The management of assessment processes in primary schools in Ehlanzeni District

by

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I, Beatrice Fikile Monteiro of student number: **28623569,** hereby declare that**-:**

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I, Beatrice F Monteiro, have obtained ethics approval for the research described in this work. I declare that I have observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's Code of Ethics for Researchers and the Policy Guidelines for Responsible Research.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMINOLOGY

CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CASS	Continuous assessment
DBE	Department of Basic Education
HoD	Head of Department
MDoE	Mpumalanga Department of Basic Education
NDP	National Development Plan
NWC	Nkomazi West Circuit
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SGB	School management board
SMT	School management team
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

ABSTRACT

Educational practice must be conducted within the confines of assessments in order to elevate teaching and learning (Pellegrino, 1999). Evidence gleaned from the literature suggests that assessment, especially assessment of management practices, has an effect on how educators teach and, consequently, how students learn (Obe, 2018:16). In terms of sampling, five primary schools from a pool of 21 primary schools in Nkomazi West Circuit in the Mpumalanga province were selected purposively due to their high level of compliance in the evaluation of assessment processes. With reference to key informant interviews and discussions, this study draws on the experiences of five primary schools in Nkomazi West circuit in terms of the management of assessment processes, opportunities, procedures and challenges. It is from the five primary schools wherein key participants were selected, from which six participants per school were selected. Observations guided by the researcher were used to validate field survey results and evidence from the school management teams in the five selected primary schools.

The study findings indicate that although educators are expected to nurture critical thinking skills in their pupils/students, this is often not mirrored in the management of assessment and teaching and learning practices. This study discovered that for management processes in schools to be effective in promoting the specified goals of the fundamental school programme, greater recognition should be given to the influence of assessment on teaching and learning, the understanding of which may arguably play a crucial role in introducing changes that may promote the cognitive processes and thinking skills desired in our schools and classrooms.

Keywords: Assessment, teaching and learning, teacher training, classroom practice

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CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

Assessment is an integral part of learning and teaching and has a major impact on the accomplishment of learners in schools. However, as long as it is the main focus of a learning effort, schools are likely to continue facing serious challenges (Pellegrino, 1999). On the other hand, assessment is a challenge both internationally and nationally (Green, 2002). Education departments worldwide are developing policies in order to address the issue of assessment, curriculum and management (Schleicher, 2012). With the changing global dynamics, schools must adapt quickly to new educational changes and priorities, which most of the developing schools are failing to do, thus resulting in multiple challenges.

The management of assessment processes is an issue of concern in many African countries and has also been identified in Asian countries. A study conducted by Nzoka (2014:14) on school management and students' academic performance found that learners in Tanzania have been proven to be underperforming because of the assessment processes followed. In Lesotho, a new policy has been introduced because teachers were experiencing challenges with conducting assessment. Subsequently, the Lesotho Curriculum and Assessment Policy was developed to address pertinent assessment challenges. Sebatane (1985, in Raselimo & Mahao, 2015:44) explains that during the first implementation of continuous (CASS) in the 1980s, teachers experienced challenges which included a lack of clarity on the concept even among the implementers which included school inspectors and classroom teachers.

The new Lesotho Curriculum and Assessment Policy has revived the issue of CASS, which could be a threat to its implementation such that teachers' inability to implement it might pose a threat to quality in educational assessment (Raselimo & Mahao, 2015). Nzoka (2014) notes that, for the most part, competitive schools require well-chosen people as principals alongside administration structures that understand and fulfil their roles as pioneers of the educational programmes, in this way guaranteeing that an organised environment conducive to learning exists. School administration groups (SMTs) should develop and build a responsible relationship with their partners (Van der Berg, 2016).

In South Africa, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) was introduced in 2011 by the Department of Basic Education (DBE). It prescribes compulsory school-based assessments for progression and promotion in all the different school phases in line with the National Protocol for Assessment (DBE, 2011b). In the Foundation Phase school-based assessment forms 100% of assessment; in the Intermediate Phase school-based assessment forms 75%, while in the Senior Phase it is 40%. Evaluation procedures should empower learners to illustrate a profound understanding of concepts instead of surface information and a review of realities. Evaluation should be able to uncover the quality of learners' understanding and thinking, as well as particular execution skills (DBE, 2011a). SMTs must ensure that the quality and standard of assessments have been met through the moderation of assessments for all subjects (National Protocol for Assessment, 2015).

This study focuses on the management of assessment processes in primary schools in Nkomazi West Circuit – Ehlanzeni District. Current assessment processes in primary schools are still primitive and traditional, failing to adapt with changes in time, space and context, leading to a lack of improvement in the education of learners in schools. Studies in the field of assessment processes have focused mainly on the impact of assessment methods on teaching and learning and have failed to look in any detail at where the assessment challenges originally emanated from or the exact challenges that contribute to schools failing to decisively deal with and redress the problems. This study therefore seeks to close the gap between past and current studies on the management of assessment processes in primary schools using specifically primary schools in Nkomazi East circuit as the point of reference.

1.2 Research problem

According to Assefa (2017:34), the use of evaluation practices at school level is challenged by the various settings and contexts in which they have to take place, such as huge course sizes and high teacher workloads, which are likely to create challenges when attempting to monitor the advancement of individual learners. A deficiency of instruction materials, such as computers and workshops, may moreover impose challenges in the appraisal of practical aptitudes particularly in science and practical subjects (Li, 2017). At the same time, CAPS does not allocate specific timeframes for teachers to administer assessments. The content is spread across the term and thus does

not allow time for assessments to take place, which may also constrain teachers in administering assessment (Raselimo & Mahao, 2015).

Policy documents require schools to administer and monitor the administration of both formal and informal assessment. Informal assessment should not be seen as separate from the learning activities taking place in the classroom (CAPS, 2011a). On the other hand, formal assessments are subject to moderation for the purpose of quality assurance and to ensure that appropriate standards are maintained (CAPS, 2011a). In countries where there are challenges with assessments, learners' school-based assessment marks are way too high compared to the exam marks (Van der Berg, 2016). Kampambwe (2010, in Raselimo & Mahao, 2015) notes that encounters in other African nations indicate that the execution of evaluation practices comparable to CASS presents practical issues in school settings, where materials and hardware are often not readily available. Another challenge for CASS is the amount of trust, or lack thereof, that can be placed in teachers.

According to Fagerlund (2018:266), assessment in primary schools in South Africa is school based. SMTs are expected to assist teachers in developing quality assessment activities, whether it be assessment for learning (formative) or assessment of learning (summative). Assessment in most schools is both far too lenient and too unreliable to discriminate between students' abilities, often leaving learners under illusions regarding their preparedness and leading to lenient and largely random grade progression (Van der Berg et al., 2016). If assessments were managed effectively there would be no discrepancies among them.

The DBE has stated clearly in the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM 1994) that the core duties and responsibilities are to:

- cooperate with co-workers in arrange to preserve a great educating standard and advance among the learners and to cultivate regulatory effectiveness inside the division and the school.
- participate in concurred school/educator evaluation procedure in order to routinely audit their proficient practices with the point of progressing educating, learning and management.

SMTs seem not to be assisting teachers in terms of assessment development; some processes seem not to be adhered to or some schools seem not to have any processes

in place to manage assessments. Consequently, processes are lacking for the planning, organising, coordinating and controlling of assessments. SMTs should enhance the management of assessment processes to increase output and ensure quality education. CAPS (2011) emphasises that comprehensive and appropriate practices should be in place for the quality assurance of all subject assessments and that this should be done once per term. Van der Berg (2016), in his study titled "Thoughts and accountability: teachers that can't and teachers that won't", found that if almost every learner were doing better on school tests, these tests would not give learners an accurate indication of how they would do in their exams.

Policy is clear that the implementation of assessment should be managed, and processes should be adhered to. Findings in the literature reveal that there is a challenge with the implementation of assessment, as the process of managing assessment in primary schools is not clear. This study tries to close the gap caused by missing information pertaining to policy directives, the status quo and the challenges posed by the implementation of an effective policy implementation processes.

1.3 Problem statement

This study explores the way in which assessment processes are managed in primary schools in Nkomazi West circuit, Mpumalanga province. The focus will be on identifying the tools used by certain schools to manage assessment processes in order to ensure that effective schools share best practices with others that are less successful to enhance and increase learner performance. In view of the persistent assessment challenges of learners and the lack of effective implementation processes caused by a number of factors such as poor policy directives, inadequate SMT capacity to foster implementation and lack of proper assessment guidelines, the study sought to explore the way in which assessment processes are managed in primary schools.

This study seeks to evaluate the impact of assessment methods on teaching and learning. Research has thus far failed to examine in detail the source of the assessment challenges that contribute to schools failing to decisively deal with and redress the problems. The study also seeks to evaluate what is working and what is failing in terms of the assessment of learners in schools and find appropriate approaches for dealing with the assessment inconsistencies that most SMTs are facing daily in schools. In this study, the current assessment procedures and methods in primary schools are queried and

evaluated in order to identify the gaps and challenges experienced by schools in the assessment process.

1.4 Research questions

1.4.1 Main Research Question

The following research question was formulated for this study:

How are assessment processes managed in primary schools by school management teams?

1.4.2 Sub-questions

From this research question, the following sub-questions were proposed for this study:

- Which assessment procedures and processes are followed by school management teams in managing assessment?
- What challenges are experienced by school management teams with regard to the management of assessment processes?
- What tools are used by school management teams to manage assessment processes?

1.5 Rationale

In South Africa and in other developing nations like Swaziland, Namibia and Lesotho, a few teachers are incapable to implement successful continuous persistent evaluation that can truly cater for the individual learner's learning processes in enormous classes,(Dawes, Biersteker, Girdwood, Snelling & Tredoux, 2018:12).The reasons for teachers battling to conduct persistent appraisal in huge classes incorporate the reality that they are not appropriately prepared to set appraisal things that evaluate all levels of Bloom's scientific classification, they don't have great information of appraisal rubrics and they are forced by the time figure to 'complete' the educational modules and hand in persistent marks to the examination office, (Engelbrecht, Nel, Smit & Van Deventer, 2016). In differentiate, evaluation in created nations includes instructors creating and scoring learned people challenging execution assignments. In this way, the integration of educational programs, appraisal and instruction in a well-developed instructing and learning framework makes the establishment for much more even handed and profitable

results (Darling-Hammond & McCloskey, 2008). Working as a subject advisor in the Mpumalanga Department of Basic Education and working closely with the SMTs has made me realise that there are gaps in some schools with regard to the management of assessment. I have also noticed that some processes for managing assessment are not taken into consideration and hence it leads to poor performance. The cause of poor performance must lie in a combination of a lack of subject knowledge, as well as other factors that determine what happens in the classroom (Van der Berg, 2016). SMTs in all schools should be monitoring what is taking place inside the classroom and during assessments.

The poor performance of learners has also been reported by the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS, 2011), the Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study (PIRLS, 2011) and the Southern and East Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ, 2010). This poor performance on the part of learners has led to many questions which require investigation. These include finding out what standardisation practices are happening in the assessments that are written in schools. This study will add valuable information on the different processes and strategies employed by SMTs with regard to the management of assessment, especially in schools in the Nkomazi West Circuit in Mpumalanga Province.

This study has thus managed to close the gap between past and current studies on the management of assessment processes in primary schools using specifically primary schools in Nkomazi West circuit as the point of reference for evaluation procedures. In addition to adding valuable information on different processes and strategies employed by SMTs with regard to the management and assessment processes, the study also sought to close the gap in terms of inconsistencies in assessment and management in primary schools.

1.6 Research aim and objectives

The aim of the study was to evaluate the management of assessment processes in primary schools at Nkomazi West circuit – Ehlanzeni district.

1.6.1 Specific research objectives

The following specific research objectives were formulated:

- To determine assessment procedures and processes followed by school management teams in managing assessments of educators and learners in primary schools in Nkomazi West Circuit.
- To identify challenges experienced by school management teams with regard to the management of assessment processes in primary schools in Nkomazi West Circuit.
- To examine tools used by school management teams to manage assessment processes in primary schools in Nkomazi West Circuit.

1.7 Limitations and delimitations of the study

This study has several limitations, the greatest being the time frame within which the study had to be completed. To counteract the effect of the time limit, an appropriate sample size was used to collect adequate and relevant data to answer the research questions. Another challenge identified was the fact that participants would be likely to respond subjectively to some of the interview questions. This led to advanced follow-up questioning techniques being devised to validate initial responses provided by the respondents.

The study fell into a grey area of research in that little research would appear to have been conducted in the area. This limited access to other supplementary studies to validate results. To address this, the study adopted a qualitative approach to try and close the data and information gaps qualitatively.

Interviews and content analysis for this study were confined to five primary schools in Nkomazi West circuit in the Ehlanzeni District. The study focused on primary schools that were not experiencing management challenges with regard to assessment, as per the Mpumalanga Department of Basic Education Annual Report, 2017. The circuit manager of the Nkomazi West circuit provided a list of the schools and the list of the SMTs that were to be directly involved in the study. Data collection was limited to the list of selected key informants who had direct access and influence on the study.

1.8 Significance of the study

Assessment is a critical step in the learning process. It determines whether or not the objectives have been met by both teachers and learners. This study was conducted in order to work towards enhancing the researcher's understanding of assessment processes. It was intended to redirect the researcher's attention in terms of how assessments are managed by SMTs to enhance learner performance in Nkomazi West circuit. The study equips the researcher and other research experts with a better understanding of assessment procedures as they pertain to learners and teachers, especially those in rural schools that are struggling to meet their goals. The study also ultimately equips SMTs to effectively and efficiently manage assessment processes in their schools' learning processes. It was regarded as imperative to carry out the study in Mpumalanga province, to assist the provincial education department to improve the performance of both the educators and the learners. The fast deteriorating condition of the education departments in South Africa is important to redress for the growth and development of the South African economy through education as aligned through the National Development Plan (NDP of 2011).

1.9 Chapter summary

This chapter provided a conceptual description of the study by explaining the status quo of the management of assessment processes in primary schools at Nkomazi West circuit–Ehlanzeni district. The study objectives and research questions, which provided an overall framework to guide the study in the selection of appropriate research methodology and presentation of data, were also discussed.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

According to Tymms (2013:45), globally, much emphasis is now being placed on the assessment of learners to enhance the performance of school especially those located in rural areas. This is a concept that every school, institution and educational facility has started to consider as critical. Since it is a government initiative in South Africa, promoted in particular by the Department of Basic Education, the training and education of learners in schools is paramount and assessments must be done; again, teachers must undergo training to carry out these duties effectively (Lederman, Lederman, Bartos, Bartels, Meyer, & Schwartz, 2014). It is in this context that this chapter intends to address various literature on the evaluation of assessment processes in different learning institutions such as schools. The chapter provides clear definition of terms that are essential for understanding the context of the study. Furthermore, the chapter creates a platform for the views and perspectives of other authors in the same field of study to be scrutinised and evaluated. Lastly, the theoretical and policy underpinnings of the study will be discussed in detail.

