of the children, what strategies do you use in ensuring that they play a meaningful role in the implementation of CASS?
2. How effective are these strategies?
3. In your view, how significant is their involvement in the implementation of CASS?
4. What challenges are you experiencing regarding their involvement in the implementation of CASS?
5. How successfully are you dealing with these challenges?

D. SUPPORT FROM THE LIMPOPO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

1. What kind of support does the Limpopo Department of Education provide for the successful implementation of CASS?
2. In your view, do you think the support is adequate for the successful implementation of this new assessment policy?
3. What recommendations would you offer for the successful implementation of CASS?

APPENDIX 8:

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE CURRICULUM ADVISORS

1. Since 1994 the South African education system was characterized by curriculum reforms which culminated in the implementation of Continuous Assessment, how significant was this change?
2. What impacts has the implementation of Continuous Assessment had on the South African education system in general?
3. In your own evaluation, how far were secondary school management teams prepared for the implementation of CASS? Why?
4. What did the Limpopo Department of Education do to prepare the secondary school management teams for the implementation of CASS?
5. In your view, were the preparations adequate in terms of generate a sound conceptual knowledge for the successful implementation of CASS? Why?
6. According to the assessment guidelines, what is the role of the principal in the implementation of CASS?
7. What is the role of the head of the department in the implementation of CASS?
8. In your own analysis, how successful are they playing these roles?
9. What kind of support are you providing to the secondary school management teams for the successful implementation of Continuous Assessment?
10. To which members of the SMT in particular does the support directed to? Why?
 - (a) If the support takes the form workshops, how often do you organize them?
 - (b) What are the contents of the workshop? What is the area focus of the workshops?
 - (c) What is the attitude of these members of the SMT to these workshops?
 - (d) If the support is directed to individuals, how frequent do you visits these schools?
Why?
11. What is the attitude of secondary school management teams in the implementation of Continuous Assessment?
12. What are your successful experiences in the implementation of CASS?

13. What challenges are you experiencing when providing support to the secondary school management teams?
14. How are you dealing with these challenges?
15. What recommendations would you provide or offer for the successful implementation of CASS?
16. What are the future plans for assessment or school support?