

**School - Based Assessment: the interface between Continuous Assessment (CASS) and the external summative examination at Grade 12 level with special focus on Mathematics and Science**

By Tholsiama Singh

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Faculty of Education  
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**Supervisors**

Prof. Sarah Howie  
Centre for Evaluation and Assessment  
University of Pretoria, South Africa

and

Prof. Tjeerd Plomp  
Faculty of Curriculum Studies  
University of Twente  
Netherlands

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## ***Dedication***

***We are guilty of many errors  
And many faults  
But our worst crime is abandoning the children  
Neglecting the fountain of life  
Many of the things we need  
Can wait,  
The child cannot.  
Right now is the time his bones are being formed,  
His blood is being made  
And his senses are being developed.  
To him we cannot answer: Tomorrow  
His name is today.***

***(Gabriel Mistral)***

***To my children  
Jeremy, Jared and Santhuri***

**Abstract**

In 2000, the Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal announced that all learners exiting the Further Education and Training band as from 2001 must accumulate marks in the subjects offered at Grade 12 through a process of Continuous assessment (CASS) (DoE, 2001d).

Apart from indicating the value of CASS to the external summative component in the ratio of 25% for CASS and 75% for the summative examination, there were and there still is no other policy to regulate the conduct of CASS at Grade 12 level. The situation is worsened by the non-preparation of educators to cope with the challenges of CASS implementation.

This study focuses on the implementation of CASS in Mathematics and Science since there is a body of firm evidence, which indicates that, the results in Mathematics and Science in South Africa is not very good. The TIMSS-R study conducted in 1998/1999 indicates that South African learners performed poorly in Mathematics and Science when compared to other participating countries (Howie, 2001). Since it has been established that continuous assessment conducted in a formative manner in subjects such as Mathematics and Science can lead to improved academic performance (Black & Wiliam, 1998), it is essential that attention be given, and initiatives taken to improve the quality of assessment in these critical subjects.

In the analysis of the 2001 Senior Certificate examination, it became evident that the CASS marks of learners in many instances were not valid (SAFCERT, 2000a). To address the concern of inflated CASS marks, Umalusi resorted to the use of statistical moderation to ensure that the CASS marks do not deviate drastically from the examination marks of learners.

This predominantly quantitative study makes use of surveys to gather data on the problems and challenges experienced by Grade 12 educators in the effective implementation of CASS and the kinds of support provided to educators to strengthen and to sustain the effective implementation of CASS in the classroom.

In addition, the study seeks to examine to what extent the Grade 12 CASS marks are fair, valid and reliable.

Data was collected from a non - random sample of 21 subject advisors and 60 educators of Mathematics, Biology and Physical Science across six provinces namely, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, Limpopo, KwaZulu - Natal, Gauteng and Mpumalanga and across all locations (rural, township and urban). Individual interviews were also conducted with four experts on CASS from national, provincial and district levels and an official from Umalusi.

It is apt to end this abstract by indicating that, *“our education system has been subjected to many far - reaching initiatives which, whilst taken in reaction to concerns about existing practices, have been based on little evidence about their potential to meet those concerns. In the study of formative assessment there can be seen, for once, firm evidence that indicates clearly a direction for change, which could improve standards of learning. Our plea is that national policy will grasp this opportunity and give a lead in this direction”* (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

## List of Key Words

Continuous assessment

Formative assessment

Summative assessment

Educator

Learner

Fairness

Reliability

Validity

Statistical moderation

Portfolio

Assessment criteria



## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
C2005	Curriculum 2005
CASS	Continuous Assessment
CHE	Council for Higher Education
DET	Department of Education and Training
DoE	Department of Education
EDS	Educator Development and Support
FET	Further Education and Training
FETC	Further Education and Training Certificate
HE	Higher Education
HG	Higher Grade
IEB	Independent Examinations Board
IPEC	Inter-provincial Examinations Committee
IPO	Input - Process - Output
NAPTOSA	National Professional Teachers Organisation of South Africa
NCS	National Curriculum Statements
NFLP	National Forum for Learner Performance
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
OBA	Outcomes-Based Assessment
PALCs	Public Adult Learning Centers
PSD	Personal and Social Development
SAFCERT	South African Certification Council
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SASA	South African Schools Act
SBA	School-Based Assessment
SG	Standard Grade
SRN	School Register of Needs
UK	United Kingdom
WSE	Whole School Evaluation