2.2. Definition of key terms and concepts

In this section, the key terms and concepts are discussed in order to unpack and reduce complexities relating to the broader understanding of the study. The major concepts/terms defined include but are not limited to assessment, evaluation and feedback.

2.2.1. Assessment

Wiliam (2011) defines assessment as "a general term which includes all methods used to gather information about children`s knowledge, ability, understanding, attitudes, and motivation". In a book titled *Learning to teach in primary school*, the authors of chapter 5, Hall and Sheehy (2010: 245), discuss what assessment is, coming to the conclusion that "assessment means different things in different contexts", however, they declare that it is "always bound up with attitudes, values, beliefs and sometimes prejudices" on both sides, which is in accordance with Ioannou-Georgiou (2003). Cameron (2001) states that

"assessment is concerned with pupils' learning or performance, and thus provides one type of information that might be used in evaluation". These definitions clearly illustrate that assessment means assessing not only knowledge and performance but also attitudes and motivation. Therefore, it is imperative to approach it with a wider perspective. Nonetheless, to assess motivation and attitude objectively is difficult and requires other tools. Cameron (2003) also mentions testing as a particular form of assessment.

2.2.2. Evaluation of assessment methods

According to Tomlinson and Moon (2014), assessment refers to the method of gathering data in order to decide the degree to which a language programme meets its objectives. Significant data can be gathered from teachers' and parents' suppositions, course reading quality, exam outcomes and learners' demeanours. A few of the instruments used in the assessment procedures include tests, surveys, course reading, investigation and observations. Other researchers maintain that assessment may be a long-term process comprising the collecting and evaluating of information so as to supply significant feedback both to teachers and learners (Dawes, Biersteker, Girdwood, Snelling, and Tredoux, 2018:13). This process is significant, as evaluations must not be done before adequate information to assess on is gathered. Cameron (2003:12) states that evaluation refers to a broader notion than assessment, which is concerned with a whole range of issues in and beyond language education. Evaluation is also done so as to evaluate the degree to which something is performing or under-performing so that a viable solution can be generated and implemented for improvement purposes (Timperley, 2009).

2.2.3. Feedback on assessment practices

Timperley (2015:34) defines feedback as "the transmission of evaluative or corrective information about an action, event, or process to the original or controlling source". Skedsmo (2011) states in this regard, "feedback is a piece of information or response given to the learner regarding his or her performance, so that it might be improved". Cameron (2003) clarifies that in the event that appraisal feedback is to be supportive of learners and foster their learning, it ought to be specific and point by point in order to be sufficient to form a contrast and, importantly, it should be related to a specific objective or

understanding so that the learner can perform better (Stead & Nevill, 2010). Cameron (2003) also gives us an overview of the process of feedback as that which must be done timeously. According to her, the process during which assessment and feedback can scaffold the learner to better learning is supposed to be done continuously with the educator, putting the learner first and minding behaviours and reactions as well.

2.2.4. Aspects of assessment

To assess learners' work, whether in formative assessment or summative assessment, appropriate instruments should be used (CAPS, 2011). If learners are able to master the assessments, it will mean that learning is taking place. Learning may be portrayed as a process aimed at changing a person's behaviour based on his/her encounters or disclosures. Hence, these forms of involvement and revelation lead to a new understanding of the world and empower us to apply the information obtained in current circumstances to the greater good of society and the communities we live in. Securing information, at some point, includes processes that change information from experiences into well-organised data (Wakefield, 1996:364).

Therefore, it is imperative for SMTs to be trained thoroughly in order to provide the needed support to schools. Most schools in South Africa have not yet reached a satisfactory standard of success compared to those in developed countries, which are at higher levels. If ineffective schools are to emulate effective schools the involvement of all stakeholders is required (Botha, 2014). A global trend with regard to assessment is that assessment should be standardised to improve performance and improve the of quality education. To ensure accountability of the government, policies aimed at maintaining high standards should be developed (Klenowski, 2011).

2.3. The notion of learners' assessment and management

Past and current studies have shown that assessments can improve methods of instruction significantly, but as Wiliam (2011:151–152) contends, it can also influence how willing, motivated and competent students are to learn. Existing studies on cognition and inspiration accentuate that a fundamental component of evaluation is motivating school learners to be the proprietors of their self-controlled learning. Wiliam (2011:152) alludes to Boekaerts's (1993) findings, which recommend that to enhance pupils' capabilities, instructors have to be create a learning environment that boosts learners' esteem to enact

the development of a pathway to well-being (Boerkaerts, 1993, in Wiliam, 2011:152). This finding accentuates the significance of sharing learning objectives with students, advancing the conviction that capacity isn't settled, making it more difficult for students to compare themselves with others in terms of accomplishment, giving input that contains a formula for assisting in activity execution and engaging learners to make independent learning decisions and outcomes. There is a huge contrast in that when an individual has knowledge on how to execute a task, it doesn't translate to the actual implementation and execution of the task, hence teachers are expected to continuously develop and nurture their teaching skills (Themane & Osher, 2014).

Evaluation and assessment in schools include choosing, collecting and making decisions about evidence relating to the objectives of the learning outcomes being evaluated (Dixson & Worrell, 2016). This suggests that teachers must understand and draw conclusions about pupils' learning procedures, progress and results. The major aim is to obtain data to recognise the gaps between the pupils' current and targeted performance and to assist them to advance and improve their performance. Be that as it may, evaluation can also serve purposes such as distinguishing qualities and shortcomings, illustrating progress and informing pupils' overall abilities.

2.4. Assessment for (formative) and of learning (summative) and learner performance

Assessment is divided into two types. There is assessment for learning (formative assessment) and assessment of learning (summative assessment). In both cases regular feedback should be given to learners to enhance the learning experience (CAPS, 2011). Feedback provides teachers with information on learners' knowledge and the effectiveness of instruction. As cited by Trumbull and Lash (2013), Guskey (2010) suggests that teachers use assessments "as an integral part of the instructional process to identify individual learning difficulties and prescribe remediation procedures". This is supported by Agaton and Pattalitan (2016), who maintain that effective feedback plays an important role in instructional scaffolding which results in learning gains. This will assist learners in refining their knowledge, skills and behaviours.

2.4.1. Formative assessment

Formative assessment is a method for looking for and obtaining proof of the stage where learners are in their learning performance levels. This is then used by learners and their

teachers to show them where learners need to be and how best to induce and improve their understanding of concepts (Agaton & Pattalitan, 2016). Dark and Wiliam (1998) have illustrated that learning picks up considerably when teachers introduce developmental appraisal into their classroom practices.

Formative assessments form an essential part of teaching and learning. They should be incorporated during the teaching and learning process and should not be dealt with as a separate unit; moreover, they should not be once off. Trumbull and Lash (2013) have emphasised the close linkage between, if not the inseparability of, formative assessment, teaching and learning. Formative assessment most commonly takes the shape of classroom inter-debates between teachers and learners (or, less commonly, between learners). These exchanges have the potential to improve learner's communication and engagements with other learners or across different platforms (Trumbull & Lash, 2013). However, teachers view assessment as an addition to their workload, hence they assume that there is insufficient time for teaching and will spend most of their time assessing (Matsenjwa & Thwala, 2013).

The purpose of formative assessment is to continuously gather information on learners' achievement and their learning. This could be done in various forms such as experiments, projects, debates, investigations, discussions and problem-solving questions (Nzoka, 2014; Matsenjwa et al. 2013). Contrary to the above, Trumbull and Lash (2013) propose that there is no outright solution to what a single occasion of formative evaluation ought to look like. Every direct action that permits teachers to reveal the way learners think about what is being instructed, which can be used to advance enhancements in students' learning, can serve a developmental purpose.

2.4.2 Summative assessment

Summative assessment is a tool used to evaluate student learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a defined instructional period –typically at the end of a project, unit, course, semester, programme or school year (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2003). Summative assessments in schools have to undergo certain processes to ensure quality standards are met according to the CAPS (2011:88). These processes include the development/generating of assessments, pre-moderation,

evaluating, supervision and recording findings. Developmental and summative work in modern and large teaching frameworks have to be adjusted, so that teachers' formative work isn't undermined by summative weight, and undoubtedly, so that summative prerequisites may be better served by taking full advantage of advancements in teachers' assessment work (Black & Wiliam, 2003).

Summative appraisals, on the other hand, are pre-planned, orderly endeavours by the instructor to discover what learners have learnt (Dixson & Worrell, 2016). The larger part of assessments in instructive settings is formal. Ordinarily, developmental evaluations are used in combination with the objectives and goals set at the start of a lesson or the school year. Formal evaluations moreover vary from casual appraisals in that learners can get ready for them ahead of time. Summative evaluation is aimed at supplying the instructor with a precise way of assessing how well the learners are advancing in a review and in a particular subject. Compared to developmental evaluation, summative appraisal can take any shape (Roos & Hamilton, 2005).

Formative assessment and summative assessment are related, as are assessment and learner performance, because each is informed by the other and in order to assess whether learners are performing well or poorly, or whether learners have achieved the objectives, they should undergo a process of assessment, either formative or summative. Assessment will then inform learner performance. The performance of learners in South Africa still remains poor. In the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS, 2011), learners in Grades 4 and 5 were found to have a low achievement of 200 points below the international average of 500 points. In both grades, learners were unable to display the desired skills and knowledge.

2.4.3. Annual National Assessment outcomes

In 2014 the Annual National Assessments were administered for the fourth time but learners continued to underperform (Annual National Assessment diagnostic report, 2014). The survey, which was conducted by Moloi and Strauss (2010) from the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ), reflects that learners who are located in the historically disadvantaged areas and from poor socioeconomic backgrounds are not performing well. Such learners have clearly not mastered even the elementary reading and numeracy skills. SACMEQ 3 data dating back

to 2007 emphasised vast geographic disparities in South Africa: 41% of rural Grade 6 learners were functionally illiterate compared to only 13% of urban learners in the same grade. While assessment is taking place in most schools' teachers assess simple items (Cumming & Maxwell, 2004; Martone, 2009; Matsenjwa, 2013).

It is important for teachers to understand the significance of assessment and that SMTs have to evaluate test items and their equivalence to meet defined benchmark (Martone et al., 2009). It is the responsibility of the SMTs to ensure that assessments are moderated beforehand so that teachers can be held accountable for the poor performance of learners. Lack of accountability has had an impact on learner performance. There is a perception that the national, provincial and local levels of government are not held accountable and this lack of accountability has led to even the assessment process in schools not being managed effectively (Van der Berg, 2016).

Assessments in most schools are too unreliable and their quality should be improved. Van der Berg further suggests that standardised assessments can improve aspects of school quality by giving accurate feedback to parents so that they will act as monitors of school quality and as champions of their children's education. The assessments which are set at school level say a lot about teachers.

Performance assessments make a distinction between teachers' strengths and weaknesses and they make a distinction between learners and their performance, (Hoadley, 2014). If the management of assessment is done effectively in schools, SMTs may be able to identify the challenges and come with intervention strategies to empower and capacitate teachers. Assessments serve as motivation for learners; if they know that they will be tested they tend to study more.

2.5. Effective evaluation and assessment

For assessment and evaluation to be valuable and compelling, it requires proper arrangement and planning. Planning for assessment partly occurs when teachers plan for each lesson or unit, and partly at the start of the school year or course (Fives, Barnes, Dacey & Gillis, 2016). Mediums of instruction and assessment should be considered together to guarantee that instruction lends itself to assessment. Planning the course items and course content also ensures that the learner's performance will be effective, and this leads to proper assessment and evaluation in the long run (Tisdall & Liebel,

2008). Moreover, if assessment isn't planned to accompany instruction, the time required for evaluation exercises will most likely not be available. As pointed out previously, learners' accomplishments are clearly central to classroom evaluation and assessment. Instructors should therefore know what and how much learners have learnt in arranging to screen the viability of instruction and arrange continuous instruction, as well as for responsibility purposes.

Concurring with Perie, Marion and Gong (2007), in order to arrange and plan instruction methods that are suitable for students or groups of students, it is vital to get the variables that have an impact on learner's execution of the course. This implies going past the appraisal of accomplishment. Nusche, Earl, Maxwell and Shewbridge (2011) believe that teachers have to constantly assess their teaching on the basis of learners' responses to taught concepts, absorption, inspiration, arrangement, cooperation, tirelessness and accomplishment. The conclusions drawn from such an assessment constitute their primary source for measuring the viability of the chosen learning exercises. The educator is so distracted with classroom exercises that he falls flat in terms of preserving a comprehensive perspective on the stream of planning learning procedures, learning targets and executing exercises such as tests to learners. Typically, this becomes the point where we are able to grant the need for assessment over tests and results.

Assessment of accomplishments is the input that makes enhancement conceivable. Through assessment, qualities and shortcomings are distinguished. Assessment, in this sense, is another perspective on learning, one that empowers learners to get a handle on what they have missed and the instructor to comprehend what can be provided in ensuing lessons to make strides in learning (Marais & Meier, 2013). To do so, elective strategies (e.g. exchange diaries, portfolio conferences, interviews and surveys, perception) are available for collecting valuable data around dialect learning and most student-related variables which influence the forms of second-language teaching and learning. Genesee (cited in Carter & Nunan, 2001) is of the opinion that for tests and elective shapes of dialect appraisal to be valuable for classroom-based assessment, they ought to be connected to guidelines, destinations and exercises, outlined to enhance learners' execution, formatively suitable, important and interesting to learners, exact, reasonable and ongoing.

2.5.1. Effects and impact of assessment for learning

The positive impact of the use of appraisal to progress student and instructor learning and classroom practice is seldom addressed in the literature, a fact affirmed by recent surveys (Gardner, 2012). All the main techniques considered critical for the successful appraisal of learners (sharing learning goals/criteria, addressing, developmental criticism, peer and self-assessment, developmental use of summative tests) are assessed as overwhelmingly positive in terms of their potential to advance changes in teachers' classroom practices (Harlen,2006). Any issues recognised are ascribed to poor relevant conditions such as need for time, deficient application of compelling evaluation standards in instructing and outside limitations and must be addressed. The result of this appears to propose that successful evaluation approaches ordinarily offer assistance by allowing teachers and schools to embrace a more learning-focused position, but research is required in order to be able to illustrate the possibility of compelling appraisal in different contexts (Tungata, 2006).

2.5.2. Impact of poor assessment on student achievement

The impact of poor assessment on the performance of learners is instituted in terms of the claimed benefits of advancing student learning and the degree that student accomplishments (which are a result of learning) can be measured from the continuous performance of the learners(Gardner, 2012).The other side of the coin is the fact that poor assessment can lead to poor student achievement through a number of factors such as demotivation, lack of interest to try further, emotional distress as well as learners dropping out of school totally. Unfortunately, most studies have not examined changes in student attainment (learning gains) that have emanated directly from effective assessment. Nonetheless, some studies have illustrated the negative effects and implications of poor assessments on student achievement (Marais & Meier, 2013).

There is reliable evidence that suggests that evaluation and appraisal lead to an increase in the number of learners with improved learning outcomes (Gardner, 2012). For instance, one study reported that 78% of members assessed the effectiveness of intervention methods for performance outcomes on primary pupils' and two of the 35 schools taking part in the study moreover showed advancements in summative tests as a result of convincing appraisal methodologies. Additionally, another study revealed that a fraction

of the schools showed changes in student accomplishments, while eight schools included in a convincing appraisal project in terms of auxiliary students' test results had more negative appraisal results (Sadler, 2010).

In any case, other sources consulted demonstrate that members, in spite of their acknowledgment of the positive impact of appraisal, felt they needed more time or superior proof to be able to unquestionably state that compelling appraisal has a positive effect on students' achievement (James, 2006). It should be noted that members engaged in a change activity, such as viable assessment that gives proficient advancement accentuating the benefits to student learning of such assessment approaches, could discover their views impacted by this, which is why more evidence is required to cement the study outcomes. It is also important to note that although there is vast literature on the assessment of learners, less has been done to look critically at the evaluation of these assessment processes by SMTs, as well as other members in authority (Harlen, 2007). Poor management of these assessment tools can have negative implications for the learning outcomes of both public and private schools.

2.5.3. Effects of assessment on teachers

Little has been written on the benefits of viable evaluation for teachers' professionalism and instructing practices. Teachers, like learners, alter their part in classroom interaction when viable appraisal is presented (Skedsmo, 2011). Their cooperation is said to move from the prime concern of being a content deliverer, which to a great extent controls the classroom flow, to a mediator and facilitator of learning who collaborates with students, supporting and checking their progress. An assessment report in Britain states that changes in teachers' practice were watched observed in a minority of schools (5 out of 43) and assessed as exceptional for the following concrete reasons:
- explanations on what and how they needed students to learn
- cautious, but adaptable, planning with goals based on appraisal evidence
- standard feedback and support of targets during lessons
- clear idea of what students may and might not do in order to assist them to improve
- viable addressing of learners, counting minutes in lesson for drawing learning together
- helpful criticism on students' work.

This shows that in as much as effective assessment is always biased towards learners it also affects teachers who are supposed to be the people who steer assessment. Reactions to assessed work for individual learners also tend to affect learners to a larger extent, which may influence their assessment processes in the future. This scenario calls for diligence and objectivity from the teachers in handling reactions and emotions, as well as avoiding situations involving bias and conflict (Hughes & Chen, 2011).

2.6. Benefits of assessment

Compelling evaluation assists learners to centrally focus on the components of their learning. This will help them understand what constitutes 'excellence', take charge of their personal learning and decide how they will move forward. The following benefits have been identified as key benefits of effective assessment for both learners and teachers in schools and other organisations:

- Effective assessment creates a valuable connection between assessment and learning activities, as the clarification of objectives will have a direct impact on the devising of teaching and learning strategies and approaches.
- According to research (Hattie, 2009), feedback of assessed work has a positive effect on learner achievement (ranked 10th out of 150 factors), particularly if it involves feedback from learner to teacher about their own learning. Many other factors identified as powerful influences in Hattie's analysis are also closely associated with assessment, hence the title of his book, *Visible learning*.
- Effective assessment successfully implemented in the extended sense used by Carless (2011) can support students to become confident, reflective, and innovative and engaged (at least four of the Cambridge learners' attributes).
- Learners' positive reactions to their assessed work also motivate teachers to aim to improve themselves, giving confidence to the teachers themselves about their assessment criteria.

Appraisal of student learning and accomplishments can be an effective tool for change in schools by educating policymakers around the learning results of the students. In order to make a difference, teachers must know how to make progress in classrooms instruction as they think of ways of making instructions clearer and learning objectives more effective in the classroom. Compelling classroom evaluation practices by teachers have appeared to gain half to a full standard deviation on outside institutionalised accomplishment tests,

with the biggest gains for low achievers. Appraisal can contribute to a compelling instruction framework by giving systemic data on levels of student accomplishment and related variables; supporting teachers and students with real-time data to move forward and educating and learning. Advertising implies that stakeholders are responsible for the outcomes of learning (Botha, 2013).

2.7. The role of SMTs in managing assessment

It is important to provide support to teachers to enable them to use assessment in the most effective way to enhance teaching and learning (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2004). The management style of some SMTs compromises the quality of education, especially if they are using a single method. Distributive leadership confirms that the collaboration of management strategies and power sharing serves as a significant contributor to school improvement (Botha & Triegaard, 2014).

Schools with a common sense of purpose and strong public organisation involving mutual relationships among staff are efficient in promoting a range of academic and social outcomes reproducing students' engagement and commitment. In schools where the principal distributes the management roles to all staff member, SMTs tend to improve the quality of education and increase performance. The SMTs should also ensure that duties are distributed fairly to teachers because in primary school each HOD is responsible for many subjects and it is impossible for SMT personnel to have knowledge of all the subjects.

The central obligations and roles of the SMT incorporate planning, as well as assessing appraisal, homework and assignments in all the subjects in the Education department (Faculty Authoritative Measures [PAM], 1994). Helping teachers to become more viable may subsequently mean altering both their evaluation practices and their convictions around learning. This will involve the improvement of a basic awareness that will unavoidably lead to the need for change within the department (James, 2015). So, for instance, actualising appraisal for learning/formative evaluation may require a teacher to re-examine what viable learning is, and his or her part in bringing it closer to classroom requirements. Essentially, a change in their view of learning is likely to require evaluation practices to be adjusted to fit the needs and requirements of the SMT and those of the learners.

2.7.1. Content knowledge of SMTs

SMTs are expected to assist teachers with assessment in their subjects but they are not specialists in all the subjects in their departments (Harlen, 2007). Teachers do not have trust in their immediate supervisors. SMTs, on the other hand, have a deep distrust in their teachers because they assume that they are not capable of developing their own assessment tasks, while teachers think that their supervisors do not have content knowledge of their subjects and that they don't have the supervisory skills required to fulfil the function they are supposed to fulfil (Fleisch, 2014).

In primary schools, one SMT member is responsible for two or more subjects, despite the fact no one can specialise in more than two subjects in his/her tertiary qualification. In addition, even if they could master the subjects the workload would hamper the process (Marshall & Jane-Drummond, 2006). The supply of teachers in relation to subject demands in the system is worrying. There are serious shortages in mathematics and languages, particularly in the Intermediate Phase. The backlog in the appointment of teachers has led to SMTs being unable to perform their duties efficiently and in line with their job descriptions.

In some schools, teachers are not submitting their work to their supervisors because of the perception that supervisors do not have the required content knowledge for all the subjects they are responsible for. According to Hoadley (2014), the point of supervision is to assist schools to identify strengths and weaknesses in teachers as well as problematic content areas, which will help the supervisor to plan for the in-service training of teachers to upgrade their assessment skills. Through supervision, schools should come up with programmes as intervention strategies to improve and such programmes should be evaluated. If all projects in South Africa were evaluated, we would know what does not work, hence, evaluation is key (Spaull, 2014).

Lack of trust in teachers has been emphasised by Van der Berg (2016), who found that teachers teach 50% of the content they are expected to teach for the year due to a lack of confidence and a lack of content knowledge or pedagogical skill to teach the curriculum at even the most basic level. SACMEQ (2007 in Spaull, 2014) found that Maths teachers are low in critical content knowledge. Teachers cannot teach what they don't know,

hence, they cannot assess what they did not teach. SMTs should be monitored to ensure that assessments that are set at school level cover the content for the term and are standardised.

2.8. Theoretical framework for assessment practices

Theory helps reviewers and researchers obtain a better understanding of the context of the study from a theoretical perspective. This study made use of Pellegrino's (1999) assessment theory, as well as affective event theory, to explain the study broadly. The two theories were chosen because they were perfectly aligned to core amplitude of the study.

2.8.1. Assessment theory (Pellegrino, 1999)

Assessment theory was developed by Pellegrino (1999) with a view to explaining the assessment of activities at an institutional level. The theory was used in his study "The evolution of educational assessment: considering the past and imagining the future". This theory indicates that setting clear goals for the future, managing assessments by all managers and for all learners, monitoring assessments, allocating resources for effective assessments and evaluating teachers regularly can promote student learning and growth.

Pellegrino (1999) accepts that at the current time, for all intents and purposes, each state has created particular benchmarks with the objective of raising the bar for the methods of instruction of all children. Americans need to preserve high measures of performance for the instructive endeavour and those benchmarks must be advanced for all children. As applied to that study this theory postulates the following:

2.8.1.1. Assessment megatrends

Students come to the classroom with biased preconceptions how the world works. The thought is to create competence in a range of inquiry and so students must have a profound establishment of real information, understand actualities and concepts within the setting of a conceptual system, and compose information in ways that encourage recovery and application. Instructors ought to use a meta-cognitive approach to instruction to assist students learn to require control of their own learning by characterizing learning objectives and checking their advance in accomplishing them.

Instructors got to use a meta-cognitive approach to instruction to assist students learn to require control of their claim learning by characterizing learning objectives and observing their advance in accomplishing them. Capable learning situations are centred on four components, specifically, information, learning, appraisal and community (Mullis & Martin, 2013).

2.8.1.2. Top-down and bottom up solutions

According to Mullis and Martin (2013), to move towards the inclusion of a wider array of cognitive performances than those currently encompassed by the drop-in-from-the-sky test format that is characteristic of the formative form of assessment in its current form, the assessment purpose must be in line with the assessment method. Sometimes the educators or teachers prescribe quick tests to ascertain whether learners are capable of handling and reacting quickly; however, sometimes this kind of assessment can be disastrous. In other instances, teachers can create their own assessment criteria without consulting the learners or other assessors.

2.8.1.3. Assessment in the 21st century

The public will have an advanced understanding and appreciation of evaluation that is an output of encountering its direct value in their learning. Technology-assisted dynamic learning situations will exist for numerous spaces of information and aptitude, with appraisal as an integral component of the large natural engineering and plan. The SAT, GRE, NAEP and other "top 50" evaluations as we know them will be antiques of history. Data about student competence and accomplishment will be captured as part of the ordinary instructing and learning process (Pellegrino, 2013).

Based on the three major aspects of assessment theory, several issues can be singled out that assist in creating links between, and drawing conclusions on, the research aim and the research intent. The first important issue was to appreciate the role assessment plays in creating conducive learning environments for learners. The other important element which the theory highlights is the role and place of each type of assessment and how each type of assessment assists in creating strengthened learning outcomes. This theory was chosen because it also suggests methods of assessment for the future. However, this study will focus on top-down and bottom-up solutions. SMTs need to

understand the purpose of assessment and the methods for assessments, as well as identify suitable assessments.

2.8.2. Affective event theory

According to Thompson and Phua (2001), effective event theory was made by analysts Howard M. Weiss and Russell Cropanzano to clarify the way in which feelings, sentiments and states of intellect influence an individual's capacity to perform specific evaluations and assessments in line with the common inclination of the evaluators. The theory clarifies the linkages between representatives' inward impacts, to illustrate their states of mind and their reactions to things that happen in their working environment that impact on the execution of their work and their definitive obligation (Wegge, Van Dick, Fisher, West & Dawson, 2006). The speculation moreover suggests that emotional work practices are clarified by worker personality and sentiments.

Rolland and De Fruyt (2003) consider results and disclosures of character demonstrate that there are different components that influence the theory. These are mindfulness, appropriateness, neuroticism, openness to understanding, and extraversion. Finally, execution input has a fundamental effect on agent impact. Standard reviews have to be done on a consistent basis both in medium and broad affiliations. The sort of feedback on execution given by supervisors can impact agent execution and occupation satisfaction (Fisher & Ashkanasy, 2014).

Closely aligned with this theory is Locke's (1976) extent of affect theory. The critical preface to this theory is that satisfaction is managed by an error that occurs between what an assessor needs in an assessment and the evaluation results.

The theory moreover communicates that the amount of effort one gives to a given task (for instance, the level of self-sufficiency) correlates with how satisfied or disillusioned one is in proportion to the advances toward self-fulfilment. At the point where an agent of evaluation esteem could be a particular highlight of a job, his/her satisfaction is all the more exceptionally influenced both unequivocally when needs are met and conversely when the needs are not met however, this differs from different perspectives. In any case, the more a particular person conveys a more grounded opinion of dissatisfaction, the

more an assessor regards that angle (Spector, 1997). In the event that the assessor is not emotionally stable, evaluation is likely to be biased and subjective, thus compromising the quality of learning.

With regard to the study, the theory helps to clarify how an assessor or evaluator must be in the right state of mind to perform assessment tasks if he/she is to deliver quality results. The most important aspects or elements identified in the theory relate to how when an assessor`s esteem creates a specific feature of a vocation, his/her fulfilment is all the more extraordinary, which is basically affected both emphatically (when desires are met) and contrarily (when desires are not met), contrasted with one whose esteem does not meet certain aspects of evaluation procedures.

2.9. Principles of assessment

Newton (2007) explains a number of principles of assessment including issues of validity, reliability, consistence and inclusiveness. These are explained in detail below.

"Principle 1: Assessment should be valid

Validity ensures that assessment tasks and associated criteria effectively measure student attainment of the intended learning outcomes at the appropriate level.

Principle 2: Assessment should be reliable and consistent

There is a need for assessment to be reliable and this requires clear and consistent processes for the setting, marking, grading and moderation of assignments.

Principle 3: Information about assessment should be explicit, accessible and transparent

Clear, accurate, consistent and timely information on assessment tasks and procedures should be made available to students, staff and other external assessors or examiners.

Principle 4: Assessment should be inclusive and equitable

As far as is possible without compromising academic standards, inclusive and equitable assessment should ensure that tasks and procedures do not disadvantage any group or individual.

Principle 5: Assessment should be an integral part of programme design and should relate directly to the programme aims and learning outcomes

Assessment tasks should primarily reflect the nature of the discipline or subject but should also ensure that students have the opportunity to develop a range of generic skills and capabilities.

Principle 6: The amount of assessed work should be manageable

The scheduling of assignments and the amount of assessed work required should provide a reliable and valid profile of achievement without overloading staff or students.

Principle 7: Formative and summative assessment should be included in each programme

Formative and summative assessment should be incorporated into programmes to ensure that the purposes of assessment are adequately addressed. Many programmes may also wish to include diagnostic assessment.

Principle 8: Timely feedback that promotes learning and facilitates improvement should be an integral part of the assessment process

Students are entitled to feedback on submitted formative assessment tasks and on summative tasks, where appropriate. The nature, extent and timing of feedback for each assessment task should be made clear to students in advance.

Principle 9: Staff development policy and strategy should include assessment

All those involved in the assessment of students must be competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities".

The discussion on the principles of assessment brings to the fore an understanding of the basic need to have regulations, rules and standard procedures for conducting assessment procedures in schools. These principles form the basic guidelines which

SMTs should use when evaluating assessment so that unbiased results can be obtained. In the event that schools conduct assessment that is not guided by the basic principles, norms and standards, multiple challenges are likely to arise and add to the existing challenges and problems primary schools are already encountering in South Africa and globally.

2.10. Conclusion

This chapter examined key components of the assessment of evaluation appraisal of learners' performance in schools, as observed by SMTs. A viable, goal-oriented, teaching–learning arrangement plan has to contain clearly understood goals, beneficial classroom exercises and an adequate amount of criticism, inputs and feedback to create students mindful of the qualities and shortcomings of their presentations. Criticism and assessment are indistinguishably related to both instructional targets and classroom learning exercises and are vital components of the learning process. Key standards of appraisal and assessment were also clarified and complementing these angles were the theoretical components of the study.

The next chapter discusses the research methods and procedures for data collection leading to the analysis of the research findings.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter traces the way in which the research was planned to investigate the administration practice of assessing appraisal for learning in provincial schools in Nkomazi West circuit within the Ehlanzeni district. It begins with the rationale for the chosen technique and then moves to the details of the methods of inquiry regarding the research approach, testing plan, the determination of inquiry approaches regarding the sample, examining strategies and timelines for completion of each stage of the study. The data analysis is explained in the following section. Furthermore, the chapter explains the techniques for data analysis as well as the specific data collection instruments matching the research design. Finally, ethical issues, trustworthiness and limitations of the study are examined further in the study together with the need for acquiring ethical clearances from the institution to conduct the research.

3.2. Research design

The research paradigm for this study is interpretivist because, as the nature of the world signifies, there is no single external reality for the problem to be researched (Creswell, 2008). The research focus was specific with the researcher seeking to understand the specific context, that is, the way in which school management teams (SMTs) are managing the assessment processes. The assumption of the assessment processes in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) was key for the researcher in order to concentrate on its interpretation. The study entails an in-depth analysis and interpretation of the phenomenon under study. The study involves an empirical inquiry into the broader spectrum of assessment. This type of enquiry investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2013). In this case, this refers to the interpretation of assessment processes for learners in rural primary schools, clearly setting the boundaries between reality and theoretical perspectives. The researcher found it useful to adopt an

interpretivist research design because it enables a close examination of the data within the specific study context. It also enabled the researcher to become part of the process and so first-hand information was collected. The case in point involves the evaluation of assessment processes in schools managed by SMTs and whether these processes are effective or not. Mouton (2013) defines methodology as the logic of the decision-making process in scientific research, that is, the specific research approach that details the right direction for the study. In this study, the methodology adopted was a qualitative research approach and this is discussed in detail below.

3.2.1. Qualitative research approach

Qualitative research is utilised to get an understanding of complex social phenomena. It is instrumental within the inquiry process, because it analyses and provides meaning, affirming the reliability of collected data (Leedy 2001). When using a qualitative research approach, a much more distanced approach to the subjects is needed in order to eliminate any prejudice, bias and attachment to the subject matter under investigation. The examination of the subjective information captured within the pilot study (trial stage) enhanced the creation of an instrument that might accurately capture important subjective information within the execution stage of the research. It moreover permitted research members to contribute to the plan with more contextualised and suitable research instruments that would enable the researcher to fulfil the research objectives.

The last part of the research involved a full utilisation of the information captured amid the execution stage which shaped the key yields of this study (Silverman, 2016). A qualitative approach moreover permitted a broad portrayal of phenomena based on the reactions of the respondents such that the analyst was able to form topics that encouraged the introduction to findings (Flick,2018). A qualitative approach moreover makes a difference as the analysts can form presumptions that can either be adulterated or actualised by using evidence from the respondents. Based on the type and format of the collected data, it was found to be practical to adopt a qualitative research approach.

3.3. Target population and sampling

The target population encompasses all possible people who fall within the confines of the study sample. The target population usually incorporates the population that the sample

will be drawn from (Lapin, 2012). In this case, the target population of the study encompassed all the relevant educators who formed part of the SMTs, as well as district managers and members of the school governing body (SGB). It was from this target population that the selected respondents were chosen to participate in interviews to answer questions relating to the evaluation of assessment processes in selected schools in Nkomazi West Circuit. In addition, Nkomazi West Circuit was selected as the target population of primary schools to be selected for the evaluation of assessment processes in schools.

3.3.1. Sampling method

A non-random, theoretical sampling process was used to ensure that the relevant and important participants were contacted for the interviews in the pilot study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Efforts were made to incorporate a varying set of members to construct a precise and all-encompassing range of issues. From the chosen categories of respondents, an assortment of members was included in the list of interviewees as the sampling proceeded. The researcher had to utilise a practical purposive random sampling technique to pick schools which were adhering to the correct evaluation practices for the assessment of learners. Accordingly, five primary schools were selected from 21 schools in Nkomazi West Circuit. These five primary schools were, namely, Sidlemu, Mjejane, Mdladla, Sihlangu and Phambanisa. They were selected purposively as the study needs to evaluate schools that were adhering to school assessment procedures.

A purposive sampling method was identified and employed to ensure that only employees who met the specifications stated in the CAPS policy as being qualified for assessment in schools were chosen, as well as those who provided direct support for the effective and efficient assessment of learners in the selected primary schools, (Cousins & Chikazunga, 2013). The application of Cousins and Chikazunga's procedure for the selection of respondents was adopted as it fitted the study perfectly. To ensure correct sampling, the sampling criteria was developed in order to allow the support staff within the primary schools selected who fitted the selection criteria for respondents to be selected.

3.3.2. Selection of respondents and sampling size delineation

The process of selecting respondents is supposed to be as impartial and reliable as conceivable, but it is constrained by the number of participants willing to take part in the study. To overcome this initial selection predisposition, a participant pool sufficient (sampling frame) to provide adequate information related to the study was ensured. According to Armstrong (2009), sometimes it is not correct to increase the sample size in order to obtain adequate data, but it is important for research that participants are selected based on how rich the information is that the participant possesses. The study respondents were known to the researcher and selection of the respondents was done purposively from employees or educators in the SMTs in the five selected primary schools.

3.3.3. Sample size

The level of selected units and the probability of selecting the units determines the chances of marginal error (Sekaran, 2001). The margin of error, the chances of selection and the chances of creating errors can be adjusted through the use of test estimates and the selection process utilised to distinguish the test (Lapin, 1990). Hence, sampling may be expanded or adjusted when the test utilised turns out to be larger and, consequently, the mistake would be less severe (Cohen, 1988). Thus, in the theoretical framework, all aspects, such as the variables of interest, must be taken into account before determining the sample size (Sekaran, 2001). In this research, five primary schools from a pool of 21 primary schools in Nkomazi West Circuit in the Mpumalanga province were selected purposively due to their high level of compliance in the evaluation of assessment processes. The selection was based on the study objectives and the outcomes that were to be achieved. For deciding on an appropriate sample measure for systematic research it was important to select an appropriate sample size that considered available resources as well as time constraints. Accordingly, five key informants were chosen from the administrative posts within the chosen schools in Nkomazi West Circuit, which consisted of a sampling frame of 26 supervisors. Table 3.1 shows the selection of respondents in the five selected primary schools in Nkomazi West Circuit.

Table 3.1: Selected research participants in five selected primary in Nkomazi West Circuit

SELECTED RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS IN FIVE SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NKOMAZI WEST CIRCUIT					
	SMT	EDUCAT ORS	CIRCUIT MANAGER	SGB MEMBERS	TOTAL
Sidlemu primary school	2	2	1	1	6
Mjejane primary school	2	2	1	1	6
Phambanisa primary school	2	2	1	1	6
Mdladla primary school	2	2	1	1	6
Sihlangu primary school	2	2	1	1	6
TOTAL	10	10	5	5	30

Source: Author's construct (2018)

3.4. Data collection instruments

For the researcher to achieve the research objectives effectively, it was imperative to find appropriate research data collection instruments to gather data from the field and as well as from study respondents. The three main data collection tools utilised in this research included interviews with the selected research participants, as well as the use of field observation and document review procedures. These instruments are explained in detail below.

3.4.1. Interviews with research participants

An interview is considered a valuable strategy for collecting data in order to understand phenomenon as described by the researcher (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995). In this study, interviews were utilised to understand and unravel the experiences of both the teachers and the SMTs conducting appraisal exercises within the classrooms. The SMTs' perceptions of learning and assessment were articulated and further probed through the use of interviews. The respondents were selected as they had a direct relationship with the assessment processes in the primary schools. Interviews were conducted with two members of the SMT, two educators, two members of the SGB and the Circuit Manager for Nkomazi West Circuit per each of the five schools in Nkomazi West Circuit.

3.4.2. Field observations

The study utilised observation to gather data on how the teachers utilised evaluation procedures to bolster learning, as observation is considered a suitable instrument for understanding phenomena in specific settings (Merriam, 1988; Simons, 2009). Within constructivist inquiry, analysts ought to inundate themselves within the common setting to investigate the phenomenon. Accordingly, the analyst went to the educators' classrooms to capture a comprehensive picture of their evaluation practices. Observation centred on collecting information on what and how teachers and SMTs applied techniques of evaluation for utilisation with learners. Observed data with regard to the classroom setting was noted to help the examination and investigation of the evaluation practices. This was bolstered by an observational checklist made by the researcher for own utilisation. Simons (2009) states that without information on the setting, the analyst may not clearly understand an issue. In this case, non-participant observation was used. Watching without being included in classroom exercises made a difference as the researcher picked up a centred, comprehensive picture of the appraisal practices used for learning by two teachers at each of the schools chosen within the Nkomazi West Circuit. The researcher attended five lesson sessions for Grade 7 learners to watch the evaluation practices utilised. The observations focused on the following aspects of each session:

- strategies used by the educators for the assessment of learners

- ways in which SMTs used the feedback, peer and self-assessment, questioning, sharing learning intentions and success criteria
- the participation and reflection of learners on the assessment activities
- the evaluation of classroom atmosphere by the SGB, circuit manager and SMT, including the context of classes, such as the number of students and the teaching resources.

It was also important to note non-verbal cues such as gesture and facial expressions in classroom interactions because these can provide additional information for understanding phenomena relating to assessment processes (Simons, 2009). The following is an excerpt from the field notes compiled during each and every observed teaching session. This part constituted the general comments at the end of the lesson and a review of learners' assessed work.

3.4.3. Documents review and interpretation

In this qualitative inquiry, documents were a useful source of data (Creswell, 2008; Merriam, 1988; Simons, 2009) for revealing practices related to the evaluation of assessment in five primary schools in Nkomazi West primary schools. The term "documents" in this context is often understood as written documents containing "a ready-made source of data" (Merriam, 1988:104). Nonetheless, these documents often need processing and alignment of data to suit the specifics of the research and the study in question. Along with interviews and observations, the analysis of documents is a common research technique in any research design. According to Simons (2005:64), the analysis and interpretation of documents provides "a helpful precursor to observing and interviewing". For example, information on assessment in the CAPS policy in higher secondary schools was used to develop questions in interviews, and to frame intentions compared with the educators' enactment of these in their teaching practices.

There are numerous types of reports which give pertinent data to clarify a phenomenon such as the CAPS approach, the evaluation approach and the School Management Frameworks created by the Department of Basic Education gives a guideline on the assessment process. In spite of the fact that information in reports can be a valuable source for research, cautious determination of reports is essential. Merriam (1988) highlights that reports are not more often than not made for investigative purposes and thus their accuracy should be carefully considered before being used. For this study, data

from the formal reports included MoET's appraisal arrangements within the Department of Basic Education. The Department of Basic Education provides yearly appraisal and execution reports with the vision of providing rules and directions, and examination processes of teaching methods and techniques. Other archived and relevant journal papers on appraisal and assessment practices were analysed for the subject matter and feedback matched to the central research problem. The researcher also utilised data collected from other reports such as teachers' lesson plans and students' work. The discussed sources of data assisted the researcher to investigate and unpack the most relevant issues as follows-:

● how different educational and assessment policies shaped the assessment practices in different institutions such as primary schools
• whether the teachers'/educators' assessment practices aligned with the policies of the Department of Basic Education and other assessment guidelines
• determination of what individual, social and cultural factors may have created synergy or tensions between assessment practices and the policy
• identification of the relationship between the intent, the performance, and the outcomes of assessment activities in the classrooms
• the validation of information from interviews and observations based on the outcomes of other researchers in the same field of study as the current research and what can be deduced from these.

3.5. Data collection and analysis

As discussed in the previous sections, data were collected by means of interviews with key informants, observational procedures and document analysis. Ten SMT members from five primary schools were interviewed. The aim of conducting these interviews was to see the world through the eyes of the research participant and to help the researcher to collect rich descriptive data to assist in understanding the problem better (Clardy, 2013). The other supporting key informants also helped to validate and reveal the shortcomings of the SMTs' perceptions on the evaluation procedures for assessment practices in schools based in Nkomazi West Circuit.

Semi-structured interviews were used which comprised a series of questions prepared in advance to obtain rich, quality data from the key informants. During the interviews the researcher recorded the participants with their permission and wrote down the important

points of the responses first prior to data collection procedures. This also allowed the researcher to probe more deeply into the answers of the research respondents. Documents were also analysed in case the researcher required more clarity on certain aspects, for example when the researcher wanted to determine the tools used for managing assessments, the interviewees.

Data were analysed using the steps for analysing and interpreting such data (Creswell, 2008), namely

- preparing and organising data (cutting and sorting, allocate identity numbers)
- exploring and coding the data
- categorising data to find meanings then form themes to describe the data
- finding meaningful patterns of data through data interpretations
- creating validation procedures to ensure accuracy of findings (trustworthiness, authenticity and credibility).

Content analysis is a systematic approach to qualitative data analysis that identifies and summarises message content (Creswell, 2011). The data collected were looked at from different angles and the researcher identified key aspects of assessment that would help the researcher to understand and interpret the raw data. The findings were interpreted by examining the responses in comparison to the findings obtained from the document analysis. It is important to note that a thematic content analysis gives the researcher a chance to create themes that eventually assist in providing clear descriptive discussions on the data outcomes, procedures and interpretations.

3.6. Ethical considerations

In terms of the ethical considerations, the researcher firstly requested permission to conduct the research from the University of Pretoria, and also sent a memo to the HOD at the Mpumalanga Department of Basic Education requesting permission to conduct research in the primary schools in Nkomazi West Circuit. According to institutional regulations and rules, researchers must seek permission prior to conducting research. Accordingly, in order to meet the requirement for informed consent, the researcher wrote a letter to the participants communicating the aims of the research as well as the implications of their participation in the research process. In this letter, they were informed

that their participation was voluntary, that participants had a right to refuse to participate, and that they could withdraw at any time should they be no longer interested in participating. Participants were also informed that they would remain anonymous and their information would be kept strictly confidential by the researcher in line with the privacy policy of the university. Safekeeping of the information was done in line with University regulations and the data collected were sent to the University for storage.

The participants were also given the assurance that they would be indemnified against any physical and emotional harm which was in any case not present. Participants were also not treated as objects or numbers but rather as individual human beings. The benefits of participating in the research project as outlined in the consent form included assisting the schools to be effective in their assessment procedures and enhancing the quality outcomes of learning. It was also emphasised that participation in the study would enable improvement in the assessment policy specifically for the schools in Nkomazi West Circuit. All consent forms, as per the rules and regulations of the University, had to be signed by the participants acknowledging their consent to participate.

A letter requesting permission to conduct research on site was sent to the selected schools for the attention of the SGB and the school principals. Individual participants each received an invitation letter to participate. In this case the consent and invitation to participate in the research process was sent to all the participants selected in the five primary schools, who agreed to be part of the study. The researcher also ensured that any unethical tactics and techniques for asking questions were avoided.

Primary data collection procedures and processes commenced after the researcher had been granted permission by the university to conduct the research in formal letter. The researcher was obliged to follow certain protocols and research ethics in order to increase the quality of the work and these are discussed as follows:

i. Voluntary participation

The research made use of volunteer participants and the participants who wished to participate fully in the activities of the study were allowed to do so. Voluntary participation reduced the possibilities of any unbiased selection of the study participants (Neumann, 2006).

ii. Informed consent

The researcher secured informed consent from the various research respondents through validly signed informed consent forms. In the event that the researcher intended to attain more information, research assistants will assist in the data collection process as well as acquiring other necessities.

iii. Privacy and anonymity

Disclosure of information was upheld by the researcher and when disclosure of information was done, sources were kept anonymous so that the privacy of the data sources was maintained at all times (Zikmund, 2003).

iv. Confidentiality

It is the duty of the researcher to ensure that no information shall by any means or otherwise be shared without the consent of the respondent. The research shall at all times keep the information disclosed by respondents as confidential as possible (Burns & Grove, 1999).

3.7. Conclusion

This research employed a qualitative research approach to understand specific conditions pertaining to the evaluation of assessment procedures, as well as opportunities and constraints in executing assessment procedures for learning. The research findings are thus limited to the specific institutions selected and can be generalised to other similar institutions such as other schools in Mpumalanga and outside the province. Nevertheless, the research methodology was designed to integrate the research findings from the study to correspond with those in the literature review and the introductory chapter.

The next chapter discusses the data presentation, analysis and discussions with regards to data collected from the respondents.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter entails the presentation, analysis and discussion of the data collected for the purpose of evaluating the management of assessment processes in primary schools at the Nkomazi West circuit – Ehlanzeni district. The chapter begins by presenting the biographical data of the respondents, followed by the tools used to manage assessment and the standardisation of assessments. Data on the type of assessments preferred and used, leadership styles preferred, and challenges associated with assessment are also discussed in this chapter. The relationship between the management of the assessment process and learner performance is also elaborated in detail, providing a clear picture of assessment procedures in Nkomazi West circuit.

4.2. Biographical or personal characteristics of respondents

This section provides a description of the respondents who participated in the study. The section clearly shows the length of time the eight respondents who were interviewed had formed part of the SMT in the school, the subjects taught, the qualifications possessed and the responsibility of the interviewed person at the particular school.

4.2.1. Length of time interviewed respondents had been SMT members

The management of assessment processes is sometimes made more effective and efficient with the experience one might have gained as an SMT member. The more experienced the members of an SMT are, the more likely it is that they will execute the assessment processes better. Hence, the interviewees were asked about the experience they possessed as members of SMTs in Nkomazi West Circuit. The results of the research findings are shown in figure 4.1 below.

NUMBER OF YEARS AS AN SMT

■ Less than a 1 year   ■ 1-2 years   ■ 3-5 years   ■ Plus 5 years
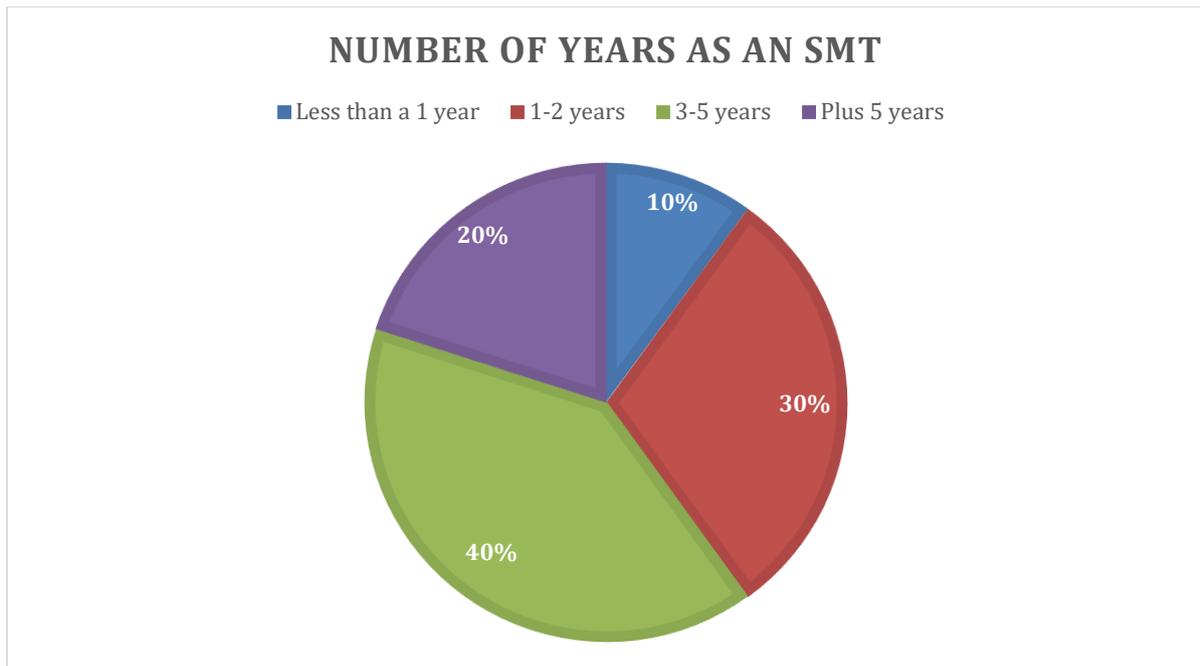
Figure 4.1: Number of years' respondents had been members of SMTs
Source: Author's field data, 2019

Figure 4.1 clearly shows that about 40% of the SMTs had had three to five years' experience working as part of SMTs, while 30% had between one and two-years' experience. The interviewees with the least amount of SMT experience had less than a year's experience. The number of years that the respondents had worked on an SMT translated to the amount of experience they had in the management of assessment processes. It was found that more than 70% of the interviewees had in excess of three years' assessment experience, which translated to better execution of assessment procedures.

4.2.2. Educational profile of respondents

Interviews were conducted with the respondents in order to determine whether formal education has any effect on the respondents' ability to implement, manage and execute assessment processes in primary schools in Nkomazi West circuit. Figure 4.2 illustrates the level of education of the employees working as SMT members in Nkomazi West circuit at the time of the investigation.
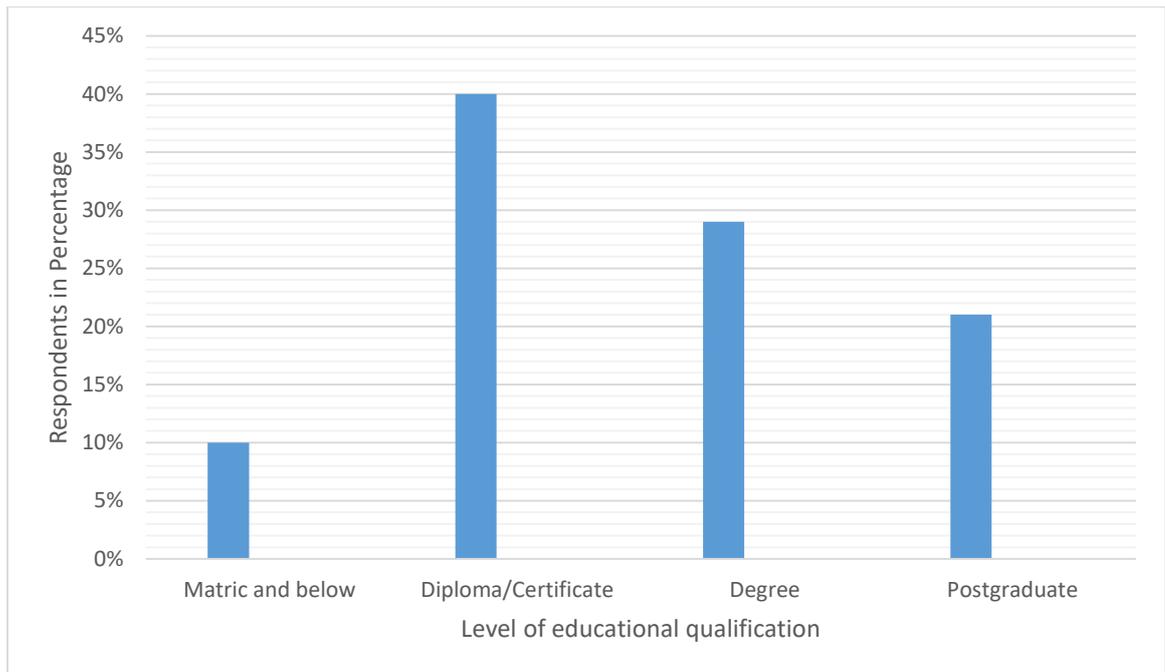
Figure 4.2: Qualification status of respondents
Source Author's field data, 2019

Figure 4.2 demonstrates that the respondents with a diploma/certificate constituted 40% of the respondents compared to 10% with matric/below matric qualifications. Regardless, the investigation found that the number of respondents who held higher educational qualifications, i.e. a degree and so forth constituted less than half of the respondents, i.e. 29%. It was found that those who held basic and matric qualifications composed generally 40% of the total respondents. An examination of the educational profile of respondents/employees to execute their business obligations without ease uncovered that the representatives with higher tertiary instruction capabilities, such as degrees and diplomas, frequently obtained the best positions in the work environment. This is often because they perform well within the working environment and become part of the SMT as an outcome for performing obligations with negligible challenges.

4.2.3. Development and monitoring of assessment responsibilities

When interviewing the study participants in all the primary schools in Nkomazi West circuit, it was found that the principal and the HoDs were responsible for monitoring the assessment process at the school, while the development of the assessment procedure, execution and methodology was done by all the members of the SMTs. The school

principals had the responsibility of ensuring that all SMTs created the assessment methodology objectively and fairly without compromising the quality of the school standards.

4.3. Tools used to manage assessment

This section contains data from the respondents on the tools used to manage assessment. The following tools are discussed in detail: monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

4.3.1. Monitoring

The findings of the study indicated that monitoring is one of the mechanisms used to manage assessment in primary schools in Nkomazi West circuit. According to some of the educators, the SMTs, specifically the headmasters and the HoDs, find time to monitor and supervise the teaching and learning activities that are being administered by the educators at their schools. Some of the respondents explained this as follows:

The head teacher in this school takes time to monitor activities that are happening. Often he asks for our teaching material, visits our classes to observe, and analyses the learners' performance. He is hands on when it comes to monitoring and supervising us.

I go to the classrooms to observe the teachers and give them feedback. Sometimes I ask for the learners' books to see their performance.

I would say that the HoDs check our work sometimes although not that often because they have their own pressures they have to deal with. They check our lesson plans, learners' assessments and do class visits.

From the above responses it can be deduced that the SMTs in Nkomazi West circuit try to ensure the quality of their assessment methods by engaging themselves in ongoing monitoring activities. These help to ensure a formative view of the implementation and effectiveness of these methods and also how they can be improved. Although monitoring is an important tool for managing assessment, it is essential to note that sometimes it becomes less effective due to the time constraints of the management personnel. This assertion is supported by Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu and Van Rooyen (2009) who highlight

that in Limpopo and Mpumalanga, HoDs fail to monitor work of educators regularly and other educators regarded their quality of observation, scrutiny and support as poor. Accordingly, the conclusion was reached that probably more training had to be done in order to improve not only assessment but also the quality of assessment in schools (Bush et al., 2009).

4.3.2. Evaluation

As a tool, evaluation is an integral part of managing assessment. According to some respondents, evaluation is used by SMTs to check the information that has been obtained during the assessment phase and analyse it critically. This helps the SMTs to identify some of the strengths of the assessment methods so that they can be reinforced and also the challenges encountered so that new strategies can be developed. According to this study, evaluation is also a critical tool for measuring whether the learners are competent or not. In order to explain evaluation as a tool used to manage assessment, some of the respondents in the SMT had this to say:

At my school we conduct both formative and summative evaluations of the assessment methods in order to control and ensure that are methods are effective.

One of our teachers in the SMT is good in monitoring and evaluation, therefore he usually helps us to evaluate our assessments methods and results against the set standards.

We have evaluation mechanisms in place as well as those by the Department of Basic Education to measure if our assessment methods are effective but the evaluation mechanisms are not effectively implemented.

The above responses indicate that evaluation is one of the methods used to manage assessments in primary schools. Evaluation is significant in measuring whether the assessment methods are effective in getting learners to achieve the set standards. According to Bush et al. (2009), an effective evaluation of assessment methods provides a systematic review of learners' performance and how learners, educators and school managers can work together towards improved outcomes. The Department of basic education has also embarked on systemic evaluation with a sample of learners to monitor learner performance and report on the quality of learning outcomes (South African

Government, 2018). Furthermore, one of the respondents highlighted that evaluation mechanisms are present at their school but they are poorly implemented. This might be due to the reluctance and incompetence of the SMT to properly evaluate the assessments used in the schools. Such a situation highlights the need for SMTs to be capacitated with knowledge on how to effectively evaluate the assessments administered in their schools for a desired outcome.

4.3.3. Reporting (written reports and meetings)

The study indicated that assessments are also managed by giving feedback to all the relevant stakeholders involved. This feedback can be in form of written reports or oral discussions where the educators meet with the SMT to discuss their implemented activities, as well as the successes and challenges encountered. The respondents indicated this assertion as follows:

We require our educators to keep detailed records of all their assessments and I can request the submission of these reports for evaluation. The educators also have to note down the outcomes of their assessments and discuss them with their colleagues in order for them to come up with improved methods of assessment.

Every month we have staff meeting were we discuss our academic plans and the progress that we have made. We also submit our portfolios to the head of the departments so that they check if we are conducting assessments as indicated on our year plans.

The above statements indicate that the SMTs manage assessments by evaluating the reports given to them by the educators. These reports help managers to measure the effectiveness of certain assessment procedures and whether they are being administered in accordance to the CAPS. Reports not only provide feedback to the management but they can also provide feedback to the parents/guardians of the learners on their performance. This process assists in enabling the parents/guardians to work together with the educators in improving the educational performance of their children. Inclusion of parents in the assessments processes and procedures can enhance the outputs of learners' performance outputs in different schools. The process of assessment must be inclusive and integrated.

4.4. Adherence to tools used to manage assessment

The data from the study indicated that the SMTs, SGB, circuit managers and educators adhered to the tools used to manage assessment. All the respondents indicated that they adhere to one or more of the tools in different ways. Some indicated that they monitor and evaluate the assessments being given to their learners. The SMTs brought to light the prepared reports to be given to the circuit managers. The adherence to the tools of manage assessment was indicated as follows:

As the circuit manager I make sure that the rules and standards are followed. My headmasters in school should report to me and give me samples of assessments, memorandums and teaching guides from their teachers. It is my duty to check if they have the required content.

Yes, I evaluate my colleagues as an entrusted stakeholder. I also give a report to the circuit manager.

Whenever my superior asks me to submit evidence of my work for evaluation I do submit all the records required.

These words spoken by the respondents indicate that they adhere to the management of assessments using various methods. These methods help them to manage the assessments effectively and implement them to reach the goals of assessments as stipulated in the CAPS document and other written documents aimed at realising quality assessments in primary schools. According to the Department of Basic Education (2018), the key to achieving assessment goals lies in the cooperation of the different parties involved such as the teachers, principals and other SMT members, parents, the district and provincial representatives. Therefore, each and every stakeholder should take part and adhere to the tools used to manage assessments to ensure effective learning outcomes.

4.5. Standardisation of assessments

Most academic assessments are highly standardised, that is, assessments rely on the evaluation of the student's understanding with respect to certain agreed outcomes. The data from the study indicated that assessments in Nkomazi West circuit are standardised by using moderation, assessment research and evaluation, and portfolios and

assessment plans. The following is a detailed discussion of the methods used to standardise assessments.

4.5.1. Moderation as a process of standardisation

According to the respondents of this study, moderation is one of the fundamental ways to ensure that the assessments are standardised. Such moderation is conducted at the school departmental levels, the school level, and the district and provincial levels. Some of the respondents highlighted how the assessments are standardised in this manner:

As per requirements of the Department of Basic Education we moderate our assessments at the school level whereby the HODs check the assessments per subject and grade, marking guides and also assess the results of the learners and give feedback to improve these assessments.

There are people responsible in our schools responsible for moderating specific tasks given to our learners. They check the validity and fairness of the assessments and whether they have been conducted in a conducive environment.

We are moderated even by the Department of Higher Education though our provincial district departments to ensure that we teach learners content that will enable them to be competitive when given national assessments

Moderation is an effective way to ensure that assessments meet the expected criteria for adequately measuring the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that a learner is expected to demonstrate in a specific assessment. Therefore, the different respondents interviewed highlighted that there is specific moderation that they undergo to ensure that their assessments are standardised. The findings of this study correlate with those of Parbhoo (2011), who used moderation as a measure to standardise assessments by examining whether the assessments covered the necessary content, the distribution of marks, the suitability of the memorandum and the mark allocation, thus measuring the quality of the assessments given to the learners. The only challenge that moderation fails to address, as per the study findings, is the element of using a blanket assessment for learners and failing to understand that learners vary. Accordingly, each learner probably requires specific assessment strategies that are not always the same as those given to

other learners due to difference in skills and performance. Hence, this gap needed to be addressed to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach to assessment challenges.

4.6. Assessment research and evaluation

Assessment research and evaluation have been found to be some of the measures used to ensure the standardisation of assessments in primary schools in Nkomazi West circuit. Some of the respondents indicated that they identify a particular subject and the assessments used, gather information on those assessments, check their suitability and effectiveness, develop an improvement plan and implement it. This is captured aptly by one of the responses:

In order to ensure that our assessments are of a high standard we collect data. The data is sought from the learners, teachers, records etc. Jointly with other identified parties we critically analyse this data to make sure that these assessments are in line with the expected standards by the Department of Basic Education and measure what they are supposed to measure. If not, we come up with a plan to improve our assessments then we implement and evaluate them to see progress. We want to maintain high standards of our assessments.

Gathering information about particular subjects and their assessment is essential in order to ensure the standardisation of assessment. The above quotation indicates that researching and measuring particular assessments is important in ensuring that they adhere to the standards set by educational bodies such as the Department of Basic Education. This process allows for any diversions from the expected standards to be brought to light and addressed. This finding is in line with data from Dublin where primary schools used research and evaluation to ensure that their assessment methods were standardised (Inspectorate, 2016).

4.6.1. Portfolios and assessment plans

According to the study the assessment procedures are standardised using portfolios and assessment plans. These assessment plans clearly define the goals to be achieved, and tasks, copies of exam papers and accompanying memoranda and work schedules are kept in portfolios. These portfolios act as a checklist or the basis on which evaluation will be conducted. Therefore, the educators make an effort to ensure that their portfolios and

assessment plans are of a quality that meets the expected criteria. Below are some of the responses indicating how portfolios and assessment plans contribute to the standardisation of assessments:

My school requires that everyone has a portfolio for ongoing assessment. In these portfolios you are expected to write all the activities that you are going to do and provide motivation of why those activities and how they link to the curriculum, timeline, work breakdown and how you are going to assess learners.

Every year we submit our teaching plans to the district office so that they can be checked if they meet the expected standards of the subject area you are delivering.

The use of portfolios and teaching plans allows the SMTs to check all the material related to the assessment of the subject for the year for each grade. This allows for the SMTs to closely monitor whether the learners are being given the assessment tasks in a way that is required by the District Department of Basic Education. According to the Department of Basic Education (2008a), the head of an area is required to assess and evaluate portfolios of different subjects with the help of the HODs to ensure that the assessments are standardised. These portfolios and assessment plans must include assessment plans, tasks, copies of exam papers, learning programmes and work schedules. The findings of this study nonetheless identified that in some cases, the portfolios of evidence lacked the much-needed content of the work given to learners. In some instances, the teaching portfolios would be incomplete as iterated by the SMTs in the schools. This was more by way of negligence on the educators' part to perform their duties diligently rather than any errors on their part.

4.7. Type of assessment preferred

The study indicated that almost all the educators interviewed (7 out of 10) preferred formative assessment, whilst only three preferred the combination of both formative and summative assessment. According to the educators, formative assessment is essential in allowing the teachers to monitor the learners every day with the aim of observing and improving their learning methods based on their performance. Below follow the responses of the some of the educators who prefer formative assessment:

I prefer formative assessment, the use of it allows the teacher to monitor the progress of the learners through everyday activities given. It gives the teacher the ability to improve his or her teaching methods and also to understand the learners' special learning needs during the course of the school term.

I do not like using summative because it limits the educational worker's ability to shape the learning. If you do assessment at the end of the course and you realise that the learners did not grasp the module content, then what? Assessment should be done simultaneously with teaching.

The above quotes show that the educators prefer formative assessment because of its ability to allow them to continuously gather information on learners' achievement and their learning. This is done in through various activities given to the learners. According to the educators these formative assessment activities have the potential to allow them to change the learning methods if they are not effective, as they are used to provide guidance and feedback to the teachers. This is supported by Trumbull and Lash (2013) who state that formative assessments have the potential to help students' think explicitly and thus open to examination and revision of the students' performance and the learning materials and methods administered to them. Though the respondents in this study mostly preferred formative assessments, some of the respondents indicated that they preferred a combination of the two as they complement each other. This is aptly specified in the following statement by one of the respondent:

I prefer both because they are all essential and serve the same purpose, that is to improve the teaching pedagogies. So it is essential that both of them are done at different periods.

The statement above denotes that both formative assessment and summative assessment are important and related. This is because they both have the same goal, which is to assess whether learners are performing well or badly and whether learners have achieved the objectives. Formative assessment enables the learners' performance to be checked during the course of the year whilst the summative tests provide results or grades which contribute to the learner's final results, (Department of Basic Education, 2008a). Therefore, some SMTs and educators prefer both because they serve the same purpose though in different ways.

4.8. Assessment strategies used by teachers

This section contains the data on the assessment strategies used by teachers to assess their learners. These include tests and examinations, everyday assessments, research, portfolios and projects.

4.8.1. Tests and examinations (formative and summative assessment)

Tests and examinations are some of the assessment strategies that are used in schools in Nkomazi West circuit. Tests usually form part of the ongoing formative type of assessment used to evaluate whether the learners understand the subject content. In contrast, examinations form part of the summative assessment used at the end of the course to determine whether students have acquired and mastered knowledge regarding a certain subject area. All of the educators and the SMT interviewed indicated that tests and exams are some of the assessment strategies that they use to assess their learners. Some of the respondents indicated this as follows:

At this school we use tests to assess if our learners have mastered the subject content of if they can recall and understand what they have learnt. This is the most common strategy that each and every teacher has to adhere to.

We administer tests during the term and examinations at the end of the term in order to observe if our students recall and are able to implement what they have learnt and read.

We administer maths and language examinations to our pupils including the National Integrated Assessment Framework by the Department of Higher Education.

From the above quotations it can be noted tests and examinations are used at primary schools to measure the learners' achievements and their understanding of what they have learnt. Tests and examinations are common strategies used in all primary schools in South Africa to determine learners' progress. According to the Department of Higher Education (2008) external examinations set by subject experts have always been a key part of the teaching and learning environment which provides standardisation of the curriculum offering. This implies that examinations are assessments which are administered in a consistent manner to all learners and graded in the same way for every

learner in order to test their capabilities. The above quotations also show that the schools in the Nkomazi West circuit are adhering to the National Integrated Assessment Framework by administering maths and language examinations in both the Foundation and the Intermediate phases (Sibanda& Graven, 2018; Department of Basic Education, 2018).

4.8.2. Everyday assessments

Everyday assessments range from giving out homework to learners to encouraging them to participate in class through presentations, role play and experiments. These types of assessment were found to be common in most schools in this study. The respondents indicated giving learners everyday assessment activities to participate in as follows:

We have moved from the traditional method of just having tests and examinations only as the assessment methods in our school. As teachers we have more flexible ways to measure the intelligence of our learners such as encouraging active participation in class. We give them a chance to present, respond to questions and give more practical examples. With this we are able to measure the strengths and areas of learning difficulty of our learners.

Our curriculum demands that we give our learners everyday tasks such a homework and in-class activities, for example reading tasks as assessment procedures.

Everyday assessments have become one of the most common assessment methods used by teachers. Teachers engage with the learners and encourage them to participate in everyday classroom activities like oral presentations, question-and-answer sessions, projects and role play. The above also indicated that the learners are given homework as well to assess their learning abilities outside the school context. These activities enable educators to quickly assess learners' capabilities as well as their weak points. This allows the teachers to model their teaching methods in line with the special needs of each learner. In a study by Moodley (2013), educators prepared everyday assessment plans every year according to the curriculum of each subject. This helped them to give their learners everyday assessments and to have a track record of their learners' achievements.

4.8.3. Research on assessment strategies

Research is one of the assessment tools used by educators in primary schools. Although research does not require the direct participation of the learners, the teachers use research to evaluate and understand the learners' learning. One of the educators in one of the schools chosen indicated how research is used as an assessment tool in the following manner:

Yes, we use research to assess our learners. What we normally do is that we gather evidence on the special needs of the learners. Each and every learner is unique in their own way, therefore we do a background check on them, their strong points and weaknesses and we model assessments depending on their profiles.

Throughout the year learners are given tasks. So, there is a time when the performances of each learner on every task is analysed by the assessor to obtain what it means for each learner.

It is important to note that comprehensive research is one of the strategies used to assess learners in primary schools in Nkomazi West circuit. This allows the educators or the assessors to evaluate the learners based on the tasks they have done at different times throughout the year. Research as an assessment method mainly involves the teachers analysing the performance of the learners over a period of time. Research allows the teachers to measure the learners' academic performance on the basis of many different tasks performed throughout the year. It also indicates changes in the patterns of a learner's performance which is important for intervention. Research as an assessment method is supported by the Department of Basic Education (2008a), which mentioned that assessment should encompasses the collection and interpretation of evidence on learners in order determine the learner's progress in learning and to make a judgement about a learner's performance.

4.8.4. Portfolio review and assessment

Portfolios were also identified by some of the respondents as a method used to assess learners in primary school. Portfolios are used to measure the competency of learners or their skills on a particular curriculum aspect. One respondent from the group of SMT members highlighted that:

Portfolios are used in our schools to test some of the learner's skills. Students are given a specific topic which they have to write on. For example, they can be given an English project to write about their experiences during vacation. Such an assignment will require them to write something every day, put visuals and analyse the experiences of each day. These portfolios enable us to check the learners' grammatical, narrative, problem solving, critical thinking skills only to mention a few. At times we allow them to orally present the contents of their portfolios to assess their presentation and public speaking capabilities.

From the above it can be noted that portfolios are used as a tool to assess the learners in Nkomazi West circuit. These assessments allow educators to assess the level of competency of the learners by observing their sentence construction, creative writing, and reading skills. To support this, a study conducted in Turkey revealed that using portfolios to assess young learners' writing skills is beneficial and effective for helping them to write in the English language classroom (Aziz & Yosoff, 2018). Another study also showed that portfolios allow for the assessment of other skills like monitoring and assessing competency development, as well as non-technical skills such as reflection which are difficult to achieve with other educational methods. This indicates that portfolios assess a wide range of skills that are essential for the learner's development.

4.9. Preferred leadership styles in Nkomazi West circuit

The SMTs and the educators interviewed indicated their preference for a variety of leadership styles. The majority of these respondents preferred the use of a democratic or participatory leadership style. This leadership style helps them, as members of the SMT and as educators and other relevant stakeholders, to take participatory action and shared decisions in planning, implementing and evaluating certain assessments. In order to explain their preference for democratic leadership style, some of the respondents said:

All the people involved in the educational system can make valuable contributions if they are given a chance to. Therefore, as leaders it is essential to use the leadership style which enables the involvement of teachers, learners, parents and other people from the department and NGOs. This gives a high success rate and cooperation because people feel that they own the strategy they have developed.

I prefer that our managers use the democratic style to lead us because if they force things on us we will not do them. We are people, we need to be treated as such and we also possess ideas that can make the success rate of our learners to be high.

From the above it can be noted that some of the educators prefer the democratic leadership style due to the fact that it allows everyone to participate in decision-making and in formulating effective assessment strategies. This allows educators to reach a consensus on the teaching strategies they can use to achieve good results and on the ways to solve the challenges which they encounter in the teaching environment. The Department of Basic Education (2008b) supports this finding by highlighting that schools that use of a democratic or participatory approach to problem solving are in a better position to develop and move forward because bringing the different educators together allows them to have the same values and vision. This also creates an environment characterised by energy and drive because everyone will work hard to achieve the set goals.

Two of the respondents in the SMT highlighted that they preferred a transitional leadership style. This is because it allows for the delegation of managerial tasks to other teachers. The respondents highlighted their preference as follows:

I give preference to the transitional leadership style because it allows the SMT to work together with the HODs to make decisions. Then day to day running of these departments is done by the HODs who give feedback to the head teacher as the manager in the school.

The transitional leadership style works for me because it gives power to various people heading specific departments to lead their departments and report back to me. I have a lot for responsibilities so it allows me to share with the entrusted subject departmental heads which gives me the time to do other tasks.

The analysis of the above responses show that some leaders prefer the leadership style that allows them to delegate some of their responsibilities to their subordinates. This makes the monitoring of different departments realistic as different activities are

monitored at department level. Feedback from the monitoring is then given to the individuals in the SMT.

The study also highlighted that one of the educators preferred an autocratic type of leadership, which is highly different to the other types of leadership styles preferred by the majority of the respondents. The educator indicated that:

People are difficult to manage, if I was a leader I would make all the decisions and come up with measures for the teachers to adhere to what they are supposed to be doing. This is because some of the teachers are lazy they don't want to work so sometimes you just have to be strict.

The above statement by the one of the respondents indicates that an autocratic leadership style is preferred at times when subordinates are not cooperating. This style forces subordinates to do what is expected of them without giving them any voice whatsoever. Studies conducted in different contexts have shown success with autocratic leadership styles (Reynolds, 2010; Fotio & Havenstein, 2007; Bass, 2008). Although this is a fact an autocratic leadership style is not always effective in all contexts. Subordinates need to be motivated and valued by engaging with them, involving them in decision-making and giving them the opportunity for professional development.

4.10. Effects of the moderation of assessments on education quality

The study indicated that moderation has a positive effect on the quality of education because it ensures quality assurance and control of assessment and improves learners' grades and teaching methods. Moderation helps to check whether the assessments are consistent with the requirements of the assessment policies set. According to one of the respondents, moderation helps to check the quality of the assessments in order for these assessments to produce good results. This is what she said:

Moderation helps us to ensure that our teaching methods are of high quality and give excellent outcomes.

The above response indicates that moderation of assessments is essential for improving the quality of assessments and to make sure that they serve their purpose of measuring students' capabilities. According to Maxwell (2002), moderation consists of measures of quality management. When moderation is carried out, the procedures and outcomes

(students' performance) are checked and requirements for improvement are given and implemented. This improves the standard of assessments which in turn also improves the quality of education.

The study also indicated that the moderation of assessments also helps to improve the teaching methods used by the educators and the grades of the learners. According to one of the SMT respondents, moderation gives schools an opportunity to review their assessments. He indicated this in the following manner:

Each year we submit a sample of our learners' assessments to the department. They are checked and evaluated looking at the questions that were asked, their suitability to the subject, the marks given by the teacher and the motivation for the marks. After this has been dome we receive recommendations on places to improve.

From the above explanation it can be noted that moderation is essential in improving the assessment of the learners. Moderation includes the feedback and recommendations given by the reviewers of the assessments and their applicability. Recommendations are essential for the educators to change their teaching methods by adopting more effective ones. The use of effective teaching methods also improves the quality of education since these methods can assist learners to grasp what they are being taught.

4.11. Challenges to the management of assessment processes in primary schools in the Nkomazi West circuit – Ehlanzeni District

Various themes emerged in answering the question: What challenges are experienced with regard to assessments? These include inadequate time to conduct assessments, lack of cooperation, educators' poor knowledge and lack of training, poor planning and implementation and absence of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. These are discussed below:

4.11.1. Inadequate time to conduct assessments

Primary school teachers are required to do a wide range of assessments such as giving learners tests, assignments, homework and practical exercises. They are also required

to monitor learners' progress, design portfolios, attend meetings and do other work activities. In the face of evidence of the many tasks that are required of them, some respondents indicated that one of the challenges related to assessments is the lack of time to conduct them. The following quotes contain some of the responses that indicate how time constraints limit their ability to conduct assessments:

Some of our teachers do not have adequate time to conduct assessments especially administering many tests and marking them. Tests are very important in monitoring the progress of learners and also if they have mastered what they are learning but teachers do not always have time for that.

Our workload is too much so we just can't implement everything that is required, we just concentrate on those tasks which will make the learners pass the final examinations.

As indicated by the above responses, time constraints limit the educators from conducting all the assessments that they are expected to. Although some of them include them in their year plans they do not implement them. They merely concentrate on those tasks that they think are more valuable to the learners' success. Concurring to a study conducted in Zimbabwe, teachers at times utilised an assortment of instruments, such as tests, lesson work, homework, perceptions, surveys, reports checklists, rating scales, stock and practical because they did not have adequate time to implement them because of their many responsibilities (Kurebwa & Nyaruwata, 2013). With limited time, teachers end up concentrating on doing only those activities which will ensure that learners achieve the best results in their final examinations.

4.11.2. Lack of cooperation

Assessment procedures are dictated by the policies of the Department of Basic Education in South Africa. Schools are required to come up with assessments that are in line with the goals this department. At times the teachers do not cooperate because they feel like teaching methods are being dictated to them without them taking part in the decision-making and the policy formulation. In some instances, teachers are too stubborn and lazy to do their work therefore they do not adhere to the assessment mechanisms. Some of the selected respondents had this to say:

Some of the teachers do not cooperate. Sometimes do not do any assessments. If we ask for their records now you will find out that some of them do not even have any.

At times as teachers we do not cooperate because policies are forced on us. They do not even ask us what works what does not work. Some of the assessments they want us to implement are unrealistic especially us with large classes.

Absence of cooperation is strongly associated with lack of ownership of strategies. Some educators feel that they are not included in the planning of certain activities, therefore they find the plans unrealistic and not suitable for their context. Consequently, they refuse to implement those plans and come up with their own. This notion is supported by Busgh et al. (2009), who found that in some schools' team work in departments is lacking, thus individuals work on an individual basis where they are limited from sharing information to improve their assessments.

4.11.3. Educators' poor knowledge and training

In schools, educators administering assessment need to be assessment literate. According to Kurebwa and Nyaruwata (2013), teachers need to be well educated, capable and knowledgeable on using assessments to inform instructional practice. Although this is the case, this study indicated that poor knowledge and training are some of the problems hindering the delivery of assessments. This sentiment is appropriately captured by the following responses by the respondents:

For assessments to be effectively planned, conducted and analysed it needs people with skills not only in their subject area but in areas such as research, management, monitoring and evaluation. Our teachers do not have these so it's pointless.

Some of our teachers are not capacitated enough, some of the workshops that are conducted are discriminatory. It's either they require teachers from other subjects of they just need a few teachers. Its funny teachers only just give tests and assignments to learners.

We lack motivation to learn new things and improve our practice because we are
not valued as teachers. The government does not promote teachers'
wellness programmes. So how can I be able to deliver?

The above quotations from the respondents indicate that some of the teachers do not have adequate knowledge, skills and competencies to administer assessments. This limits them from using the wide range of assessment tools available to them. Some tools that are part and parcel of assessment like research and evaluation need special skills for them to be implemented, so without these skills teachers stick only to tests and examinations which are much easier to report on. The findings of this study correlate with the findings of Kurebwa and Nyaruwata (2013), who identified that educators were reluctant to use some assessment methods because they lacked capacity. In another study in Limpopo, educators lacked knowledge on how to implement assessment because they were not exposed to long periods of professional development training. This shows that there is a need for ongoing professional development of educators to assist them to properly implement assessments as supported by Phasha, Bipath and Beckmann (2016).

4.11.4. Poor planning and lack of implementation

The planning phase of assessments lays a foundation for other activities to follow. For the plans to be realised there is a need for implementation. According to the information from the interviews poor planning and implementation can lead to assessments being ineffective. The respondents had this to say on poor planning and implementation as challenges to assessment:

Assessment plans can be well planned but without proper implementation the
lack results. Most of our assessments are not implemented well.

Some of the teachers do not know how to write their assessment plans. Several
of their plans lack substance. How do you implement something that you
cannot even plan for, it's highly impossible?

Lack of planning and implementation directly affects the conducting of assessments and their ability to serve the purpose they are supposed to serve. Without realistic and goal-centred plans, educators fail to assess their learners in ways that adhere to the expected quality standards. According to the Department of Basic Education (2018), poor

performing schools are characterised by lack of planning. Accordingly, some schools do not plan for regular assessments to track learners' progress. In other instances, educators and SMTs fail to adequately implement the planned assessments as a result of time constraints, lack of resources and lack of cooperation from the teachers to mention just a few. Therefore, without proper planning and effective implementation strategies, assessments will not be conducted successfully and they will not yield the desired results.

4.11.5. Absence of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms

The other challenge highlighted in this study has to do with issues of controlling the assessments, that is, monitoring and evaluation. One of the respondents in this study indicated that the absence of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is one of the challenges experienced with regard to assessment:

In this school we just do what we want. No one really cares even if we do not do all the assessments that we are required to. Our leaders who are supposed to monitor and analyse our work are lazy so we just do what we can when we can.

Monitoring and evaluation are essential tools to evaluate the implementation and impact of the assessment methods used in primary schools. Among the challenges associated with assessment are the absence of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and the incompetence and reluctance of the people who are supposed to implement these strategies. According to the Department of Basic Education (2018), poor management and lack of competence on the part of the SMT, and particularly the principal, results in these schools underperforming. Therefore, without monitoring and evaluation and the motivation of the educators by the SMT, educators do not perform the tasks they are supposed to. This affects the learners' educational achievement and cognitive abilities, since they are not given tasks that test and improve their learning abilities and prepare them for their final examinations, which allow them to progress to the next level.

4.12. Relationship between management of assessment and learners' performance

All the respondents interviewed indicated that proper management of assessments has a substantial effect on the academic performance of the learners. The respondents

indicated the significant effect of the management of assessment on the learners' performance as follows:

If the assessment processes are well planned, implemented, evaluated and monitored there is no doubt that they will have a significant effect on the academic performance of the learners.

The whole purpose of managing assessment processes is to improve the learners' performance through improving the already existing strategies and implementing new ones. The achievement of our learners also depends on the effective management of assessment tools or methods.

From the above quotations it can be noted that management of assessments should follow all the critical elements of management, that is, planning, organising, implementation and controlling, to bring out the desired outcome. Proper management of the assessment has to do with planning the assessment, organising how these assessments are going to be implemented, implementing them and monitoring and evaluating them. When assessments are well managed and administered, the learners will, according to the above responses perform well. Evidence from other studies shows that schools with well-managed assessment initiatives have recorded improvements in summative tests as a result of effective assessment strategies (Sadler, 2010; Carless, 2011). This shows the importance of well-managed assessment for improving learners' academic performance.

4.13. Additional issues regarding assessment

When asked about additional issues regarding assessment one of the respondents indicated that there is a need for diagnostic assessment, while another mentioned that an additional workforce would help minimise the challenges related to assessments. One of the respondents indicated that the educational system should move away from the tradition of using only formative and summative assessments to the use of diagnostic assessment as well. This is indicated in this way:

In order for our assessment to be standardised schools should also implement the diagnostic assessment that enables us to identify the strengths and weaknesses of our learners so that they are given assessments that are

> *based on their performance and interests like what developed countries*
> *do.*

Summative and formative assessments are essential for measuring the achievements of learners during the year and at the end of certain courses or grades. The above response denotes that diagnostic assessments should be integrated in order to have comprehensive and standardised assessments. Learners' needs should be assessed prior to starting a certain level in order to establish their learning needs and their potential areas of difficulty (Department of Basic Education, 2008a). This enables the learners to be developed in areas that best suit their intellectual capacities.

Furthermore, another respondent indicated that there is a need for an additional workforce in primary schools employed specifically to monitor and evaluate assessments. This is specified below as indicated by the respondent.

> *We need additional workforce, for example a team that is only at schools to*
> *monitor the teachers and their assessments methods. Without these our*
> *vision for effective assessments is farfetched.*

Monitoring and evaluation combined with the busy schedules of the SMTs were some of the challenges related to assessments. According to the above quotation there is a need for the schools to have people who concentrate only on monitoring and evaluating the assessments and whether educators' carry out their duties involved in assessing learners. This will ease pressure on the SMTs which sometimes involve headmasters and HODs who cannot monitor assessments effectively because they have other work that needs their attention. This view is supported by Moodley (2013), who indicates that there is a need for a workforce in terms of educators for the CAPS to achieve its objectives.

4.14. Chapter summary

This chapter presented, analysed and discussed the data collected by means of the semi-structured interviews, which were conducted with the purpose of evaluating the management of assessment processes in primary schools at the Nkomazi West circuit – Ehlanzeni district. The study found that monitoring, evaluation and reporting are the common tools adhered to and used to manage assessments in the Nkomazi West circuit. Standardisation of assessments was done through moderation, research and evaluation,

as well as portfolio and assessment plans, in order to make the assessments valid, reliable and fair. According to the findings, most teachers preferred to use formative evaluation although the findings indicate that the most common type of assessments used are tests and examinations, which are categorised as summative assessments.

The following chapter summarises the study findings, making recommendations and conclusions.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter provided a comprehensive analysis of the research findings gathered from the study areas. This chapter gives an outline and summary of all the study chapters as well as conclusions and suggestions made with regard to the investigations. The researcher endeavoured to satisfy the rationale and purpose of the study which was to examine the variables driving to the management of assessment forms in rural schools. This chapter summarises the study findings and makes recommendations on how schools could improve their assessment procedures. Furthermore, the chapter provides areas for future research and, lastly, an overall conclusion to the study is provided highlighting key areas.

5.2. Summary of research findings

The findings of this study highlight several issues emanating from assessment processes in public schools. The experiences and perceptions of SMTs regarding assessment procedures and standards from different contexts were explained using relevant literature on the subject area. The literature aimed at unearthing the relevant drivers and aspects leading to the existence of problems that are thought to impact on the effectiveness of managing the assessment of learners in schools.

This study discussed findings obtained from data which were collected using semi-structured interviews with the purpose of evaluating the management of assessment processes in primary schools at Nkomazi West circuit – Ehlanzeni district. The study found that monitoring, evaluation and reporting are the common tools adhered to and used to manage assessments in Nkomazi West circuit. Standardisation of assessments was being done through moderation, research and evaluation, as well as portfolios and assessment plans, in order to ensure that the assessments are valid, reliable and fair. According to the study, most teachers preferred to use formative evaluation, although the findings indicated that the most common types of assessment used are tests and examinations, which are categorised as summative assessment. This might be because of some of the challenges highlighted in the data presentation, for example inadequate time and poor knowledge and training on specific assessments. These challenges result

in the educators opting for tests and examinations only, as these are less time consuming and easier to moderate. In the case that some of these are not monitored, they get away with not implementing them and turning to other assessments. The data also indicated that there is lack of cooperation by educators in implementing assessments because they feel that these policies were imposed on them.

The data presentation and analysis showed that the respondents preferred democratic and transitional leadership styles which encourage all relevant stakeholders to share decisions with leaders and also allow for delegation of responsibilities to subordinates. This shows the respondents' willingness to work as teams and to share common goals to ensure the implementation of standardised and quality assessments procedures in primary schools in Nkomazi West circuit.

5.3. Recommendations

The discussions that follow below are suggested strategies and recommendations proposed by the researcher in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the management of assessment processes. The strategies and recommendations were based solely on the research findings and the researcher's perspective on the management of assessment practices.

5.3.1. Improvement in management of assessment processes

Although a significant number of schools showed that they conducted assessment well, there was still a need to improve the way certain assessment methodologies were being conducted by SMTs in schools. However, a significant proportion of the respondents, about 60%, agreed or were unsure that the SMTs conducted assessment planning reviews before the actual evaluation took place. It appears that there has not been genuine engagement with all SMTs at all levels, as data collected showed that feedback was limited to senior administration. The presentation and execution of appraisal strategies in any organisation requires a concerted effort from senior administration to advise groups around the purpose of the framework and to clear up questions with respect to building up appropriate grounds for improving learners' performance. The following points are recommendations proposed for creating a better assessment planning process:

I. Development of guideline framework for assessment planning prior to a major assessment review committee panel.

II. Need to put in place timeframes for the assessment planning procedures and to conduct assessment evaluations speedily.

5.3.2. Increase in assessment workshops and training for SMTs

The administration of assessment is related to the creation of a shared vision and the participation of all assessment stakeholders. Hence, it makes a difference if each person taking part in the SMT understands their part in contributing to the outcomes of learners' performance and improving evaluation methods (Fletcher & Williams, 1996:34). Preparation by managers and SMTs for their roles and duties within the execution evaluation process prepares them for organisational efficiency and the accomplishment of an organisation's objectives, destinations and set targets. The good thing about continuous preparation and coaching is that, during the middle of the year, the SMTs and HoDs are capable of coaching and mentoring teachers to help them in accomplishing their objectives and accomplishing ideal execution strategies. Continuous preparation and training are utilised to redress execution insufficiencies, strengthen execution conduct, mould workers with unused abilities, inspire execution procedures and guide representatives so they understand their roles in schools.

5.3.3. Increased input of stakeholders in the assessment procedures

The Department of Basic Education has the duty to guarantee dynamic interest of staff in target setting for the execution of duties within the administration framework at all division levels, depending on work profiles, qualities of workers and the accessibility of tools. Execution planning implies setting execution needs and objectives for groups and people to channel their endeavours toward accomplishing hierarchical destinations. In this respect, representatives have to play a dynamic role in defining and reclassifying their work. Getting workers included in the planning phase will help them to understand the objectives of the school, what must be done, why it must be done and how well it ought to be done (USOPM, 2011).

Participation does not mean consultation as it were; it implies permitting the representatives to be part of the decision-making process for the institution. Allowing all

the teachers to play a role within the assessment execution and advancement framework will not increase the maintainability of the programme but advances the scope of the assessment processes. Participation will moreover empower all the representatives to transparently unveil all their work challenges, viewpoints on areas of improvements and suggestions for remedial actions to be taken in order to improve the assessment of learners and learners' performance.

5.3.4. Conducting ongoing feedback on assessment procedures

Assessment input objectives ought to be examined, and feedback given on a continuous basis all through the appraisal rating period. In addition to this ongoing assessment, feedback must be given across all the different school levels; that is from SMTs to teachers, teachers to learners and learners to teachers (Pulakos, 2004). In this study, most of the respondents indicated that they had received criticism from their principals, who were responsible for observing and assessment of evaluation practices. For a successful assessment feedback process to occur, training is required for both managers and SMTs about their roles and responsibilities in the management of assessment process (Pulakos, 2004).

5.4. Areas for future research

The research in this study was broad; hence, similar study could look at the topic from different angles, based on the differentiation of study objectives or research questions. Similarly, research in the area of management of assessment processes in primary schools may be diverse but in this particular case, the following topics could be considered for future research:

I. Exploring the usefulness of management of assessment processes in secondary schools in South Africa

II. SMTs' perceptions on assessment methods and techniques, a comparative analysis of rural and urban schools

III. A comparative analysis of management of assessment processes in private and public schools in Mpumalanga province.

5.5. Conclusion

The study findings revealed that the management of assessment processes is an issue of concern in primary schools in the Nkomazi West circuit. It was discovered that, with regard to school management and students' academic performance, learners have been proven to be underperforming because of the assessment processes followed. The assessment policy in the circuit often results in teachers/educators experiencing challenges when conducting assessment. Accordingly, a new assessment policy should be developed in order to address pertinent assessment challenges to avoid loopholes.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Answer all questions in full sentences.

1. For how long have you been an SMT member in the school?

2. How many subjects are you responsible for? Do you have knowledge of the subjects that you are managing?

3. Which qualifications do you have that makes you competent in the subjects you are managing?

4. Do you have a system in place that monitors the quality of assessment?

Yes	1	No	2

5. What tools are used to manage assessment?

6. How do you ensure that assessments are standardised? Motivate.

7. Which type of assessment do you prefer (formative/summative). Give reasons for your answer.

8. How often do you moderate assessment tasks?

Once a term	1
Once a year	2
Twice per term	3
Twice per year	4
Never	5

9. How is assessment process being managed? Mention all the processes.

10. Do you adhere to the processes mentioned above? How?

11. What was the average learner performance in the past **THREE** years?

Below 50%	1
Above 50%	2

12. What kind of assessment strategies do teachers use to assess learners?

13. Describe the management strategies and techniques you use to maintain quality assessments.

14. What leadership style do you prefer to use and why?

15. How often is formal assessment administered in your school?

Once a term	1
Once a year	2
Twice per term	3
Twice per year	4
Never	5

16. Does management of assessment have an impact on learner performance?

Strongly agree	1
Agree	2
Disagree	3
Strongly disagree	4

17. Briefly explain what effect management/moderation of assessment has on quality education?

18. What challenges are experienced with regard to assessments?

19. Is there a relationship between the management of assessment process and learner performance?

Yes	1	No	2

20. In your opinion is there anything else you would like to add regarding assessment issues in your school?

APPENDIX B: LETTER OF REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Letters to Department of Basic Education, Principals and School Governing Bodies. The same letters below were sent to the various schools in the District.

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA
Faculty of Education

P.O Box 106
Hoyi
1348

19 February 2019

The Head: Education
Mpumalanga Department of Basic Education
Private Bag X11341
Nelspruit
1200

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY IN SELECTED SCHOOLS WITHIN EHLANZENI DISTRICT (NKOMAZI WEST CIRCUIT)

I, Ms. Beatrice F Monteiro, a student at the University of Pretoria, registered for MEd (Education Management Law and Policy). I would like to request your permission to conduct a research study in five primary schools in Ehlanzeni District. The title is "The management of assessment processes in primary schools in Ehlanzeni District, Nkomazi West circuit".

The purpose of the research study is to explore how assessment processes are managed by Grade 4 School Management Teams (SMTs). I will use semi structured interviews with the five selected SMTs from five primary schools. Documents for the SMTs will also be analysed in order to enhance the collected data. The information obtained from the participants will be held with strict confidentiality and will be used for the research purposes only. Real names of schools and participants in the research study will not be used in order to ensure anonymity.

The study will also add valuable information on different processes and strategies employed by SMT's with regard to the management of assessment processes in Grade 4.

Yours Faithfully

Ms B.F Monteiro (Researcher)

Cell no: 082 474 7827

Email: beatricemonteiro@yahoo.com

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

P.O Box 106
Hoyi
1348

19 February 2019

The Principal
Sidlemu Primary School
KwaLugedlane
1341

Dear Sir / Madam

REQUEST TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY AT SIDLEMU PRIMARY SCHOOL.

I, Ms. Beatrice F Monteiro, a student at the University of Pretoria, registered for MEd (Education Management Law and Policy). I would like to request your permission to conduct a research study in your school. The title is "The management of assessment processes in primary schools in Ehlanzeni District, Nkomazi West circuit".

The purpose of the research study is to explore how assessment processes are managed by Grade 4 School Management Team (SMTs). I will use semi structured interviews with the selected members of the SMT. Documents for the SMT member will also be analyzed in order to enhance the collected data. The information obtained from the participants will be held with strict confidentiality and will be used for the research study purposes only. Real names of schools and participants in the research study will not be used in order to ensure anonymity.

The study will also add valuable information on different processes and strategies employed by SMT's with regard to the management of assessment processes in Grade 4.

Consent

- Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep, along with any other printed materials deemed necessary by the study investigators.

Respondents Signature:		Date:	
Researcher's Signature:		Date:	

Yours Faithfully

Ms B.F Monteiro (Researcher)

Cell no: 082 474 7827

Email: beatricemonteiro@yahoo.com

P.O Box 106
Hoyi
1348

19 February 2019

The School Governing Body
Sidlemu Primary School
KwaLugedlane
1341

Dear Sir / Madam

REQUEST TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY AT SIDLEMU PRIMARY SCHOOL.

I, Ms. Beatrice F Monteiro, a student at the University of Pretoria, registered for MEd (Education Management Law and Policy). I would like to request your permission to conduct a research study in your school. The title is "The management of assessment processes in primary schools in Ehlanzeni District, Nkomazi West circuit".

The purpose of the research study is to explore how assessment processes are managed by Grade 4 School Management Teams (SMTs). I will use semi structured interviews with the selected SMTs. Documents for the SMT member will also be analyzed in order to enhance the collected data. The information obtained from participants will be held with strict confidentiality and will be used for the research purposes only. Real names of schools and participants in the research study will not be used in order to ensure anonymity.

The study will also add valuable information on different processes and strategies employed by SMT's with regard to the management of assessment processes in Grade 4

Consent

- Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep, along with any other printed materials deemed necessary by the study investigators.

Respondents Signature:		Date:	

Researcher's Signature:		Date:	

Yours Faithfully

Ms B.F Monteiro (Researcher)

Cell no: 082 474 7827

Email: beatricemonteiro@yahoo.com

APPENDIX C: Department of Basic Education Approval to Conduct Research

education
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Building No. 5, Government Boulevard, Riverside Park, Mpumalanga Province
Private Bag X11341, Mbombela, 1200.
Tel 013 766 5552/5115, Toll Free Line: 0800 203 116

Litiko le Temfundvo. Umnyango we Funda   Departement van Onderwys   Ndzawulo ya Dyondzo

Ms BF Monteiro
PO Box 106
Hoyi
1348
Email: b.monteiro@education.mpu.gov.za;

RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: BEATRICE MONTEIRO

Your application to conduct research study was received and is therefore acknowledged. The tittle of your research project reads: **"The management of assessment in primary schools at Nkomazi West circuit- Ehlanzeni district"**. I trust that the aims and the objectives of the study will benefit the whole department especially the beneficiaries. Your request is approved subject to you observing the provisions of the departmental research policy which is available in the department website. You are requested to adhere to your university's research ethics as spelt out in your research ethics.

In terms of the research policy, data or any research activity can be conducted after school hours as per appointment with affected participants. You are also requested to share your findings with the relevant sections of the department so that we may consider implementing your findings if that will be in the best interest of the department. To this effect, your final approved research report (both soft and hard copy) should be submitted to the department so that your recommendations could be implemented. You may be required to prepare a presentation and present at the departments' annual research dialogue.

For more information kindly liaise with the department's research unit @ 013 766 5476/5148 0r a.baloyi@education.mpu.gov.za

The department wishes you well in this important project and pledges to give you the necessary support you may need.

MRS MOC MHLABANE   06 11 18
HEAD: EDUCATION   DATE

MPUMALANGA
THE PLACE OF THE RISING SUN
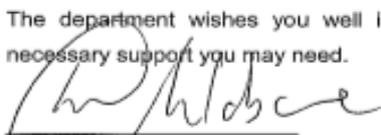
APPENDIX D: Language Editor Letter

Alexa Barnby

Language Specialist

Editing, copywriting, indexing, formatting, translation

BA Hons Translation Studies; APEd (SATI) Accredited Professional Text Editor, SATI
Mobile: 071 872 1334
Tel: 012 361 6347   alexabarnby@gmail.com

15 September 2019

To whom it may concern

This is to certify that I, Alexa Kirsten Barnby, an English editor accredited by the South African Translators' Institute, have edited the dissertation titled "The management of assessment processes in primary schools at Nkomazi West Circuit – Ehlanzeni District" by Beatrice Fikile Monteiro for the qualification Magister Educationis: Educational Leadership.

The onus is on the author, however, to make the changes suggested and address the comments made.